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EPISTEMIC PRINCIPLES, EPISTEMIC CIRCULARITY AND THE ULTIMATE EPISTEMIC GOAL.

Thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

In this work we investigate the feasibility of the project of showing that a certain kind of generalisations that philosophers call 'Epistemic Principles', which state conditions for the achievement of epistemic goods such as justifications and entitlements, fulfil general conditions for their correctness. First, we identify the veritistic commitments underlying the project; it is argued that some common interpretations of such commitments are mistaken and a minimal interpretation of them is outlined. The minimal interpretation is then defended against some charges of explanatory deficits.

We explicate how the project of showing that an epistemic principle is correct is motivated and constrained by the veritistic commitments expounded in the first chapter. Then we show how a form of epistemic circularity constitutes a major obstacle for that project. We discuss several forms of circularity and argue that only one of them threatens the project, we explain the exact nature of the obstacle it poses for the project.

Then we examine various strategies that attempt to avert the obstacle; some by freeing the project from the veritistic commitments that constrain it, others by constructing an allegedly apriori way of carrying out the project, without giving up its initial veritistic commitments, and still another by reconceptualising the very explanatory goal of the project. All of them are examined in detail and found unsatisfactory.

However, it is argued that the doubt that our results cast on the feasibility of the project does not warrant a generalised pessimism about the possibility of obtaining philosophical knowledge concerning epistemic principles, for the results that sustain that doubt constitute themselves knowledge of epistemic principles.

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Above all, I want to say 'Thanks' to Margarita M. Valdes, my dearest friend, for her support throughout all these years.

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Miguel Angel Fernandez
December 2005

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INTRODUCTION

This is an investigation into the feasibility of the project which attempts to show that we are justified, or otherwise enjoy a reassuring epistemic position, with respect to our entrenched conviction that we possess ways of belief formation that deliver justification or other epistemic goods for us. We can call this the 'reassuring project'. In the context of this project that conviction is captured in some generalisations called 'epistemic principles'. These principles have a conditional form, in their antecedent they mention conditions sufficient for the achievement of the epistemic good mentioned in the consequent. We fix the discussion on one single epistemic principle about perception; this is the specimen we take to investigate the project:

> (EP) If on the basis of its perceptually appearing to one that *p* one believes that *p*, one is *prima facie* justified in believing that *p*.

(EP) formulates what ordinarily we take to be conditions for *prima facie* epistemic justification through perception, this is our entrenched conviction. The reassuring project undertakes the task of showing that this ordinary attitude is justified, that we are justified in believing that the conditions mentioned by (EP) are conditions sufficient for justification of belief.

The justification for which (EP) gives conditions is *epistemic* justification. So the conditions mentioned in the antecedent must be constrained by whatever it is that is distinctive of epistemic justification. Beliefs can be evaluated from different points of view; the reassuring project needs to specify what is distinctive of the epistemic evaluation of belief. Chapter I articulates as an underlying presupposition of the reassuring project the idea that what is distinctive of epistemic evaluation is that it is evaluation relative to the goal of truth. The idea is that what endows cognitive performances and the beliefs they produce with epistemic value of any sort is that they aim at truth. This is the core tenet of what we call a 'veritistic' conception of

epistemic value. The central veritistic tenet is a mere slogan and there have been different ways of interpreting it; we discuss several interpretations that we label 'psychologism' because they reduce the role of truth in epistemic evaluation to the role that the concept of truth plays in the desires or motives that a cognitive agent may have concerning truth-linked goals he can intentionally pursue. We argue that this kind of psychological relation to truth-linked goals is inadequate to account for what we ordinarily take to be sufficient sources of epistemic value. The reassuring project needs to understand the central veritistic tenet in a non-psychologistic manner. We propose that a minimal teleological understanding of truth as the ultimate epistemic goal is enough to issue an adequate constraint on epistemic goods. The constraint in question is that the conditions deemed sufficient for an epistemic good must be truth-conducive. We call this a 'truth-conducive constraint'. Some philosophers have argued that truth cannot be the only ultimate epistemic goal because supposing that it is results in our inability to explain the epistemic good of paradigmatic examples of cognitive achievements; the second part of Chapter I discusses some of these objections to the minimal veritism and sketches responses to them. The purpose of this discussion is to show how the minimal idea that truth-conducivity is what distinctively constraints epistemic goods is deeply entrenched in a proper understanding of such goods.

If principles that define conditions for epistemic goods are subject to a truth-conducive constraint then they are correct only if they fulfil such a constraint. This means that (EP) is a correct epistemic principle only if perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. Therefore, in order to show that our conviction that (EP) is correct is justified the philosopher engaged in the reassuring project has to show that we are justified in taking it that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. It can easily be seen that this task essentially relies on perception and hence it seems to be infected with some sort of vicious circularity. Chapter II discusses what the kind of circularity in question is and what is exactly vicious about it in relation to the reassuring project. We argue that the kind of circularity exhibited by the argument that uses perception to show that we are justified in believing that perception is truth-conducive consist in the fact that the justification for the premises of such argument depends on what its conclusion asserts. We call this form of circularity (DT). In identifying (DT) we contrast it with other kinds of circularity and with the

specific epistemic vices that they engender. In particular we contrast (DT) with the kind of circularity that is thought to engender the epistemic vice known as 'transmission-failure'. Transmission-failure occurs when one has justification for certain premises and one competently infers a conclusion form them but one fails to thereby acquire a justification for that conclusion. It has been argued that this epistemic vice is produced in an argument or reasoning when the justification for its premises depends on an antecedent warrant for its conclusion. This is the specific type of circularity that is thought to produce transmission-failure; we call it '(DW)'. We examine in detail the general grounds that have been offered to charge arguments with (DW) and transmission-failure, we argue that they are not cogent grounds for the charge and in particular that they are not cogent reasons to charge the form of argument used in the reassuring project with (DW) and transmission-failure. That leaves us with the question of what is the epistemic vice produced by (DT) with respect to the attempt to show that we are justified in believing that perception is truth-conducive. The last section of Chapter II formulates the vice, that we call the Conditional Position Problem (CPP). It consist in the impossibility of getting past an explanatorily vacuous position in which the veritistic philosopher cannot conclude that we are justified in believing that perception is truth-conducive but only that we are justified in thinking that it is *if* it is. We explain in detail the problematic nature of this position.

Chapter III investigates several strategies for avoiding the Conditional Position Problem. One consists in freeing epistemic principles from truth-conducive constraints. We explain how lifting such constraints would indeed enable the veritistic philosopher to overcome (CPP). The master argument for freedom is then presented and the consequences usually drawn from it are expounded. One consequence of lifting truth-conducive constraints from epistemic goods is that an alternative epistemic constraint needs to be imposed on such goods, if there is going to be still something distinctively epistemic about such goods. It is argued that the constraints set to replace truth-conducive constraints are inadequate inasmuch as they fail to make intelligible the epistemic defeat of the goods they are supposed to constrain. A second major strategy for avoiding (CPP) consists in avoiding reliance on perception altogether in showing that we are justified in believing that perception is truth-conducive, this would mean to show this apriori. We examine two different

attempts to construct such apriori route to the reassuring epistemic position sought in the project. We argue that one of them involves a conception of the correctness of epistemic principles in which they are not subject to straightforward truth-conducive constraints but to a 'subjectivised' version of them, which proves to be as inadequate as a constraint on epistemic goods as the constraints examined in the context of the first strategy to overcome (CPP). We then conjecture that truth-conducive constraints do not seem to be a negotiable component in a proper understanding of epistemic goods, so we examine an attempt to construct an apriori route to the reassuring epistemic position that fully respects truth-conducive constraints. We argue that this attempt subtly smuggles empirical presuppositions and hence fails to achieve the apriority that would enable the veritistic theorist to avoid (CPP).

In the first section of Chapter IV we discuss yet another possible strategy for avoiding (CPP), this one tries to modify the very goal pursued in the reassuring project. It proposes to conceptualise the goal in terms of showing that we have a *strategic entitlement to take on trust*, rather than in terms of showing that we have *justification to believe*, that perception is truth-conducive. We argue that the pursuit of the reconceptualised goal is still thwarted by a problem exactly parallel to (CPP).

Given that the goal of the reassuring project proves to be elusive we explore the question of what are the consequences of this result for the possibility of gaining philosophical knowledge about epistemic principles at all. We argue that the fact that the veritistic philosopher cannot satisfy himself in showing that there is a reassuring epistemic position, conceptualised as a justification or as an entitlement, with respect to our conviction that perception is a source of epistemic goods, does not warrant a generalised pessimism about the possibility of gaining philosophical knowledge about fundamental epistemic principles. For not only there are aspects of such principles the knowledge of which our results leave untouched, but the very piece of knowledge that the goal of the reassuring project is unattainable is itself a valuable piece of philosophical knowledge concerning epistemic principles.

Chapter I

Goods and Goals

I.1. Veritistic Epistemology and Divisions of Philosophical Labour

In this first chapter we attempt to identify and articulate the plausible minimal commitments of the philosophers who pursue the project of providing a philosophical explanation of the generalizations they call 'Epistemic Principles'. Borrowing terminology from Alvin Goldman we call such commitments 'veritistic' because they manifest endorsement of the idea that *truth* is the touchstone of a proper understanding of epistemic achievements and values. Epistemologists committed to this general veritistic idea differ enormously otherwise. An objective of this chapter is to articulate a minimal veritistic shared commitment that can plausibly be held to underlie the project they all pursue.

Most philosophers that have worked in the aforementioned project have not attempted a defence of their minimal veritistic commitments, but recently such commitments have become the explicit target of opposition and attack. A second objective of this chapter is to examine the arguments of this opposition and sketch veritistic responses to them. The veritistic responses to that opposition suggested here will be sketchy; a full treatment of the issues implicated would need a separate investigation. However, such a defence is not essential for reaching our conclusions concerning the philosophical explanation of epistemic principles; we admit such conclusions are *conditional* on endorsement of minimal veritism. But the veritistic ideas on which those conclusions are conditional are deeply entrenched and in this chapter we want to illustrate how they are more entrenched in our understanding of epistemic evaluation than their opponents seem to acknowledge. Later chapters will add evidence for this claim about the deep entrenchment of veritism.

Let us begin with some typical statements of the minimal veritistic commitment we will articulate and support:

...our central cognitive aim is to amass a large body of beliefs with a favourable truth-falsity ratio. For a belief to be epistemically justified is for it, somehow, to be awarded high marks relative to that aim.[1]

Epistemic evaluation is undertaken from what we might call the "epistemic point of view". That point of view is defined by the aim of maximizing truth and minimizing falsity in a large body of beliefs.[2]

...the distinguishing characteristic of this particular species of justification [i.e. epistemic justification] is, I submit, its essential or internal relationship to the cognitive goal of truth. Cognitive doings are epistemically justified, on this conception, only if and to the extent that they are aimed at this goal....[3]

In order for evaluations to be epistemic, it must be that the person's beliefs are measured against the standard of how good a job they do of realizing his goal of now believing truths and now not believing falsehoods.[4]

The veritistic commitment expressed in these passages has two components. The first is phrased in terms of there being a *goal*, namely truth or true belief or a high truth-falsity ratio in a body of beliefs or some other truth-linked goal, which cognitive activity aims at. The second component is the idea that there's a *relation* that holds between cognitive activity and its truth-linked goal which renders the former susceptible of a distinctive type of evaluation, namely epistemic. These are the two components of the minimal veritistic commitment that in this chapter we need to articulate in a plausible manner.

The terminology of activity, goals and aims suggests intentional agency and voluntary control. Alston's and Foley's quotations above are a case in point; they explicitly state the veritistic idea by saying that maximising the truth-falsity ratio in one's body of beliefs is an aim *we* have. The epistemic goal is conceived here in such a way that individual people can have it as the content of their intentions, and the relation between cognitive performances and the epistemic goal is then construed as a special case of a psychological relation of intending or desiring to bring about the goal or states of affairs conducive to the goal. Most statements of the veritistic commitment to be found in the literature encourage this 'psychologistic'

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[1] Alston 1985: 84.
[2] *Ibid.*: 83.
[3] Bonjour 1978: 5.
[4] Foley 1987: 124.

understanding of the central veritistic idea, but such interpretation of veritism is inappropriate for the type of cognitive performances that will be discussed in the rest of this investigation. It is beyond question that *some* cognitive endeavours are guided by an overt intention of maximising truth-falsity ratios or of achieving other truth-linked goals. Paradigms of that type of cognitive activity are essentially social cognitive practices, like research programmes in science and standard teaching in universities. But not all cognition plausibly fits this model of being intentionally guided by an overt intention to achieve a truth-linked goal; individual episodes of perception, of memory and of various forms of ratiocination need not be so guided in order to bear a relation to a truth-linked goal that makes the doxastic states they engender susceptible of epistemic evaluation. The rest of this thesis deals with epistemic principles that concern this latter type of individual cognitive episodes for which the intentionalist or psychologistic understanding of the core veritistic commitment is implausible. Section (I.2) below expounds in detail why such understanding is inappropriate for a treatment of the type of cognitive episodes in question and section (I.3) sketches an understanding of the veritistic commitment which is adequate for that type of cognition.

The underlying dichotomy of types of cognition presupposed in this investigation is closely related to Goldman's distinction between *individual* and *social* epistemology.[5] The subject matter of this investigation is a project within individual epistemology. The epistemic principles to be discussed later concern cognitive achievements assumed to be such that they can be philosophically studied in abstraction from the social practices in which they *can* be embedded. The prototype of such achievements is discrete episodes of unaided visual perception; the basic epistemic principle we will discuss concerns this specific type of achievement. This type of cognitive achievement contrast with those that are *essentially* embedded in wider practices of social interaction, like the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph. Whether this contrast runs deep enough to warrant the assumption that the former kind of achievement can be philosophically studied in abstraction from the latter is an issue that this thesis will not address; its theme is a philosophical project that makes that assumption, not the assumption itself.

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[5] See Goldman 1999a: 4.

The inadequacy of the psychologistic reading of the core veritistic commitment for the study of the individual type of cognition relates to the fact that in this type of cognition we deal with the *ultimate* and *fundamental* source of epistemic value. This means that the explanation of the epistemic value of individual cognitive performances and achievements need only cite a relation to a truth-linked goal which itself doesn't depend on nor involve a different type of cognitive performance. The epistemic value of essentially social cognitive performances is not ultimate and fundamental in that sense because its explanation must cite the epistemic value of a different type of cognitive performance, namely individual ones. There's an asymmetric explanatory relation between the epistemic value of individual and essentially social cognitive performances. For example, suppose we want to explain the epistemic value of a specific implementation of a pedagogical technique which sets students to work in a laboratory collectively in the execution of a series of experiments. We want to explain how good this social cognitive practice is for the learning of certain truths. In constructing such an explanation we need to advert to the individuals' episodes of perception and ratiocination that are involved in the collaborative practice and to the epistemic good such actual episodes have. If those individual episodes were themselves epistemically deficient that would undermine the overall epistemic value of the implementation of the collaborative practice, but if the individual episodes were themselves epistemically good their value would contribute to the overall value of the collaborative practice. Even if the epistemic value of the individual episodes or performances doesn't 'add-up' to the value of the collaborative practice, the former necessarily contributes to the latter. By contrast, in explaining the epistemic value of individual cognitive performances there's no further distinct type of performance whose epistemic value could be cited in the explanation. In this sense the epistemic value of individual performances is ultimate and fundamental, it is not constituted by the value of other types of performance (in particular, not of social performances); their epistemic value derives from a relation to truth which accordingly needs to be also ultimate and fundamental. A psychological relation that an individual or a group of individuals can establish with a truth-linked goal is *not* ultimate and fundamental in the required sense, as will be argued in the following two sections of this chapter, hence the inadequacy of psychologism for the individual type of cognition.

We will leave open how adequate psychologism is for the understanding of veritism as applied to essentially *social* cognitive practices; we will only argue that it is definitely not adequate for a veritistic treatment of *basic individual* cognition and thus for the explanation of ultimate and fundamental epistemic value. Here we are relying on a **first division of philosophical labour**: our project demands leaving on the side the issue of how to properly formulate veritism with respect to essentially social cognitive practices, and how such veritistic explanation would link with the veritistic explanation of ultimate and fundamental epistemic value.

The articulation of the minimal veritistic commitments for the treatment of individual cognition obviously employs the notion of *truth*. Many different philosophical debates intersect in this problematic node. In order to carry out our investigation we need to apply here a **second division of philosophical labour**. In general we can distinguish three broad categories of philosophical problems concerning the notion of truth:

A. *Semantic* issues related to how to understand, characterise, analyse or explicate the truth-predicate.
B. *Metaphysical* issues related to how we should conceive the truth-makers for different domains of discourse, e.g. as objective, response-dependent, evidence-transcendent, etc.
C. *Epistemological* issues related to how to understand the role of truth in the explanation of epistemic evaluation.

These areas of problems can definitely be connected: endorsing and defending a certain view in one of them may bring commitments in the others. But expounding such interconnections gives material for several separate investigations. In order to pursue ours concerning veritistic epistemic principles we need to focus on the epistemological issues, leaving aside their potential connections with the other groups of issues. The minimal conception of truth as *a type of representational success* which will be identified later in this chapter as part of the minimal veritistic commitments, can be thought to bring with it problematic further commitments with respect to issues in (A) or (B). We will not discuss this kind of possible difficulty; we will focus only on some of the *epistemological* consequences of the minimal veritistic commitments as they arise within a specific philosophical project.

I. 2. Psychologistic interpretations of veritism

The previous section pointed out that the common statements of the core veritistic commitments strongly encourage a psychologistic reading which is inadequate for the explanation of fundamental epistemic value. The present section argues for that inadequacy.

Recall the twofold minimal veritistic commitment: the idea that there is a truth-linked goal of cognitive activity and that there's a relation between cognitive performances and that goal which makes the former susceptible of epistemic evaluation. A psychologistic understanding of veritism explicates the relation in question as a special case of a psychological relation and the truth-linked goal as a case of an object of a psychological state. There are serious doubts as to the psychological plausibility of supposing that there is a truth-linked goal that is the object of a psychological state of cognizers *whenever* his cognitive performances are susceptible of epistemic evaluation.[6] But for the sake of argument let us assume that there is a plausible truth-linked goal suitable for a psychologistic reading of veritism. We will now argue that a psychological relation that people can establish with such a goal cannot endow their cognitive performances with fundamental epistemic value, i.e. it is not a condition for making them candidates for epistemic evaluation.

A straightforward psychological relation of the intended sort would be that a cognizer has the formation of true beliefs as the intentional aim issuing from a *general desire that motivates* her intellectual performances. How should we construe the content of such a general desire or intention for true belief? It wouldn't be plausible to construe it as a desire for true belief *for its own sake*, for very rarely any such desire can be attributed to us. Most of the cases of wanting to know the truth are cases of wanting the truth just as an instrument for something else, not for its own sake. In all such cases our cognitive performances could have epistemic value even if not accompanied by the desire for truth for its own sake; such desire could not then explain the presence of epistemic value in *all* cases, even if it would remain an open question if it could *add* some epistemic value to those performances that does motivate. The content of the general desire or intention that the psychologist needs

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[6] See David 2001 for discussion of the problems related to the formulation of the required truth-linked goal.

better be compatible with wanting true belief not for its own sake. We can specify a general desire with that property as a desire for true belief *as such*; for even when we want true belief only as an instrument to fulfill other non-epistemic interest, for example find the nearest petrol station, we still want our true belief as such, *as true belief*, since the fulfillment of our interest typically depends on our belief being true. There might be other problems as to the psychological plausibility of a general desire for true belief as such, but for the sake of argument let us suppose that there is such a general desire that spreads throughout the space of possible cognitive performances.

We want to elaborate on an interesting problem for this kind of psychologistic view that we think is briefly hinted at by Ernest Sosa, he writes:

> If the evaluation of a quality is epistemic then presumably it will concern how well it suits believers for grasping the truth in certain salient field/circumstance conditions....... But must such a quality take the form of a practice that can count as a motivation voluntarily held by the agent/subject? It is this that seems problematic.[7]

And this is why Sosa thinks that's problematic:

> Sooner or later we shall need to recognize that our virtuous epistemic conduct must derive at some deep level from our virtuous nature, a nature not itself due entirely to one's free and autonomous choice. Any choice due to the agent must derive from something in the agent's nature, lest it be unacceptably arbitrary or fortuitous. But that in the agent from which it derives cannot be prior choices unto infinity.......Requiring a logically prior choice without exception would lead to the vicious regress or to the unacceptably arbitrary. Virtuous conduct must derive from something in the agent's constitution not itself a logically prior choice...... that in one's character to which the admirable performance is attributed cannot be some logically prior truth-conducive practice, or policy or motive or virtue.[8]

We can flesh out the problem that Sosa sees in the following way. If we suppose that what makes a certain cognitive performance or practice (of belief formation) epistemically good is that it is guided or otherwise accompanied by a general desire for true belief as such, then a vicious regress is triggered. In the presence of that supposition each performance or practice *Pn* must have been adopted or executed because of the general desire of believing truths as such, but since that adoption or

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[7] Sosa 2001: 56.
[8] *Ibid.*: 56-7.

execution should not be fortuitous relative to that desire the view we are assuming also requires that the adoption or execution of *Pn* be supported by a prior belief *Bn-1* to the effect that beliefs produced through *Pn* tend to be true. But, in the present view, if *Bn-1* is to have epistemic value it must be the result of the general desire for true belief as such plus a prior belief *Bn-2* that the practice or performance that yields *Bn-1* tends to produce true beliefs. But, in the present view, if *Bn-2* is to have epistemic value..... and so on *ad infinitum*. This regress impedes our understanding of how a relation to truth, conceived as an intentional aiming, can be the source of the epistemic value of particular cognitive performances.[9] Since the regress is produced by the psychologistic supposition that what makes a certain cognitive performance or practice (of belief formation) epistemically good is that it is guided or otherwise accompanied by a general desire for true belief as such, we should reject that supposition in explaining how a relation to truth can be the source of the epistemic value of individual cognitive performances.

It might be replied that a regress need not be triggered. One can accept that in order for S's belief that p formed through M to have epistemic value it must have been accompanied by the intention of reaching the truth, but it could be argued that this intention is ambiguous. It could be either of the following two:

A. S had the following intention: "I will use M in order to find out the truth".
B. In using M S had the following intention: "I will find out the truth".

(A) can plausibly be viewed as triggering a regress, for it is plausible that having such an intention rationally commits one to *believe* that M is a good way of getting to the truth, and with *this* belief in place we have the beginning of the regress described above, because we need to explain where the epistemic value of that belief comes from. But (B) doesn't seem to have such an effect, for it doesn't seem to rationally commit one to have the problematic belief concerning the truth-conducivity of M. Think here of children who do want to find out what's the case for the sake of the

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[9] We have to be careful. We are not denying that one *can* aim intentionally at true belief. One can, even if, as discussed latter in this section, in so aiming one typically (but not necessarily) makes true belief an instrumental means for the fulfilment of non-epistemic interests or desires. What we deny is that such intentional aiming is the *fundamental relation* that endows individual cognitive performances with epistemic value. One's ability to aim intentionally at truth cannot constitute the fundamental relation we need to explicate.

matter without believing that the actual method they instinctively use is good for that purpose. Also, most adults, when using basic perceptual means for settling a question, say the number of objects on a table, plausibly proceed with the intention of finding out what's the case but without the belief that the method they use is efficient for that purpose. So, reading the intention as in (B) it wouldn't seem to trigger the kind of regress described.

Let us assume that the intention understood as in (B) doesn't trigger a regress because it doesn't commit the subject to believe that the method or practice which he intends to use is truth-conducive. But if the choice of method M is not determined by the content of the intention, it becomes unclear why such intention should endow the beliefs formed through M with any epistemic value. The efficacy or inefficacy of M clearly influences whether the beliefs formed through M have epistemic value. So if M were efficient and the content of one's intention *determined* the use of M it would be plausible to cite that intention in explaining the source of the epistemic value of one's beliefs formed through M. Similarly, if M was ineffective and the content of one's intention determined the use of M it would be plausible to cite the intention in explaining why the beliefs lack epistemic value. But if the content of the intention doesn't determine the use of M, citing the intention in explaining the epistemic value of the beliefs would look irrelevant. The (B) reading of the problematic intention would seem to escape the regress described above at the price of depriving the intention from the capacity to play the theoretical role that the psychologistic view under discussion needs it to play.

In order for it to be plausible that an intention of aiming at truth plays any epistemic role in endowing an issuing cognitive performance with epistemic value it must be understood as in (A). But positing an intention with that content in the explanation of epistemic value triggers a regress that impedes our understanding of how the posited psychological relation can be the source of epistemic value. A psychologistic reading of the central veritistic commitment produces this problem and therefore leaves us with no satisfactory account of the fundamental role of truth in the explanation of epistemic value.

There are some versions of psychologism that do not succumb to that problem because they are not put forward as explanations of *fundamental* epistemic value. L. Zagzebski has advanced a view of that sort. She thinks that truth "typically

operate[s] in our psychology not as an end in any sense, but as a motive"[10] and she believes that the operative motive in question is love of true belief; she thinks that this motive has intrinsic value and that "it is capable of conferring additional value on the acts it motivates".[11] We can see how she thinks that the motive of love of truth adds value to the cognitive performances it motivates by means of a comparison with the role she also assigns to motives in moral action. Consider three different relations acts can have to compassion (understood as the aversion to the suffering of others). We can distinguish (a) acts that have the consequences of compassionate acts, i.e. the elimination of the suffering of others, without having it as an aim nor as a motive; (b) acts that have the elimination of the suffering of others as an aim, without being motivated by compassion; and (c) acts that have compassion as a motive. Here are examples of those various types of acts. An act of type (a) could be talking next to someone who, unbeknownst to us, gets her pain alleviated just by hearing a human voice; an act of type (b) would be talking to that same person with the intentional aim of alleviating her suffering, but in doing so one is motivated not by the desire to alleviate her suffering for the sake if it but, say, by the desire for relief from the nausea produced in us by the sight of the suffering person. An act of type (c) would be talking to that person while being motivated to do so by the desire to alleviate her suffering for the sake of it. Zagzebski thinks that on the epistemic side we can have an analogous tripartite division of cognitive performances. Performances that (a*) have truth as a consequence, without having it as an aim nor as a motive, e.g. as when we get true beliefs by accident; (b*) performances that have truth as an aim, without having the motive of the love of truth, e.g. as when we what to know the truth not for its own sake but only as a means for the achievement of a further goal; and (c*) performances that are motivated by the love of truth, as when one seeks for the truth for its own sake.

Zagzebski's central claim is that other things being equal, performances of type (c*) are epistemically *more* valuable than performances of types (a*) and (b*),[12] and that the explanation of this inequality is the motive present in (c*) but absent in (a*) and (b*). As she puts it: "I propose that love of truth is a motive that confers

[10] Zagzebski 2003a: 146.
[11] *Ibid.*: 147.
[12] *Ibid.*: 148.

value on acts of belief *in addition* to any other value such acts might have".[13] Whatever problems Zagzebski's view might face, the regress problem sketched above does not seem to be one of them. That criticism demonstrates that one cannot explain *all* epistemic value as arising from a psychological relation between cognitive performances and a truth-linked goal; there must be some epistemic value which is not explicable by any such relation, that is fundamental epistemic value. But this is *consistent* with the idea that the presence of a psychological relation, like the motive of the love of truth Zagzebski describes, can *add* value to the epistemic value that the performances it motives may already have. The regress criticism presented above only entails that such added value is not fundamental epistemic value and that the source of that additional value is not the ultimate source of the fundamental epistemic value of a cognitive performance.

Because Zagzebski's view is not concerned with fundamental epistemic value it avoids the regress problem for psychologism. However, there's a concern about the nature of the additional value that in her theory springs from the motive of love of truth. We need to ask if there's in effect some additional *epistemic* value that arises from those motivational origins.

She thinks that the motive of love of truth confers additional value on the performances that it motivates because the motive is intrinsically valuable and this is so because true belief is itself intrinsically valuable.[14] But this claim does not seem to sit well with standard evaluative practice; for it is not clear that in cases where our cognitive performances are motivated by the love of truth there's *any* epistemic value accruing to the corresponding cognitive performances *just in virtue of that psychological relation*. Imagine two scenarios. In the first out of pure love of truth *S* undertakes the task of forming true beliefs about absolutely trivial topics, e.g. the names and associated numbers in a particular page of the phone book or the number of grains in a scoop of sand from the beach.[15] In the second scenario *S* undertakes the same task but not out of love of truth, but because the task is part of one of those silly TV shows. Suppose that *S* uses exactly the same methods of belief formation and arrives exactly at the same true beliefs in both scenarios. Moreover, the two scenarios are identical, the only difference being that that in the first S acts motivated by the

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[13] Zagzebski 2003a: 149, my emphasis.
[14] *Ibid.*: 147.
[15] I take these examples from Sosa 2001: 49.

love of truth and in the second he doesn't. It is exceedingly implausible that S's cognitive performances in the first scenario have some epistemic value that they lack in the second just because in the first they are motivated by that (quite notorious) love of truth.

In later work Zagzebski modifies her view by saying that the value of the motive of the love of truth comes not only from the intrinsic value of true belief but also from the place it occupies in the constellation of motives that are constitutive of a good life, or in her Aristotelian terminology, a life of *eudaimonia*.[16] She holds, for example, that the love for truth is valuable *because* true belief is typically a prerequisite for successful execution of acts motivated by morally good traits.[17] But what should we make of cases where the true beliefs we form are not prerequisite for the success of any morally good acts? Presumably the true beliefs of subject S in the first scenario about the phone book and the grains of sand are of that sort. Maybe Zagzebski could classify S's love of truth in that scenario as pathological, for being severed from the other kind of motives that she holds makes love of truth valuable. In that way she would explain why love of truth in such scenario does not add any epistemic value to S's cognitive performances. But even in cases where one's love of truth is adequately related to the other motives constitutive of a good life, there's still a concern as to whether the value that love of truth can contribute to cognitive performances in virtue of being so related to those other motives is epistemic in nature. For if love of truth is valuable because true belief is typically a prerequisite for successful execution of morally good acts, then the value attached to love of truth derives from truth's instrumental status relative to recognizably non-epistemic ends. But this makes it difficult to see how the alleged additional value conferred by the motive of love of truth on cognitive performances could be *epistemic* in nature.[18]

A psychologistic interpretation of the central tenets of veritism is inadequate for the explanation of fundamental epistemic value, for it leads to a vicious explanatory regress. It also seems to be inadequate to explain any additional epistemic value cognitive performances may have, for it posits as sources of that value relations to non-epistemic ends and thereby it becomes unclear why we should

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[16] See for example her 2003b.
[17] Zagzebski 2003b: 24.
[18] In (I.5.2) below we discuss in detail this intuitive problem for Zagzebski's view.

conceptualise that additional value as epistemic in nature. These difficulties give us reason to look for a non-psychologistic interpretation of the central tenets of veritism.

I.3. Minimal Veritism

The previous section exposed the flaws of a psychologistic interpretation of the core veritistic ideas that there's a truth-linked goal of cognitive performances and that a relation to it is the source of fundamental epistemic value. The flawed interpretation is a case of psychologism because it attempts to reduce the role of a truth-linked goal in the explanation of fundamental epistemic value to a role the notion of truth can play in an individual's psychology as a general desire, intention or motive to pursue true belief. We observed that the concept of truth can play some of these psychological roles, but we argued that the role of truth in the explanation of fundamental epistemic value cannot be reduced to any of those. The present section sketches a minimal version of the core veritistic ideas that escapes the flaws of psychologism and can be seen to reasonably represent the minimal veritistic commitments of the project to be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Three theses characterise what we'll call 'MINIMAL VERITISM' (MV):

a. Truth is the *ultimate* epistemic goal relative to which epistemic achievements are assessed.
b. A cognitive performance derives fundamental epistemic value from *a fundamental relation* to truth.
c. Truth's having that fundamental relation to cognitive performances is *autonomous* from any non-epistemic goals.

The rest of this section explains the meaning of these theses. (MV) does not assert that truth is the only epistemic goal or value *tout court*; it only says that truth is the *ultimate* epistemic goal. This means that (MV) can allow for a plurality of epistemic goals but entails that what there is of epistemic value in each of them must be explicable in terms of a relation to truth; whereas explaining the epistemic good of

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truth doesn't require citing a non-ultimate or *derivative* epistemic goal.[19] Thus, according to (MV) there is an asymmetrical explanatory relation between truth and other epistemic goals: truth's explanatory place in that relation is ultimate whereas the place of all other epistemic goals is derivative. For example, consistency and knowledge are epistemic goals distinct from truth; however, the explanation of their epistemic value must cite the concept of truth: consistency is epistemically good because it rules out ways of failing to attain a *truthful* system of beliefs and states of knowing are epistemically good at least for guaranteeing *true* belief.[20] But on the other hand, as we will see below, the explanation of why truth is an epistemic good need not mention consistency, knowledge nor any other derivative epistemic goal.

(MV) does not deny that individuals can value and pursue truth because they value and pursue a variety of other non-epistemic goals, but it denies that the explanation of the relation between cognitive performances and truth that endows the former with fundamental epistemic value should advert to any of those non-epistemic goals or to the reasons why individuals happen to value them. That is what it means to say that such a relation between cognitive performances and truth is *autonomous* from non-epistemic goals. For example, people value having true beliefs because that is conducive to fulfilling their practical goals. Having a correct belief as to the location of the nearest restaurant is a means to satisfy my hunger, thus getting my belief right here is valuable (partially) *because* it is a means for something I value for non-epistemic reasons. (MV) doesn't deny these facts about the insertion of truth in wider practices of evaluation; what it denies is that the explanation of the fundamental epistemic value that a cognitive performance derives from its relation to truth should mention the place that truth can occupy in those wider practices. It denies that such an explanation should mention the value that a true belief derives from being a prerequisite for achieving something we value because it fulfils our non-epistemic interests, like our interest for food or for fame. Citing such a source of value would make fundamental epistemic value *dependent* on non-epistemic values, which contravenes the autonomy of epistemic value stated in (MV)-c.

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[19] Goldman 2001: 31 calls something close to this version of veritism 'unitarianism', because it holds that the unifying epistemic theme of all epistemic goals and virtues is truth.

[20] Some opponents to veritism have objected that even if truth must be cited in accounting for *some* of the epistemic value of other epistemic goals, a connection with truth does not suffice to explain *all* the epistemic value in such derivative epistemic goals, therefore truth cannot be the only *ultimate* epistemic goal in the present sense. A couple of instances of this type of objection to veritism are discussed in (I. 4) and (I. 5) below, where veritistic responses to them are sketched.

Some philosophers who would agree that the value of having one's non-epistemic interests satisfied doesn't enhance or contribute to the epistemic value of cognitive performances would insist that the *presence* of some such interests is nevertheless a *condition of possibility* for the corresponding cognitive performances to be epistemically assessable. A. Goldman puts forward a view of this sort. He motivates his view by considering cases where a subject is ignorant of absolutely trivial facts about which he *lacks all interest*; for example, about who won the women's breast stroke at the 1976 Summer Olympics. Goldman is convinced that in such cases the subject's ignorance fails to affect the epistemic value of his belief corpus *because* the subject lacks interest on the corresponding facts. He writes:

> Does S's ignorance on all of these matters constitute, or even contribute toward, the impoverished V-condition of his creedal corpus? Does such ignorance imply that his creedal state should receive a low V-value, or V-ranking? If S is totally uninterested in these questions, I am inclined to say that his knowing no answers to them doesn't not count against the V-value of his beliefs states.[21]

And consequently he concludes that:

> ...an agent S's belief states... have [epistemic] value or disvalue when they are responses to questions that *interests* S (or, more generally, when other agents are interested in S's knowing the answer).[22]
>
> ...veritistic value should always be assessed relative to *questions of interest*.[23]

In (I.2) we argued that the presence of a standing (epistemic) interest and concomitant intention to know the truth about a specific subject matter does not by itself *endow* with any epistemic value the performances that it can motivate. Goldman's view is importantly different from that view we have already criticised. He is not saying that the presence of the interest (epistemic or non-epistemic) is the *source* of epistemic value, he just says that the presence of (non-epistemic) interests is a *condition of possibility* for the corresponding performances to have any epistemic value. We will show that this role that Goldman assigns to non-epistemic interests is at odds with standard epistemic practice.

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[21] Goldman 1999a: 88-89. 'V' means *veritistic* in Goldman's abbreviation.
[22] *Ibid.*: 88. His emphasis.
[23] *Ibid.*: 89. His emphasis.

As we have seen, he motivates his view on cases of *steady* states of ignorance, throughout a given period of time, which run together with *steady* lack of interest in the relevant questions. Now, given that in his framework 'ignorance' means *withholding of judgment*[24] we can see that even in his motivating cases his view is implausible. In such cases the subject's lack of interest doesn't preclude the presence of epistemic value or the possibility of epistemic assessment, for his withholding of judgment can itself be the result of vicious epistemic practice, e.g. biased survey of evidence. For example, suppose that I withhold judgment as to who is going to win the next presidential election and I am not interested on the matter. According to Goldman my withholding of judgment is not assessable with respect to epistemic value simply because I am not interested in who is going to win the next presidential election. But this is false if my withholding of judgment on the matter is itself the result of vicious epistemic practice, e.g. if I have an irrational belief that the agencies publishing electoral tendencies are dishonest. In such a case my withholding of judgment does merit a low epistemic mark in virtue of being the result of an irrational belief.

The implausibility of Goldman's view is clearer in cases where there's a *change* in credal state, say from ignorance to belief or from acceptance to rejection, together with a *change* in interest. For example, suppose that at t_1 one believes that the library will be opened tomorrow as usual and one has a standing interest on the matter because one needs to return an overdue book. One knows that there might be a strike within the next few days, so one keeps on alert for updating one's knowledge on the matter. At t_2 one reads an email from the provost saying that the University will be closed tomorrow because of the strike; accordingly one changes one's belief state from acceptance to rejection of the proposition: "The library will be open tomorrow as usual". However, in the same email one learns that overdue books need not be returned, thus one loses interest in the question whether the library will be open. In a case like this it is obvious that the fact that one ceases to be interested in the question is no obstacle to epistemically evaluate one's credal change; moreover, the fact that one happened to be interested in the question *at any* time is irrelevant for epistemically assessing the credal change. Regardless of whether one has or stopped having an interest on the question we can still assess epistemically relevant

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[24] Goldman 1999a: 89.

properties of one's credal change, for example the reliability of the method that produced it.

The presence of non-epistemic interests might be in some circumstances *causal* pre-conditions for the initiation of the execution of cognitive performances that are epistemically assessable, but as the above examples suggests they are not preconditions for the epistemic assessment itself, for the performances are epistemically assessable even when they are not causally preceded by any such interest. This confirms that the relation between cognitive performances and truth responsible for fundamental epistemic value is autonomous from all non-epistemic interests and goals, not only because these do not contribute to the epistemic value of performances they might initiate, but because they are not even conditions for the possibility of assessing them epistemically.

In the context of (MV) the claim that truth is the ultimate and autonomous epistemic goal must be understood with reference to representational states of individuals, not with reference to individuals themselves. If it makes sense to say that individuals have truth as a goal it has to be an intentional goal of them. As we argued in (I.2) individuals can and do intentionally aim at true belief, but that is not the kind of relation that underlies truth's role in the explanation of fundamental epistemic value. We suggest that the claim that truth is the ultimate and autonomous epistemic goal must be understood not in intentional terms but in teleological terms. Producing true beliefs is the *representational function* of certain psychological systems, that function is fulfilled when the system succeeds in producing true beliefs. In this sense true belief is the *goal* of those systems, it is achieved when the relevant systems fulfil their representational function. That a psychological system of an individual has as its representational function to produce true beliefs is entirely independent from the intentions, desires and motives that the individual might have. He cannot intend to have or not to have that function; his psychological system has that function simply in virtue of being a system capable of producing beliefs at all.

Truth's role as the representational goal of psychological systems capable of belief is establishable apriori, as T. Burge has pointed out:

> ...it's apriori that a representational function of a psychological system of belief is to form true beliefs. Understanding what a belief is suffices apriori to warrant the view that such a system has as function to represent truths.[25]

Burge does recognise that most functions of psychological capacities can be established only empirically; his claim is only that a specific type of function, i.e. the *representational function*, of a specific type of psychological capacities, i.e. those *capable of belief*, can be established apriori from a proper understanding of what belief is. Given that there are psychological systems capable of forming beliefs, it seems that we can effectively deduce apriori that the representational function of those systems is to form true beliefs. For from a proper understanding of what belief is we know that true belief is a species of veridical representation; we also know apriori that a representational function is a function to form veridical representations, i.e. representations that fulfil the representational goal. From these pieces of apriori knowledge it obviously follows that the representational function of systems capable of belief is to form true beliefs.

Truth is the ultimate and autonomous epistemic goal because it is the representational goal of systems whose performances produce true beliefs, and both performances and beliefs are epistemically evaluable relative to that representational goal. Accordingly, the relation that endows cognitive performances and beliefs with fundamental epistemic value obtains when the representational systems of the individual are in good order and succeed in representing his normal environment veridically. We will call this relation 'truth-conducivity'. This means that the truth-conducivity of a cognitive performance is necessary for it and the belief it produces to have fundamental epistemic value. At this stage there's some explaining that we will have to leave for later. We need to explain how we are going to understand the notion of truth-conducivity; we will do this in (I.5.3) and (II.1). We also need to respond to arguments that challenge the view that truth-conducivity is necessary for epistemic value; we will do this in (III.1.2), (III.1.3) and (III.3.1).

The above claims about the apriori status of truth's role as the ultimate and autonomous epistemic goal is neither incompatible with nor undermined by the apparent anthropological findings that suggest that some societies or cultures value

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[25] Burge 2003: 509.

other goals in belief fixation and revision over truth. For example, Hongladarom (2002) reports that some practices in Thai society show that in that culture other values, such as continuity of tradition, are put on a higher level than truth, and trump truth in case of conflict with respect to belief revision. Some writers take these empirical findings to show that truth is not necessarily the overriding ultimate epistemic goal and that whatever epistemic goals a human group has it is a contingent matter that they have them.[26] Those findings are neither incompatible with nor undermine the minimal veritism articulated here; the reason for this is not that we assume a general thesis to the effect that apriori claims, like the one at the heart of minimal veritism, are non-revisable in the light of empirical evidence. No such thesis is being relied on here. The reason for the irrelevance of the anthropological findings is rather that they concern what groups of people value or prefer as a touchstone of belief fixation and revision, and we have insisted that minimal veritism is *not* a theory about what people value or prefer. None of the three theses that define minimal veritism assign a role to people's values or preferences in the explanation of fundamental epistemic value. Minimal veritism is a theory about the source of some epistemic value (i.e. fundamental) which is independent of any preferences and intentions of cognitive agents.[27] Relative to such a theory the aforementioned anthropological evidence is off the point.

The anthropological evidence does show that there may be non-epistemic dimensions of evaluation of beliefs; for example, how conducive they are for the continuation of certain political order. The evidence also suggests that people can assign more importance to non-epistemic dimensions of evaluation of belief than to the epistemic dimension of evaluation identified by minimal veritism. But this is not incompatible with minimal veritism either, for it does not rank the epistemic dimension of evaluation above non-epistemic ones. Minimal veritism is not a theory about any such ranking of dimensions of evaluation of belief.[28]

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[26] See Hongladarom 2002: 88-90

[27] This claim must be viewed in light of the arguments of (1.2) above.

[28] Goldman 1999a: 31-33, marshals some historical and anthropological evidence to argue that a concern for truth can be found across epochs and cultures as the touchstone of the epistemic evaluation of various practices. In describing that evidence Goldman is counter-attacking the kind of relativistic view we've discussed in the text. Goldman feels that the historical and anthropological evidence is relevant for his veritistic theory because his framework is one for the study of essentially *social* cognitive practices, unlike the minimal veritism discussed here which is a framework for *individual* cognitive practices in the sense explained in (1.1). Given that the aim of the minimal veritism sketched here is the explanation of the fundamental epistemic value that attends individual cognitive processes and events the historical and anthropological evidence is irrelevant, for the

For minimal veritism the ultimate source of epistemic value is thin: it is just a fundamental relation to a type of success that corresponds apriori to a type of representational state. Hostility to the thinness posited by veritism in the explanation of fundamental epistemic value need not look out at alien societies where different epistemic goals seem to override truth in belief fixation; in (I.4) and (I.5) we'll see that some philosophers criticise veritism alleging its inability to fully explain the source of the epistemic value of even the most universal and cross-cultural epistemic achievements. Those philosophers think there are other sources of epistemic value beyond the one recognised by veritism. In assessing the views of those thinkers we will rely on the following Principle on the Authority of Standard Evaluative Practice: When a putative source of epistemic value is identified we have to ask what reason we have to conceptualise it as epistemic. If there's an operative taxonomy in standard practice that conceptualises the putative source of value in admittedly non-epistemic terms, then we have a *prima facie* principled reason *not* to conceptualise it as epistemic. That reason is *principled* because it derives from general patterns implicit in standard evaluative practice, but it's *prima facie* because it can be defeated by an argument for a different conceptualisation. In the remainder of this chapter we will discuss those prominent challenges to veritism, and we will suggest possible veritistic responses to those challenges. The purpose of the discussion is not to assemble a full-blown defence of minimal veritism but only to show that departing from it while maintaining a proper understanding of epistemic evaluation is not as easy as its adversaries seem to suppose.

I. 4. Explanatory Deficits I? The Nature of Understanding

The end of the previous section discussed the relevance for veritism of epistemic practices of alien cultures that appear to be incompatible with veritistic claims. The rest of the chapter examines an objection to veritism which attempts to undermine it not by looking at the peculiarity of certain epistemic practices, but by arguing that it fails to explain satisfactorily even what are acknowledged to be the most universal

reasons expounded in the text. I leave open what one's position concerning that empirical evidence should be if one's aim is the explanation of epistemic value of essentially social cognitive practices; Goldman's stance is one possibility in theoretical space.

epistemic achievements: knowing and understanding. The argument here is that the epistemic nature and value of such achievements cannot be entirely explained in terms allowed by minimal veritism. We will now examine this kind of problem for veritism and suggest veritistic ways of dealing with it.

I.4.1. Understanding, knowing and doxastic states

It has been recently argued that the concentration of modern epistemology on skepticism viciously narrowed the spectrum of epistemic achievements actually studied in the discipline to knowledge and justification. Accordingly, the notion of truth became the touchstone in the understanding of successful or valuable aspects of cognition. From this point of view, the obsessive concentration on truth and knowledge has resulted in the dismissal of epistemic achievements whose nature, it is claimed, cannot be fully explicated in terms of those traditional touchstones alone. It is claimed that one of those dismissed epistemic achievements is *understanding*.[29] J. Kvanvig, for example, believes that "understanding is a cognitive achievement distinct from knowledge", and argues against the view that "the kind of understanding at issue when regarding our cognitive successes and achievements is some type of deep and comprehensive knowledge concerning a particular subject, topic, or issue".[30]

In Kvanvig's sense understanding consists in: "an internal grasping or appreciation of how the various elements in a body of information are related to each other in terms of explanatory, logical, probabilistic, and other kinds of relations."[31] The view he argues for is that understanding in that sense is not a species of knowledge. His central case for this view consists in showing that what is essential for knowledge, namely, non-accidental true belief, is not essential for understanding and therefore that the latter cannot be a species of the former:

> ...understanding does not advert to the etiological aspects that can be crucial
> for knowledge. What is distinctive about understanding.....is the internal

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[29] Kvanvig 2003 and Zagzebski 2001 blame on scepticism the dismissal of epistemic achievements, like *understanding*, which they believe are not suitable for a veritistic treatment. Riggs 2003 mentions *wisdom* as another neglected epistemic goal; in fact he thinks that wisdom is the "highest epistemic good" of which understanding is merely a component (2003: 216).
[30] Kvanvig 2003: 188.
[31] *Ibid.*: 192-3.

> seeing or appreciating of explanatory and other coherence-inducing relationships in a body of information.... When we think about knowledge, however, our focus turns elsewhere immediately.....We think about the possibility of fortuitousness, of accidentality, of being right but only by chance.[32]

He describes a case where one has understanding of a body of information without having knowledge of the propositions in that body precisely because one is the beneficiary of a kind of epistemic luck, which is incompatible with knowing. John has read loads about the history of the Comanche dominance of the southern plains of North America in the nineteenth century. The books John read are accurate on the matter, so by reading them he has thereby amassed an impressive understanding of that historical phenomenon. Now, suppose that nearly all the books on the topic that John *didn't* consult are inaccurate and wrong on the matter; John happened to pick up the history books that are accurate but his choice was random; he could easily have picked up the inaccurate ones: he was merely lucky in not doing so. Because his possessing correct information on the historical facts is the result of that luck John lacks knowledge.[33] Kvanvig contends that even though John lacks knowledge of the propositions in his body of information about the Comanche dominance he nevertheless *does* have understanding of that historical phenomenon. Understanding survives a kind of epistemic luck that prevents knowledge; thus understanding is not a species of knowledge.

The claim that the subject has understanding in a case like the above can be contested, but we will grant that claim and then concede that it follows from it that the achievement Kvanvig calls 'understanding' is not a species of knowledge. We will argue that even if this is correct, explaining the nature of understanding doesn't constitute a problem for a veritistic account of epistemic achievements, for what there is of epistemic value in understanding can still be explicated in veritistic terms.

First, let us try to get a better grip on what understanding exactly is. As already quoted Kvanvig claims that understanding "requires..... an internal *grasping* or *appreciation* of how the various elements in a body of information are related to each other in terms of explanatory, logical, probabilistic, and other kinds of

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[32] Kvanvig 2003: 198.
[33] The type of luck here is the same that prevents knowledge in a traditional fake-barn case, see Goldman 1976.

relations"[34], it "is the internal *seeing* or *appreciating* of explanatory and other coherence-inducing relationships in a body of information".[35] According to him someone achieves understanding when "the person has *seen* the right kinds of relationships among the various items of information grasped",[36] and he stresses the fact that the mere obtaining of such relations between items of information possessed by the subject is not enough for understanding, since it also requires that "the way in which all the information fits together must be part of what the person is *aware of*".[37] We must ask what this 'grasping', 'seeing', 'appreciating' or 'being aware of' the explanatory relations distinctive of understanding consist in. Since in everyday language the straightforward uses of such expressions is factive, we could hypothesize that such locutions are equivalent to or entail knowledge; thus appreciating how the elements in a body of information fit together and seeing the explanatory relations that link them would simply be *knowing* that such relations obtain. However, Kvanvig cannot assume this natural reading because it will make understanding *equivalent* to knowing that the relevant explanatory relations obtain, and what he attempts to show is precisely that understanding is not a species of knowledge. In Kvanvig's example which we described above, epistemic luck is fatal not only for knowledge of the individual propositions in one's body of information but also for knowledge of the explanatory relations that hold between them, because one learns about such relations through the *same source*, which is correct but one has been lucky in selecting it. In the example then, epistemic luck also prevents knowledge of the explanatory relations holding between the pieces of information one possesses without preventing one's understanding (or so Kvanvig claims). Therefore, understanding cannot consist of knowing that such relations obtain. Kvanvig cannot coherently adopt the natural reading of the locutions he uses to explain the nature of understanding.

In a less natural reading of the locutions they are *doxastic*, when one appreciates or grasps that p, one endorses in judgment or at least is disposed to judge that *p*. This reading makes states of appreciating and grasping that *p* species of believing that *p*; we will understand 'doxastic states' as belief states. Since all believing is propositional, on the present reading understanding would consist in

[34] Kvanvig 2003: 192-3.
[35] *Ibid.*: 198.
[36] *Ibid.*: 193.
[37] *Ibid.*: 202. All emphases in the quotations in this paragraph are mine.

believing certain complex propositional contents that articulate the explanatory relations that obtain between various items of information one possesses. Given our previous discussion we must accept that such beliefs need not be knowledge, yet not just any set of such beliefs will endow one with understanding. If one capriciously forms beliefs that happen to articulate correct explanatory relations between various facts about Comanche history that one has memorized, one does not thereby understand anything of Comanche history. The reason is *not* that the way one arrived at those beliefs is unreliable, that it could easily have lead one to falsehood or that it gives one true beliefs only by chance; all these are obstacles for knowing those propositions in the present case, but we have seen that one can lack that knowledge without lacking the understanding. The reason why one lacks understanding in the present case must be different. I submit that the reason is that one believes the propositions that articulate the explanatory relations despite one's having *reason to doubt* the trustworthiness of one's source, for one knows that capriciously stitching together various memorized facts is not a good way of coming to understand how those fact relate to each other. In such a case one believes in various explanatory relations for bad reasons; one fails to believe with adequate justification. This suggests that the doxastic states that articulate the explanatory relations must be adequately justified if they are going to yield understanding. But then understanding becomes a species of justified true belief and once the nature of understanding has come to this veritism can explain it as a special case of justified true belief. At this point, of course, there could be non-veritistic accounts of the justification component of that special case of justified true belief, as there can be non-veritistic accounts of justification in general, but the point that matters is that veritism *could* give an account of the doxastic states that on the present suggestion would constitute states of understanding. Understanding wouldn't be intractable for veritism. This would vindicate veritism against the charge that it *cannot* explain the nature of that epistemic goal called 'understanding'. That is probably why Kvanvig wishes to avoid interpreting the states of grasping and appreciating as doxastic as well. The basis of his rejection of the doxastic reading is that:

> ...when understanding is achieved, the object of understanding is an "informational chunk" rather than a number of single propositions..... Though one might know a number of propositions, even together with other propositions concerning the explanatory and other coherence-making

relationships between the information in question, this propositional knowledge would not constitute understanding... until a change in the object of such cognitive achievement occurs.[38]

Since the object of belief is also propositional, these remarks entail that states of appreciating explanatory relations between pieces of information cannot be a species of belief. But then Kvanvig leaves us completely in the dark as to how to interpret the involved states of appreciation. Given his argumentative goal (i.e. that understanding isn't a species of knowledge) he cannot coherently adopt the natural, factive, reading of the relevant states, but he doesn't want to adopt the doxastic reading either, which would anyway make the problem tractable for veritism. Kvanvig does not provide a clear characterisation of the allegedly *sui generis* states implicated in understanding which makes it problematic for veritism.[39]

Kvanvig is interested in making a different objection to veritism which shifts the focus of attention from the attitudinal nature of the states implicated in understanding to their value, and then claims that veritism cannot account for some distinctive ways in which understanding is epistemically valuable. He writes:

> ...to have mastered such explanatory relationships [constitutive of understanding] is not valuable only because it involves the finding of new truths but also because finding such relationships *organizes* and *systematizes* our thinking on a subject matter in a way beyond the mere addition of more true beliefs or even justified true beliefs.[40]

This is certainly true. The value of understanding a subject matter goes beyond the value of merely having unrelated true beliefs about that topic; in Kvanvig's view the excess of value consists in some sort of organization and systematization. We can grant this but then we have to ask if the nature of that value is *epistemic*. Some value attached to those virtues is undoubtedly epistemic. For example, inasmuch as they are conducive to truth-involving goals, like *prediction* and *explanation*, the value of

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[38] Kvanvig 2003: 192.

[39] Kvanvig's view becomes only more obscure given his final statement that "understanding.... is constituted by *subjectively justified true belief* across an appropriately individuated body of information that is systematized and organized in the process of achieving understanding" (2003: 202. My emphasis). He must not mean that the states of appreciating explanatory relations between pieces of information distinctive of understanding are justified true beliefs, for then the object of such states would be propositional, contrary to what he wishes to hold. He must rather mean that the pieces of information among which one appreciates certain explanatory relations when one understands are 'subjectively justified true beliefs', leaving still unexplained what the appreciation itself consists in.

[40] Kvanvig 2003: 202. My emphasis.

systematization and organization is epistemic. Here veritism can explain their value as epistemic in terms of their connection to the truth-involving goals that define successful prediction and explanation. The opponent to veritism can repeat his objection at this new level, alleging that prediction and explanation are not epistemically good *only* because of the truth-involving goals they contain. As a response to this we must note two points. First, whether or not this new complaint is correct, what matters at this stage is that veritism *can* give an explanation of the epistemic value held to be problematic for it (i.e. the value of systematization and organization) by identifying a connecting path between that value and some goals, like prediction and explanation, which are *at least* truth-involving. Secondly, if prediction and explanation are thought to have some epistemic value unaccountable in veritistic terms it is the burden of the objector to prove that that is so.

But as a matter of fact the opponent of veritism fails to discharge his burdens. For example, in explaining why the initially cited virtues of organization and systematization are problematic for veritism, Kvanvig mentions aspects in which they are valuable and which are unaccountable in veritistic terms:

> Such organization is *pragmatically useful* because it allows us to reason from one bit of information to other related information that is *useful as a basis for action*.... Moreover, such organized elements of thought provide intrinsically satisfying closure to the process of inquiry, yielding a *sense or feeling of completeness to our grasp* of a particular subject matter.[41]

It is true that understanding a subject matter is valuable for those reasons: for being pragmatically useful and for producing a satisfying feeling of completeness and achievement in our comprehension of things; but we have not been given a reason to conceptualise such value as epistemic; on the contrary, we have *prima facie* reason *not* to conceptualise it that way, for standard evaluative practice is already equipped with non-epistemic taxonomies to classify those types of value as, for example, *practically useful* and *psychologically pleasant*. Deviation from such classifications needs a rationale that Kvanvig does not provide. He fails to discharge the burden he holds in the presence of his criticism to veritism.

No cogent reason has emerged so far for thinking that either the nature of states of understanding or their epistemic value is problematic for veritism

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[41] Kvanvig 2003: 202. My emphasis.

I.4.2. Non-propositional vehicles and cognitive abilities

We suggested above that if states of understanding are interpreted as doxastic, veritism could treat them as a species of justified true belief. Some opponents of veritism challenge this attempt of making understanding tractable for veritism by arguing that states of understanding are *not necessarily* propositional, and hence *a fortiori* cannot be explained as a species of true belief, for all belief is propositional. Zagzebski, for example, believes that "understanding involves seeing how the parts of [a] body of knowledge fit together, where the fitting together is not itself propositional in form".[42] And in the same spirit W. Riggs claims that

> ...there are good reasons for doubting that understanding is always propositional. That is, the actual content of one's understanding might not be fully explicable in terms of beliefs plausibly attributable to the agent. This amounts to a denial that the phenomenon of understanding can be reduced simply to a collection of true beliefs.[43]

As Kvanvig, the kind of understanding they target is the appreciation of a pattern of relations, explanatory and otherwise, that hold within a whole. Riggs is explicit about this. He writes: "The kind of understanding I have in mind is the appreciation or grasp of order, pattern, and how things 'hang together'. Understanding has a multitude of appropriate objects, among them complicated machines, people, subject disciplines, mathematical proofs, and so on."[44] They do not deny that having understanding of, say, a subject discipline or a machine, involves having various propositional states, for example those beliefs that one would express in verbally demonstrating that one understands. What they deny is that understanding *consists of* or is *fully explicable* as having those propositional states. To support their claim they first discuss cases in which the appreciation or grasp of order is achieved through a non-propositional form that cannot be plausibly reduced to propositions believed by the person who gains understanding. Riggs mentions understanding gained through graphs and charts[45] and Zagzebski mentions the role of a metaphorical image:

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[42] Zagzebski 2001: 244.
[43] Riggs 2003: 218.
[44] *Ibid.*: 217.
[45] *Ibid.*: 218.

> The American mathematical geneticist, Sewall Wright, used the metaphor of a landscape with hills and valleys as a way of explaining adaptive genetic mechanisms. Selection drives populations up the slopes, he argued. Scientists who think that populations seek the closest lowest level have suggested turning the image upside down. Either way, people find that the image gives them an understanding they would not have had otherwise...[46]

The idea is that the understanding gained through the chart, the graph or the metaphorical image has epistemic value, yet it doesn't have propositional form and then cannot be equivalent to nor explicable as true beliefs attributable to the subjects. Thus, the epistemic value of those states of understanding cannot be explained as deriving from a fundamental relation they bear to truth, for they can bear no such relation to truth, which necessarily is propositional.

Section (I. 3) above explained that truth's role as the ultimate epistemic goal stems from its status as the representational goal of psychological systems capable of forming beliefs. This makes truth a standard of correctness for belief, i.e. we can evaluate beliefs with respect to whether they are true or not. Now, when the representational states are not propositional truth cannot be a standard of correctness for them because truth is not the type of representational success that conceptually corresponds to them. However, an analogous standard of correctness will apply to such representational states as long as they have the mind-to-world direction of fit. For example, a graph or a map can be more or less *accurate* and a metaphor can be more or less *misleading*. Accuracy and non-misleadingness are standards of correctness for those states; i.e. we can evaluate them with respect to those standards. From a veritistic point of view those standards play a role analogous to the role that the standard of truth plays with respect to the propositional representational states of belief: they are types of representational success that conceptually correspond to those states and in virtue of this status achievement of those types of representational success endows the corresponding states with epistemic value.

We can test by example this veritistic response to the above problem. Understanding through an accurate map how to get somewhere is a state with high epistemic marks precisely because based on an *accurate* representation of a geographical region. If the map had been inaccurate our understanding would have

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[46] Zagzebski 2001: 241-42.

been epistemically impoverished. Understanding through metaphors figures in scientific discovery, as in Faraday's use of lines of magnetized iron filings to reason about electric fields or as in Zagzebski's example of the geneticist; it also figures prominently in teaching, as when we are told to think of electricity as analogous to water flowing through pipes.[47] Understanding would not be gained in these instances if the metaphors used were misleading; understanding gained in those ways is epistemically good to the extent that the metaphors are *not misleading* and thus can be seen as promoting the acquisition and transmission of truths.

Riggs and Zagzebski might reply that the value of understanding gained through non-propositional vehicles or states exceeds that of merely fulfilling the standard of correctness corresponding apriori to the vehicle or state, and then that that excess of value would still be unaccountable in veritistic terms. A graph can *organise* at once information that in propositional form would be tedious and cumbersome to convey, in that way the graph can facilitate the *use* of that information. This is valuable and this value goes beyond simply representing data accurately. Similarly, a metaphorical image can be *inspiring* and *motivating* for a whole tradition of research. This is valuable and this value again goes beyond merely being non-misleading and promoting veridical representation. These values effectively exceed the value of understanding that veritism can account for but as pointed out above, standard practice gives us a *prima facie* reason *not* to conceptualise those dimensions of value as epistemic and the opponent of veritism does not provide a reason to defeat standard practice. Without extra-argument the fact that understanding is valuable in those ways poses no problem to veritism.

But Riggs and Zagzebski have a more powerful case to support their opposition to veritism. They highlight the fact that understanding is constitutively associated with a range of *abilities* which cannot be explained merely by the attribution of true beliefs or other representational states to the agent. What is held to be specifically problematic for veritism is not the nature of the states of understanding nor the vehicles through which we gain understanding, but some abilities associated with those. The subject may have many true beliefs, even

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[47] See Geritner & Jeziorski 1993 for discussion of different uses of metaphor in scientific research. As their discussion illustrates, the overall value of metaphorical thinking can be factored off into epistemic (i.e. truth-linked) value and other types of value that we conceptualise in different ways.

knowledge of facts about which she has understanding, but it is argued that her understanding is not reducible to her having those true beliefs or that knowledge, for possession of the abilities constitutively associated with understanding is *not equivalent* to any set of such states.[48] Let us look at some examples to flesh out the new objection. Riggs asks us to consider someone who understands cars. He believes that the understanding of that person is best "captured" by her abilities to predict and diagnose problems in a car from a meager base of clues. Alternatively, consider someone who understands a certain period in history. This person will display her understanding in the abilities of imagining and discussing what would have happened if certain things had been slightly different. Riggs thinks that this ability for counterfactual thought, as well as the abilities of the car expert for prediction and diagnosis, go beyond the mere grasp of various facts concerning those subject matters: "these sorts of abilities are indicative of a high degree of understanding, and often cannot be acquired or explained in terms of propositional knowledge".[49] The idea behind this reasoning is that understanding involves some sort of knowing how and that this cannot be reduced to attribution of propositional knowledge nor any other representational states. Zagzebski is more explicit on this point:

> ...one does not understand a part of a field without the ability to explain its place within a much larger theoretical framework, and one acquires the ability to do that by mastering a skill..... understanding is a state gained by learning an art or a skill, a *techne*. One gains understanding by *knowing how* to do something well, and this makes one a reliable person to consult in matters pertaining to the skill in question.[50]

The implicit claim here is *not* that knowing how does not bring with it a bunch of propositional knowledge; they acknowledge that it may and in fact typically does. The claim is rather that having that propositional knowledge doesn't bring by itself alone the relevant ability; one *can* have that propositional knowledge without having the ability. Whether this claim is correct or not is a matter of hot debate. But for the sake of argument we will assume that the claim is correct and argue that it poses no insurmountable obstacle to veritism.

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[48] The terminology of 'constitutive association', 'equivalence' and 'reducibility', is not the explicit terminology of Riggs nor Zagzebski. But I take it that it captures the spirit of their objection.
[49] Riggs 2003: 220.
[50] Zagzebski 2001: 241. Her emphasis.

The abilities that are thought to be constitutively associated with states of understanding are abilities to *predict, diagnose, imagine* and *explain*. The successful exercise of any of these abilities results in the canonical outcomes of such abilities, namely good predictions, diagnoses, counterfactual descriptions and explanations. We must ask, *good* with respect to what? The obvious answer is: "With respect to how things are, will be or would be". And this is just a notational variance of truth-talk. What makes a prediction epistemically good is (at least) that the likelihood of it turning out to be *true* is high, what makes a counterfactual description epistemically good is that the likelihood of its consequent being *true* is high on the hypothesis of its antecedent. We can conjecture that the outcomes of the abilities in question have epistemic value because of a relation they bear to truth. Now, since an ability that systematically fails to achieve its canonical outcome is thereby malfunctioning, i.e. is disvalued, it is reasonable to suppose that we attribute epistemic value to those abilities only insofar as they have outcomes that we deem as epistemically valuable; the abilities possess epistemic value because their outcomes do.

For the sake of argument we have conceded to the objector that the epistemic value of the abilities constitutively associated with states of understanding cannot be explained in terms of their being equivalent to or explicable as states of propositional knowledge, or other representational states, attributable to the subject of the abilities. But the epistemic value of such abilities can still be explained in veritistic terms as deriving from a relation that their canonical outcomes have with a representational goal.

This response to the apparent problem posed by the epistemic value of the abilities associated with states of understanding assumes that the epistemic value of the abilities is instrumental, that they have value in virtue of the value of their canonical consequences. The opponents of veritism might dispute this instrumentalist assumption. Some of them argue that one can bring about the outcomes without genuinely having the ability, but achieving the outcomes through the ability is epistemically more valuable than achieving them in some other way; therefore possessing the ability is valuable for more than delivering its canonical outcomes. The alleged extra-value stemming from possession of the ability consist in its making its outcomes *creditable to the agent*, or *attributable to her as her own accomplishment*, which is lacking when the outcomes are achieved other than by exercise of the genuine ability; call that extra-value *attributability value*. In (I. 5. 2)

below we suggests that attributability value is not *distinctively* epistemic and then its presence poses no explanatory demand on veritism. Therefore, the instrumentalist assumption implicit in the above veritistic response is not undermined by the fact that genuine exercises of cognitive abilities brings with them some (attributability) value, which is not exhausted by their instrumental relation with their canonical outcomes.

I. 5. Explanatory Deficits II? The Value of Knowing

A line of objection against veritism that came up in our previous discussion of the nature of understanding was that states of understanding possess some epistemic value which is held to be unaccountable within a veritistic framework. It was argued that one flaw in this objection is that those who pose it fail to provide a principled reason to suppose that the value held to be problematic for veritism is *epistemic* in nature, while we do have *prima facie* principled reason to suppose it is not. There is, however, a parallel objection to veritism which attempts to identify some problematic epistemic value in states of *knowing*. The problematic value at issue is that which makes knowing epistemically better than mere true believing. Since it is obvious that what makes knowing better than true believing is epistemic in nature, the kind of response used with respect to the value of understanding cannot apply here. The new challenge to veritism, based on the excess of value of knowledge over mere true belief, is an argument with the following form:

I.   According to Veritism the only ultimate epistemic goal/value is truth (Def. of Veritism)
II.   Knowledge is epistemically better than mere true belief.   (Obvious)
III. If truth is the only ultimate epistemic goal/value, knowledge is not epistemically better than mere true belief.
IV.   Truth is not the only ultimate epistemic goal/value. (From II, III)
V.   Veritism is false. (From IV,I)[51]

The problem of explaining the excess value of knowledge over mere true belief is called the 'value problem'. We'll call the argument I-V the "value argument". It

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[51] An underlying argument of this form is discussed in De Paul 2001, Kvanvig 2004, Percival 2003, Sosa 2003, Riggs 2002 and Zagzebski 2003b.

purports to establish veritism's inability to solve the value problem. We will argue that the value argument is unsound, for premise (III) is false; but first we'll expound the reasons why the proponents of the argument believe in premise (III).

I. 5. 1. The "Value Problem"

M. De Paul calls the idea that truth is the only epistemic good 'Value Monism' and takes it to be pretty obvious that if value monism is true then knowledge cannot be epistemically better than true belief:

> .... knowledge *cannot* be epistemically better than mere true belief IF true belief is the only epistemic good. The point seems so simple and clear that I'm not sure how to go about arguing for it, yet it does not seem to have been recognized.........a central, and I would think nonnegotiable, element of our concept of knowledge is that it is of great epistemic value, and, more specifically, that it is more valuable than mere true belief. But it simply cannot be if truth is the only epistemic good. When one has a true belief, one has already attained the only thing of epistemic value -one's belief is as epistemically good as beliefs can get. No matter what other characteristics one's true belief might have, these characteristics cannot add any additional epistemic value, for we are supposing that truth is the *only* epistemic good, and the belief in question is a belief that is true! The belief cannot be true two times or three times over; it is true and that is that.[52]

It is not plausible that anyone has ever held that truth is the only epistemic goal; veritistic philosophers normally allow for epistemic goods distinct from truth but believe that their epistemic value is to be explained by their connection with truth. In this sense they take truth to be the only *ultimate* epistemic goal, which is what minimal veritism asserts. In any case it is more fruitful to interpret De Paul as criticising minimal veritism; as we will see, his discussion squares well with this interpretation.

One natural reaction to the above quotation could be to suggest explaining the extra-value of knowledge as pertaining to the *way of attaining* the state of true belief rather than to the state itself. Reliability is necessary for knowledge, even if it is not a conjunct in a non-circular analysis of knowledge;[53] reliably acquired belief is

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[52] De Paul 2001: 175-176, his emphasis.
[53] See Williamson 2000: Ch. 1 & 4.

epistemically better than mere true belief; so why not say that the epistemic superiority of knowledge over mere true belief derives from its reliably component? De Paul considers this position but alleges that if we really adhere to minimal veritism then we would have to hold that reliability is epistemically good *merely* as a means to truth and therefore, he thinks, it could not add any value to a belief which is in fact true. He believes that in order for reliability to add epistemic value to true belief it would have to be epistemically valuable independently from any connection with truth, and that would amount to giving up minimal veritism:

> ...[If we accept that reliability is good merely as a means to truth] then one just cannot maintain that a justified true belief is better, in terms of the good of believing the truth, than a true belief plain and simple. To the extent that we really consider attaining the truth by reliable means to be better than attaining the truth by other means, we value forming beliefs reliably for its own sake, apart from any connection with the truth.[54]

He describes several analogies sharing the same basic structure, which he thinks bring out the obviousness of why reliability cannot be invoked by veritism to solve the value problem. Let's examine one of the analogies in detail. We value attaining a fortune, but *if* money is everything we care about, i.e. the only thing we value, it makes no sense to value more attaining a fortune honestly than dishonestly. As a matter of fact we value attaining the money honestly more than attaining it dishonestly, but De Paul thinks this is so only because in addition to valuing money we value honesty independently: "it makes sense to value attaining the goal in one way more than attaining it in another, but only because more than one value is in play".[55] Similarly, the thought is supposed to be that in order for it to make sense that reliably acquired true belief is epistemically superior to mere true belief, there must be a second value in place distinct from truth. We must note that the intended analogy exploits a crucial dissimilarity. The fact that we value earning money honestly more than earning money dishonestly explanatorily demands positing a value distinct from money, because we already acknowledge that honesty is valuable *independently* of money. But no analogous prior acknowledgment exists with respect to reliable methods of belief acquisition and truth, for we do not conceive of such methods as epistemically valuable independently of their being good routes to truth.

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[54] De Paul 2001: 179.
[55] *Ibidem.*

To say that a method of belief acquisition is reliable is to say that it is instrumentally good as a means of reaching true beliefs; truth is value, for that reason reliability is valuable; so it is not the case that reliability is valuable independently of truth. The analogy should not have the effect of pushing our intuitions where De Paul's already are.[56]

Zagzebski also thinks that if we endorse minimal veritism then we lack the resources to solve the value problem. She also sees as obviously incorrect the suggestion that the excess value of knowledge over true belief can be explained as deriving from the reliability of a source of true belief, which is valuable in turn only in virtue of its being a good route to truth. She accepts that the value of a reliable source derives from the value of truth but, as DePaul, she holds that then being the product of a reliable source cannot confer any *extra* value on a true belief that it produces:

> The good of the product makes the reliability of the source that produces it good, but the reliability of the source does not then give the product an additional boost of value...... being the product of a reliable faculty or agent does not add value to the product.[57]

She also thinks that an analogy can clearly bring out the wrongness of the view she is attacking: a reliable espresso maker is good because espresso is good, but being the product of a reliable espresso maker does not make a cup of espresso *any better* than it would be if it had been the product of an unreliable espresso maker; if the cup of espresso tastes good it makes no difference to its goodness if it's the product of a reliable or unreliable espresso maker. Similarly, we are supposed to conclude that if a belief is true, and truth is the only ultimate epistemic value, then it makes no difference that it is the product of a reliable or unreliable faculty. Having been reliably arrived at cannot help in explaining the epistemic superiority of knowing over merely truly believing, for reliable formation adds no value to true belief.

This analogy is also unsound. The analogy presents a case where there's one dimension of value of the product of a machine, i.e. its taste, which is not affected by the reliability of the machine. An epistemic case analogous to this presents no

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[56] In fact De Paul himself seems to acknowledge that behind his rejection of the view under discussion there are only his brute intuitions: "The suggestion that the combination of attaining a good (truth) and attaining it by way of something good only as a means to that good (justification) has more value than the good itself does not strike any intuitive cord with me" (De Paul 2001: 181).
[57] Zagzebski 2003b: 13.

problem for minimal veritism, for, as we have explained in (I.3), minimal veritism allows that there are dimensions of value of a true belief that are not affected by the truth-conducivity of its source. For all Zagzebski says the dimension of value of coffee that she chooses, i.e. its taste, could be analogous to any of the dimensions of value of true belief that veritism allows are not affected by truth-conducivity. Without further argument her analogy fails to illustrate the point that in the same way that the reliability of the machine does not improve the taste of the coffee, the truth-conducivity of its source does not improve the epistemic value of a true belief. If we want to asses whether and how the reliability of a machine affects the value of its outcomes it seems foolish to look at properties we antecedently know are not affected by reliability, like their taste; it seems more sensible to examine other properties.

The analogies used by the opponents of veritism to illustrate its alleged inability to solve the value problem fail. Their analogical reasoning leaves open whether premise (III) of the value argument is true or false. But in fact some of those philosophers seem to be more interested in presenting their own non-veritistic solutions to the value problem than in providing a sound argument that shows that veritism cannot solve it. That is the case of Zagzebski. Few philosophers have tried to respect veritism in attempting to solve the value problem; one of them is E. Sosa. Before we sketch a minimal veritistic solution to the problem we will examine and criticise Zagzebski's and Sosa's solutions; doing so will enable us to appreciate the kind of difficulties that the minimal veritistic solution we will sketch helps us to avoid.

I.5. 2. Shortcomings of non-minimal views

In Zagzebski's view the source of the value of knowledge over mere true belief lies in the value of the motives that cause those of an agent's cognitive performances that yield states of knowing:

> The properties of knowing that make it better than mere true believing are properties that it obtains from the agent in the same way good acts obtain evaluative properties from the agent. In particular, a belief can acquire value from its motive, in addition to the value it may have in being true..... love of

true belief is plausibly the primary motive underlying a wide range of intellectual virtues. If love of truth is a good motive, it would add value to the intellectual acts it motivates.[58]

She accepts that the motive of the love of truth is valuable partially because true belief is valuable. However, if that motive is going to play a substantive role in explaining the superiority in value of knowing over mere true belief, it has to be valuable other than just by being love *of true belief*, for otherwise her account would fall pray of the same explanatory deficiency that she thinks affects veritism. Zagzebski believes that the needed extra-value in the motive of love of true belief derives from "distinctively moral motives".[59] Let's look at a couple of ways in which according to her the value of the motive of love of truth derives from its connection with moral motives:

(1) When something of moral importance is at stake when we act, and that act depends on the truth of a particular belief, then it is *morally* important that that belief be true. Then, "the motive for true belief in such cases is motivated by the higher-order motive to be moral or live a good life".[60]

(2) True belief is typically a prerequisite for successful practical action; so, the motive to value truth is motivated by the motive to value those practical ends we pursue in acting, and this motive in turn is motivated by the *desire to have a good life*.

Such a hierarchy of motives attempts to explain (partially) the source of the *epistemic* value of a cognitive performance by tracing it back to a motive which possesses a kind of value conceptualised as *non-epistemic* even by Zagzebski herself:

> I propose that the higher-order motive to have a good life includes the motive to have certain other motives, including the motive to value truth in certain domains........ If knowledge is true belief credited to the agent because of its place in her motivational structure, it gets value not only from the truth motive but also from the higher-order motive that motivates the agent to value truth in some domain or on some occasion. *And that motive has nothing*

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[58] Zagzebski 2003b: 17-18.
[59] *Ibid.*: 18.
[60] *Ibid.*: 24.

to do with epistemic value in particular; it is a component of the motive to live a good life.[61]

We can concede that the hierarchy of motives displayed by Zagzebski constitutes a plausible explanation of *some* value of the cognitive performances at the end of the motivational chain. But the value in those performances that she aims to account for is what makes for the *epistemic* difference between the value of performances that result in knowing and the value of those that result in merely believing truly, and so her recognition that the value of the motives at the beginning of the motivational chain she displays is a *non-epistemic* value makes it hard to understand how her explanation can succeed. For, why should we suppose then that the value her explanation accounts for is the value that she aims to explain? We have reason to suppose otherwise, since the *kind* of value in her explanans admittedly mismatches the *kind* of value in her explanandum.

We can clearly appreciate here a clash between Zagzebski's explanation and standard evaluative practice. Ordinary practice classifies the motives that Zagzebski appeals to as deprived from epistemic import. It's easy to describe examples. One may desire to lead a good life and this desire may motivate one to pursue certain courses of action and value certain traits of character, for example to be generous and donate money to charities. This motive may in turn motivate one to learn the truth about certain subject matters, for example, whether some apparent charity representatives are honest. Now, imagine two scenarios. In the first one comes to believe that the representatives are honest out of gullibility and ignoring rather obvious clues to the contrary; in the second one comes to believe that they are not honest on the bases of a phone call one makes to confirm their identity. Standard practice classifies the belief in the first scenario as epistemically deficient and the belief in the second as epistemically good, even though the *motivational* chain leading to belief is identical in both. Therefore, standard practice treats the motives exhibited in those chains as epistemically irrelevant. The presence of those motives might add some value to the performances that they motivate, but such value isn't epistemic.

We must emphasise that in articulating this criticism we are not begging any question against Zagzebski. We are not presupposing a veritistic conception of

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[61] Zagzebski 2003b: 24, my emphasis.

epistemic evaluation and then pointing out that Zagzebski's explanation violates that conception. We are appealing to standard practice prior to giving any explanation of its structure and then pointing out that Zagzebski's explanation conflicts with the structure it should *prima facie* respect. Thus, the effect of standard evaluative practice here is to offer a *prima facie* reason against her explanation (which classifies certain motives as source of epistemic value) and to put the burden onto her to show that those motives do have epistemic import.[62] But she fails to discharge her burden, for as we've seen even she describes the relevant motives as devoid of epistemic import.

Let us now look at a type of (purportedly) *veritistic* solution to the value problem that has been developed by several virtue epistemologists. We will focus on the version of the solution advanced by Ernest Sosa.[63] The first step in Sosa's strategy is to distinguish two types of value: intrinsic and instrumental. Something has intrinsic value if its value doesn't depend on or derive from its relation to anything else valuable, whereas the instrumental value of an event derives from the fact that it brings about something else that is valuable. Sosa is particularly interested in a sub-type of instrumental value he calls 'praxical value', the sort of value that an action has *in virtue of* causing something valuable to happen:

> An agent may bring about an event E. The bringing about of E by A may then itself be assessed. This event, call it E', may not have any intrinsic value beyond the intrinsic value contained already in E, but it will have instrumental value proper to the special relation involved in E's happening because of E'. Call this special sort of instrumental value *praxical value*, the sort of instrumental value in actions of bringing about something valuable.[64]

Being a sub-type of instrumental value praxical value is derivative from some intrinsic value, that is to say, an event which possesses praxical value does so only because and to the extent that it brings about something which is intrinsically valuable. In Sosa's terminology, praxical value is "logically constituted by causation plus intrinsic value".[65]

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[62] We obtain this effect here by applying what we called the Principle of Authority of Standard Practice, see (I.3) above.

[63] See Greco 2003 and Riggs 2002 for other versions of the same type of view.

[64] Sosa 2003: 162.

[65] *Ibidem.*

Sosa would agree with De Paul and Zagzebski that if truth is the only intrinsic epistemic value, then there's no hope of explaining the superiority of knowledge over mere true belief in terms of some *excess of intrinsic* epistemic value possessed by the former over the later, for knowing and mere believing truly are *on a par* in point of intrinsic epistemic value. Yet, he would argue, there's a difference in praxical value between the two states. A state of mere believing truly might be caused in you by an external force or event, for example an evil scientist manipulating your brain. Even though that state is a state of yours it is not a state that you brought about through the exercise of what Sosa calls your 'excellences' or 'competencies; therefore such a state is attributable to you but only in a very weak sense, similar to our attribution of movements to a marionette when the puppeteer makes it dance. A state of believing truly of that sort possesses intrinsic epistemic value: because the belief is *true*, but it lacks praxical value: because it wasn't you who brought it about. By contrast, a state of knowing involves a state of believing truly attributable to the agent in the strong sense of being something that he accomplishes through the exercise of his competencies. In addition to the intrinsic value of true belief such a state possesses the praxical value attendant on its having been you who brought it about. Sosa's initial conjecture is that this praxical value accounts for the excess value of knowing over merely believing with truth:

> Consider ... a case where a true belief, a *true* believing is attributable to you as your doing. We may now say that, besides the epistemic good in that true belief, there is further the praxical good in your action of bringing it about. And this arguably involves your exercise of excellences constitutive of your cognitive character.
> That is a way in which truth can have a distinctively important and fundamental place in explaining epistemic normativity, compatibly with knowledge having epistemic worth over and above the worth of mere true belief. We can see the good that attaches to an epistemic action creditable to the agent, who brings about that good for himself, and is more than just the recipient of blind epistemic luck.[66]

A problem with this explanation is that the praxical value that purportedly accounts for the superiority of a state of knowing over one of mere true believing is a type of value of *events* or *actions*,[67] not of *states*. To make his explanation work Sosa would have to add the premise that the praxical value of the action that brings about the

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[66] Sosa 2003:173.
[67] See the quotation from Sosa at page 48 of this thesis.

state of knowing somehow gets transferred from the action to the state it produces. For the sake of argument let's suppose that such a premise is available to Sosa. He thinks that the explanation he has proposed does not fully resolve the value problem, his reason is that:

> ...this praxical value does not explain the fact that we would prefer a life of knowing, where we gain truth through our own intellectual performance, to a life where we are visited with just as much truth but through mere external agency.[68]

> Our preference is not just the presence of truth, then, however it may have arrived there. We prefer truth whose presence is the work of our intellect, truth that derives from our own virtuous performance. We do not want just truth that is given to us by happenstance, or by some alien agency, where we are given a belief that hits the mark of truth *not* through our own performance, not through any accomplishment creditable to us.[69]

Sosa's dissatisfaction with his initial solution to the value problem seems to be this: The praxical value of a true belief is grounded on its attributability to one as the result of the exercise of one's competencies, but Sosa seems to think that a true belief can be so rooted in one's competencies and still be true "by happenstance or some alien agency". Why does this show an inadequacy in his previous explanation in terms of praxical value? The phenomenon Sosa is envisaging is that one could end up *believing* a proposition which is true, but where the explanation of why one believes this truth (rather than some false alternative) doesn't mention the exercise of one's cognitive excellences. This will occur, for example, when a (mildly) Evil Demon changes the world to make some of one's beliefs come out true. In such a case one's believings are the result of exercising one's cognitive excellences, because the Demon didn't interfere with them; yet that virtuous exercise plays no role in explaining why one's believings are *true*. In Sosa's terminology this means that a true *belief* can be attributable to one, and so have praxical value, even if our believing being true is not the joint outcome of the way the world is and the exercise of our competencies alone. But clearly, he thinks, we value a true belief in which both the believing and its being true are attributable to one more than one of which

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[68] Sosa 2003:173.
[69] *Ibid.*: 174.

only the believing is attributable to us, and that's because the former true believing is knowledge while the latter is not. But then the value of knowledge over true belief cannot be accounted for only in terms of praxical value, for a true belief can have praxical value and yet still be epistemically less valuable than a genuine state of knowing in virtue of its being true not being attributable to the agent.

Sosa is convinced that the value attendant on a true belief when its being true and not only the believing is attributable to the agent cannot be praxical value and must be some *intrinsic* value:

> Truth-connected epistemology might grant the value of truth, of true believing, might grant its intrinsic value, while allowing also the praxical extrinsic value of one's attributably hitting the mark of truth. This praxical extrinsic value would reside in such attributable intellectual deeds. But in addition to the extrinsic praxical value, we seem plausibly committed to the *intrinsic* value of such intellectual deeds...... We want..... to attain truth by our own performance, which seems a reflectively defensible desire for a good preferable not just extrinsically but intrinsically. *What we prefer is the deed of true believing, where not only the believing but also its truth is attributable to the agent as his or her own doing.*[70]

For the sake of argument let us grant that we need to posit some intrinsic value as the value attendant on the attributability to the agent of the truth of his believing. This would mean that we need to posit some intrinsic epistemic value in addition to the praxical value of a true *believing* being attributable to the agent, in order to account for the epistemic superiority of knowing over mere true belief. But what could that *intrinsic* epistemic value be? Since the status of true belief as an intrinsic epistemic value is not challenged throughout Sosa's discussion (see the beginning of the last quotation), then Sosa's solution of the value problem involves positing two intrinsic epistemic goods: true belief and the good of having the truth of one's believing attributed to one. Since the latter good is *intrinsic* it cannot derive nor depend for its value on anything else we value, in particular, it cannot derive nor depend on the value of true belief. But this creates a problem for Sosa. Can we really make sense of the idea that "hitting the mark of truth as one's own deed" is something epistemically valuable *independently* of the value of truth? There's a sense in which *in general* it is a good thing to accomplish something through the exercise of one's own skill and competence, quite independently of *what* it is that one accomplishes. For example,

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[70] Sosa 2003: 174-175. His emphasis.

dropping nuclear bombs with precision and competence is a good that (obviously) doesn't derive from any value in what it brings about; its good is a type of intrinsic good, it is the good that attends to any success achieved through an agent's own skill. Maybe Sosa has this kind of good in mind as the supplementary intrinsic good he introduces to solve the value problem; if so his explanation is defective, for that kind of intrinsic good is not distinctively epistemic, as it is a good inherent to *any* success achieved through one's own competence. It may be present in the event of "hitting the mark of truth as one's own deed" but it would not add anything of distinctively *epistemic* value to it and therefore it could not play the role that Sosa needs it to play in his solution to the value problem.

I. 5. 3. A minimal veritistic solution

Minimal veritism holds that truth is the only ultimate epistemic goal and consequently that any property of cognitive performances that has epistemic value derives it from its relation to truth. Let's call a property of this sort, i.e. that is epistemically valuable only because of its relation to truth, a T-property. A minimal veritistic solution to the value problem must explain the epistemic superiority of knowing over mere true belief in terms of a T-property. As we saw, De Paul and Zagzebski think that a T-property cannot play such explanatory role, hence their belief that premise (III) of the value argument, i.e. that if truth is the only ultimate epistemic goal knowledge cannot be epistemically better than mere true belief, is true. The reason why they think that a T-property cannot play the explanatory role that veritism needs it to play is that they find it obvious that a T-property, like reliability, cannot confer *additional* value on a true belief precisely because it is conceived as epistemically valuable only as a means to truth. As discussed above the alleged obviousness here stems from ill-constructed analogies. Whether or not a T-property can play the intended explanatory role is not obvious, the remaining of this section argues that it can.

We will understand the T-property of reliability or truth-conducivity as the property of *being the outcome of a reliable process or method of belief formation*. In order to solve the value problem we need to explain how a true belief having such a property has more epistemic value than a mere true belief.

Reliability is a notion that can naturally be understood as supporting counterfactuals. We will work with the following understanding of reliability:

(RELIABILITY) One's true belief that p is the outcome of a reliable process or method M of belief formation if and only if, were p to hold in slightly different circumstances, if one were to use M to determine whether p one would still believe that p.[71]

Accordingly, one's true belief that p is the outcome of an unreliable process or method M of belief formation if and only if, were p to hold in slightly different circumstances, if one were to use M to determine whether p one would not believe that p. This means that, if one's true belief p has the T-property of reliability, one's true belief persist across a close range of possible circumstantial changes, it is *robust*; and if it lacks that T-property it does not persist even within that close range of possible circumstantial changes, it is *fragile*.

Intuitively, a robust true belief is epistemically better than its fragile counterpart. Consider the following scenarios.

First scenario: A couple visit a doctor to find out the gender of their future child through the technology of ultrasound. The couple comes to believe that their child will be a boy, which is true. Because their true believing is reliable if things had been slightly different, say if their appointment had been a different day, they would still have (correctly) believed that their child will be a boy.

Second scenario: The couple consult a charlatan to find out the gender of their child. The couple comes to believe that their child will be a boy, which is true. However, because their believing is unreliable, if things had been slightly different, say if they had consulted the charlatan a different day when he had the hunch that their child will be a girl, they would not have believed that their child will be a boy.

The couple's true belief is epistemically better in the first scenario than in the second because their true belief in the first scenario has *counterfactual properties* that it lacks in the second: *the former true belief would subsist in circumstances in which the latter true belief would not*, and this is a consequence of the former having the T-property of reliability, which the latter lacks.

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[71] Although (RELIABILITY) is related to an ordinary notion of reliability we don't pretend that it is an analysis of any ordinary notion.

De Paul and Zagzebski ignore that the T-property of reliability endows a true belief with counterfactual properties which enhance its epistemic value. They might still want to press and ask why should we suppose that any *counterfactual* properties of true belief *add* any epistemic value to the *actual* value of true belief? The kind of explanatory role that minimal veritism makes counterfactual properties play here is not peculiar to epistemic evaluation. Many kinds of items are *actually* valuable because of the counterfactual properties they have, and they are *more* valuable if they have them than if they don't. For example, a fire extinguisher is *actually* valuable not only because it works well against this fire, but because it would have worked well against other fires, and a fire extinguisher that works well against fires in different situations is *actually more valuable* than one that only works well against this fire. In using a counterfactual understanding of the T-property of reliability to solve the value problem minimal veritism is not exploiting an *ad hoc* or suspiciously uncommon explanatory role of counterfactual properties; on the contrary, it appeals to a pervasive metaphysical structure of value found not only in the epistemic domain.

There are other T-properties of belief that are defined in counterfactual terms and that have been discussed in the context of the value problem, most notably *truth-tracking* and *safety*.

(TRUTH-CONDUCIVITY) S's belief that p tracks the truth if and only if, if p were false S would not believe p, and if p were true S would believe p.

(SAFTY) S's belief that p is safely true if and only if, if S were to believe p, p would be true.

A true belief that tracks the truth or that is safely true is epistemically better than a mere true belief, for a true belief with any of those properties is *guaranteed to be true* in a close range of possible circumstances, whereas a true belief that lacks them might easily be false within that same range. Therefore, if we suppose that either truth-tracking or safety is necessary conditions for knowledge, they would appear to be T-properties candidates to solve the value problem.[72] However, that supposition

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[72] Nozick 1981 argues that truth-tracking is necessary for knowledge; Sosa 1999 argues that safety is. They do not discuss those properties in the context of the value problem.

has problematic consequences, the most important of which is that it would produce violations of the Closure Principle about knowledge. For truth-tracking and safety are *not* closed under known logical entailment, whereas there's a strong case for the view that knowledge is. Consider the following Closure Principle:

(CP) [If K(p) & K(p$\Rightarrow$ q)] $\Rightarrow$K (q)

One's belief that *p* might track the truth whereas one's belief that *q* might not. One's belief that one has hands tracks the truth, one knows that that belief entails that one is not a BIV, yet one's belief that one is not a BIV doesn't track the truth.

Similarly, one's belief that *p* might be safely true whereas one's belief that *q* might not. In a supermarket there are only red apples, half of them are now randomly replaced by green wax models of apples. One is looking at the only red apple to the right of the scale and is asked what it is. One believes that it is a red apple and this is a safely true belief, for if one were to believe *that* in slightly different circumstances it would still be true, for all *red* apples are real apples. One also knows that from the fact that the only red apple to the right of the scale is a red apple it follows that it is an apple, yet one's true belief that it is an apple is not safely true; for if one were to believe *that* in slightly different circumstances (say when the only object to the right of the scale is a green wax apple) it would have been false.

Violations of closure are problematic, a solution to the value problem should avoid accepting such violations, otherwise it will be exchanging one problem for another. Since the T-properties of truth-tracking and safety commit one to violations of closure we should reject them as candidates to solve the value problem, especially given that we have a better candidate.

The T-property of reliability or truth-conducivity used above does *not* produce violations of closure. One's true belief that *p* through *M* is reliable if and only if, were *p* to hold in slightly different circumstances, if one were to use *M* to determine whether *p* one would still believe *p*. When this is the case and one knows that *q* is entailed by *p*, one *ipso facto* reliably believes *q*, for deduction from truths is a reliable method of belief formation: if one were to use it in slightly different circumstances one would still believe *q*. Therefore, whenever one reliably believes a truth *p* and knows that *p* entails *q*, one also reliably believes *q*. The T-property of

reliability used to solve the value problem is not incompatible with closure, to this extent and in the present context it is preferable to truth-tracking and safety.[73]

The solution to the value problem defended here assumes that the T-property of reliability is necessary for knowledge and then explains that knowing is epistemically better than mere true belief in terms of the epistemic value contributed by reliability to states of knowing.[74] This is a minimal veritistic explanation because the counterfactual properties that define reliability are epistemically valuable only because of a connection to the ultimate epistemic goal of truth, i.e. because they amount to subsistence of *true* belief across different close possible circumstances. Unlike Zagzebski's solution, the present one doesn't posit sources of epistemic value that contravene the structure of standard evaluative practice; and unlike Sosa's it doesn't posit an intrinsic epistemic value distinct from truth which, because of its generic nature, cannot be seen to play the explanatory role demanded from it. The present solution sticks to the idea that truth is the only ultimate epistemic goal and that all epistemic value is to be explained in terms of a connection with that goal.

In this chapter we have articulated minimal veritism and argued that it does not succumb to some recent objections of its opponents. It seems to be deeply entrenched in a proper understanding of epistemic evaluation. But minimal veritism imposes severe constraints on the philosophical explanation of any epistemic good. Next chapter expounds the problematic consequences of those constraints upon the kind of philosophical explanation in question

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[73] See Kvanvig 2004: 205-216 for further discussion of truth-tracking and safety in the context of the value problem. He is sceptical that *any* T-property could be used to solve the value problem, but he does not consider the T-property of reliability utilized here.

[74] In assuming that reliability is necessary for knowledge, we are *not* assuming that it is part of an *analysis* of knowledge.

Chapter II

Circles

II. 1. Epistemic Principles and Truth-Conducive Constraints

The minimal veritism articulated in the previous chapter constitutes the essential commitments of a philosophical project that attempts to show that certain basic 'epistemic principles' are correct. Those principles have conditional form, in their antecedent they mention conditions sufficient for the epistemic good mentioned in their consequent. Here are some elementary and widely discussed exemplars of such principles:

> If S has a clear seeming memory that p and has no defeating reasons against believing that p, then S is justified in believing that p.

> If a person has a clear sensory impression that x *is* F (or of x's being F) and on that basis believes that x is F, then this belief is *prima facie* justified.[75]

> If one believes that p on the basis of its sensorily appearing to one that p, and one has no overriding reasons to the contrary, one is justified in believing that p.[76]

> Having a percept at time t with the content p is a defeasible reason for the cognizer to believe p-at-t.[77]

The last exemplar is not formulated in conditional form, and some other formulations in the literature aren't either, but it is obvious how they can be recast to fit the standard conditional model. We can present this model in schematic form thus:

> (Φ) If S is in mental states $\mu_0....\mu_n$ and S forms doxastic attitude δ on those basis, δ has epistemic quality ϵ for S.

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[75] Audi 1988: 308.

[76] Alston 1986: 12

[77] Pollock & Cruz 1999: 201.

Being in mental states $\mu_0....\mu_n$ engenders the epistemic quality ε for doxastic attitude δ of S. From the examples above we see that mental states that are deemed sufficient to engender epistemic qualities include states of 'being perceptually appeared that p' 'seeming to remember that p' and so on. In the literature we will be discussing the engendered epistemic quality is typically some form of *prima facie* justification and the doxastic attitude is belief. For simplicity we will omit the qualification *prima facie* most of the time.

When the antecedent of an epistemic principle mentions the *basing* of one's belief on the mental states there mentioned, the principle gives sufficient conditions for *being justified* in believing that p. When the principle does not mention that one bases one's belief on the mentioned mental states, the principle gives sufficient conditions for *having justification* for believing that p. The second type of principle defines an epistemic quality that can be true of one even if one doesn't believe that p, or believes it for bad reasons; in contrast the first type of principle defines a quality that is true of one only if one believes p on the right grounds. This difference corresponds to the distinction between what is sometimes called *doxastic justification* and *propositional justification*. For the sake of uniformity with the literature to be discussed we will focus on epistemic principles that specify conditions for *being justified* in believing p.

Epistemic principles, as we will understand them here, are not intended to be something like a *norm* that one needs to follow to attain a justified belief. This shows up in the fact that our schema (Φ) does not have an imperatival consequent; it doesn't say that given the conditions mentioned in the antecedent you ought to believe p. Maybe this kind of norms of belief fixation can be constructed from principles with (Φ) structure but it is important to emphasis that within the project we will be investigating epistemic principles will not be understood as norms or rules of belief fixation, but merely as generalizations of the conditions where an epistemic good is achieved. The explananda of that project are those generalizations, not any possible corresponding norms. This difference is important because the explanation of norms is burdened with issues that do not burden the explanation of generalizations. For example, concerning the explanation of the correctness of norms one of the immediate questions that arise is in what sense they can *guide* or *govern* belief fixation. No such question arises in explaining the correctness of

generalizations with (Φ) structure. On the prototypical case these generalizations state conditions for justification and the explanation of their correctness explains why such conditions are indeed sufficient for justification. This is an explanation of our justification. What we ought to do to achieve justified beliefs is a further question.

As the thematic unbalance of the above exemplars shows there is a biased preference in the literature for epistemic principles about perception. Since we want to study the project of a philosophical explication of epistemic principles as it has been in fact predominantly developed, we will also focus on principles about perception. We will not attempt to generalise the results we obtain with respect to this sub-class of epistemic principles to all of them, but our discussion will disclose some general problems that the philosophical project would face in other areas.

Conditional statements of the form (Φ) are not the only generalizations that philosophers call 'epistemic principles'. Some epistemic principles do not state conditions for the achievement of an epistemic good or quality but conditions for its successful *transmission*. For example, a principle about transmission of justification across entailment says that if one is justified in believing some premises and one competently deduces a proposition from them, one thereby *obtains* justification to believe that proposition. In symbols:

(TJ) If S $_{JB}[p_1....p_n]$, and S $_{CD}[(p_1....p_n)\Rightarrow q]$, then S $_{JB}[q]$.[78]

Some philosophers call the principles that conform to the (Φ) schema 'generating principles', because they state the conditions under which an epistemic good or quality is *generated*; whereas principles like (TJ) are called 'transmission principles' for the already observed reason.[79] The project we will be discussing arises with respect to generating epistemic principles only; therefore whenever we talk of

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[78] Where 'JB' stands for 'justification to believe' and 'CD' for 'competently deduces'. A transmission principle about deduction like (TJ) should not be mistaken for a closure principle about deduction. Unlike a transmission principle a closure principle does not say that one *gains* a justification through competent deduction, it only says that whenever one is justified in believing certain propositions one is also justified in believing their known entailments, without implying that the justification is *acquired* through the deduction. Thus a closure principle can hold in cases where a corresponding transmission principle fails. See Wright 2003: 57-58 and Hale 2000, for more on the difference between transmission and closure principles.

[79] The terminology of 'generating' and 'transmission' principles is used by Audi 1988; see also Boghossian 2001: 38.

epistemic principles, unless otherwise indicated, we will be referring to generating epistemic principles.

In the context of a veritistic understanding of epistemic goods and qualities there is a constraint on the adequacy of any epistemic principle. Since according to veritism all epistemic goods are such in virtue of a fundamental relation to truth, the claim that the transition form mental conditions $\mu_0....\mu_n$, mentioned in the antecedent of a principle, to belief is sufficient for an epistemic good carries the veritistic implication that the transition from $\mu_0....\mu_n$ to belief exemplifies a fundamental relation to truth. As pointed out in (I. 3) that fundamental relation is truth-conducivity. Given minimal veritism in order for an epistemic principle to be correct the transitions from the conditions mentioned in its antecedent to belief have to be truth-conducive, in order to be correct the principle has to fulfill a *truth-conducive constraint*. In our practice we tacitly assume that standard transitions from conditions mentioned in the antecedents of epistemic principles to belief are truth-conducive, and we take it that this is necessary for such transitions to be epistemically acceptable. In this sense our practice embodies tacit acceptance that epistemic principles are subject to truth-conducive constraints. If in constructing a philosophical explanation of epistemic principles we don't assume that they are subject to a truth-conducive constraint we would have to be some sort of error theorists with respect to that aspect of our practice, which takes them to fall under such constraints.

If epistemic principles are subject to truth-conducive constraints, then showing that an epistemic principle is correct involves showing that the principle satisfies a truth-conducive constraint. Different versions of this general conception of the philosophical explanation of epistemic principles is manifested in the literature. Some Rationalists want to explain the truth-conducivity of the relevant transitions purely in terms of the nature of their intentional contents[80] and some Naturalists believe that the explanation should only appeal to what we know about the evolution and functioning of the cognitive capacities that deliver the mental conditions involved in those transitions. Still others, from a less theoretically-loaded perspective, focus on the prospects of showing the truth-conducivity of the transitions through

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[80] For example, Peacocke 2004: Ch. 4-6.

more casual inductive means.[81] Whatever the specific direction the project takes, they all share the ambition of showing that the transitions mentioned in an epistemic principle meet a truth-conducive constraint. In the context of veritism the thought of providing a philosophical explanation of the facts underlying the correctness of epistemic principles, the facts that make the principles be correct ones, involves the task of showing that the targeted epistemic principles meet a truth-conducive constraint; nothing more than minimal veritistic commitments is necessary to motivate that task.

However, some veritistic philosophers report different motivations for embarking on the task. Audi and Chisholm, for example, say that their interest in pursuing the task is driven by the wish to refute a sceptic who argues that nobody's doxastic states instantiate the epistemic good mentioned in the consequent of a given epistemic principle.[82] The desired refutation of such a sceptic would proceed by establishing that the relevant epistemic principle EP_i meets a truth-conducive constraint and then using EP_i as the major premise in a Modus Ponens argument, which has as a minor premise a claim to the effect that an arbitrary subject S forms a belief on the basis of mental states of the kind mentioned in the antecedent of EP_i and as conclusion the claim that S's belief instantiate the epistemic quality denied by the sceptic. But it is not necessary to have the ambition of refuting scepticism in this manner to be committed to show that epistemic principles meet a truth-conducive constraint, for even in the absence of a sceptical doubt about the possibility of the relevant epistemic quality one would still face the demand to show truth-conducivity so long as one wants to explain the facts that account for the correctness of the principles and one understands this correctness within the framework of minimal veritism. Veritism entails that epistemic principles are correct only if transitions from their antecedent conditions to belief are truth-conducive, and thus issues the corresponding task for the theorist wishing to establish the facts of such correctness.

Some philosophers do not unnecessarily overload with an anti-sceptical aspiration the motivations for the task of explaining and establishing truth-conducivity, instead they find the very idea of motivating and pursuing that task as preposterous. Thomas Reid, for example, held that it is a 'first principle of common

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[81] For example, Alston 1986. Each of these approaches to the task will be amply discussed in due course.
[82] See Audi 1988 and 1993a, and Chisholm 1989: Ch. 1, 7.

sense' that 'the natural faculties by which we distinguish truth from error are not fallacious',[83] he thought this to be 'self-evident' and held that the 'things that are self-evident are the sole province of common sense'.[84] This means that for him it is 'self-evident' that standard epistemic principles fulfil a truth-conducive constraint, for the mental conditions mentioned in them are the outputs of the 'natural faculties' that Reid talks about. Given that it is obvious that he intends 'self-evident' to entail *known and not in need of inquiry*, he is effectively saying that through 'common sense' we know, without having to do any explaining or proving, that epistemic principles satisfy a truth-conducive constraint. Therefore, he would regard as ill-motivated the task of explaining and establishing what evidently is in no need of that. I think Reid and other philosophers inspired by him[85] overlook the real role that veritistic commitments play in motivating the task they want to dismiss and simultaneously overestimate the potential role of scepticism. The common sense philosopher thinks that only a ruthless sceptic would doubt and demand proof of the 'self-evidently' correct epistemic principles. He notes that opposing the idea that well-entrenched epistemic principles, i.e. principles that describe well-entrenched epistemic practice, are correct does not only appear to be false but absurd.[86] The common sense philosopher thinks one doesn't have to *argue against* the resulting absurdity, he doesn't take responding to such scepticism to be philosophically binding; therefore he concludes that the task of *arguing for* truth-conducivity in epistemic principles lacks cogent motivation. Even assuming that the envisaged sort of scepticism is absurd and that one is not bound to respond to absurd-sounding views, it still doesn't follow that the task of establishing truth-conducivity is ill-motivated. That's because the common sense dismissal of the task assumes that such motivation can *only* come from the ambition to refute a from of scepticism that contradicts well-entrenched practice. The common sense philosopher agrees with Audi and Chisholm in that this ambition is the driving force behind the task of establishing truth-conducivity, but contrary to them he takes this to be precisely the reason to dismiss the task. But as already explained above the veritistic motivation for that task is independent of that anti-sceptical ambition. Therefore, the commonsensical dismissal of scepticism, even if correct, has no bearing on the well-

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[83] Reid 1785: 630.
[84] *Ibid.*: 567.
[85] For example, Bergmann 2004: 722-726.
[86] Reid 1785: 606.

groundedness of the rationale for the task of establishing truth-conducivity in epistemic principles.[87]

Regardless of what the relative entrenchment of the epistemic principles is and whether or not one thinks a sceptical doubt needs to be addressed, there is a minimal rationale to establish truth-conducivity which derives from the simple structure of the veritistic commitments already expounded: Veritism entails a truth-conducive constraint on the correctness of epistemic principles, thus such principles correctly define our actual justification only if transitions from their antecedent conditions to belief are truth-conducive. In the context of veritism, in order to satisfy ourselves in showing that our acceptance of epistemic principles is justified we have to show that we are justified in taking it that they fulfil a truth-conducive constraint.

II. 2. Evidence for Truth-Conducivity and the Threat of Circularity

Given that truth-conducivity is necessary for the correctness of an epistemic principle the project we are examining needs an understanding of the property of truth-conducivity and of what can be evidence for it. In (I.5.3) we characterised a notion of reliability or truth-conducivity in counterfactual terms according to which:

> (RELIABILITY) One's true belief that p is the outcome of a reliable process or method M of belief formation if and only if, were p to hold in slightly different circumstances, if one were to use M to determine whether p one would still believe that p.

But a counterfactual understanding of truth-conducivity hasn't been the preferred one of the philosophers working within the project that occupies us; the majority of them assume a statistical notion of truth-conducivity according to which a way of belief formation W is truth-conducive if and only if on average it produces sufficiently more true than false beliefs. The counterfactual and the statistical notions are not equivalent. A way of belief formation W may have perfect record delivering true beliefs because it has always been exercised in artificially controlled circumstances;

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[87] In this interpretation of Reid he *dismisses* the task of establishing truth-conducivity in epistemic principles. On an alternative interpretation he does not dismiss the task but actually indicates a specific conception of how to carry it out successfully. See Van Cleve 2003: 50-52 for discussion of this interpretation of Reid.

yet it might be counterfactually very fragile, for in slightly different circumstances it would easily yield a false belief. Because of the non-equivalence of the two notions evidence for the statistical truth-conducivity of a way of belief formation does not necessarily count as evidence for its counterfactual truth-conducivity. Again, a very high ratio of positive trials in the performance of a way of belief formation doesn't establish that it would yield positive trials in a close range of different circumstances, if the averaged sample is insufficiently diverse. In order to make evidence for the statistical truth-conducivity of a way of belief formation count as evidence for its counterfactual truth-conducivity the former must be collected from a relevantly varied sample. Most philosophers who discuss how we can establish the truth-conducivity of a way of belief formation implicitly assume that the relevant evidence comes form a sufficiently rich sample. We will make the same assumption and then take statistical evidence to be evidence for the counterfactual property.[88]

Both notions of truth-conducivity apply primarily to cognitive capacities, what Goldman (1986) calls 'methods' and 'processes', ultimately leading to the formation of beliefs. Because the exercise of those capacities involves a transition to a belief, we will frequently call the cognitive capacities 'belief-sources' or 'ways of belief formation', and accordingly apply the term 'truth-conducivity' to belief-sources and to the transitions to belief that they involve. So, for instance, the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source will be treated as equivalent to the claim that transitions from perceptual states involved in forming perceptual belief are generally truth-conducive.

As already indicated we will focus our discussion on epistemic principles about perception. It will be helpful to have the basic specimen before us:

(EP) If on the basis of its perceptually appearing to one that p one believes that p, one is *prima facie* justified in believing that p.

How can it be shown that (EP) meets a truth-conducive constraint? The central and immediate problem for this task is that any evidence one can gather in support of the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source would seem to rely on perceptual evidence at some point or another, i.e. seems to rely on deliverances of the

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[88] Goldman 1979: 346, makes a different assumption with the same effect. He assumes that the observed frequency of true belief in a cognitive capacity will be approximately replicated both in the actual lung-run *and* in close counterfactual circumstances.

very same belief-source whose truth-conducivity one is attempting to establish. And this suggests that such evidence is bound to involve some sort of vicious circularity.

There are arguments for the truth-conducivity of perception in which the reliance on perception is obvious and simple: collecting a record of past performances of a perceptual system and checking perceptually that the outcomes of those performances have been veridical, is one of such simple arguments. Following W. Alston we'll refer to this type of arguments as 'simple track-record arguments', their standard structure is this:

(TRA):

1. At t_1, S_1 formed the perceptual belief that p_1, and p_1.
2. At t_2, S_2 formed the perceptual belief that p_2, and p_2.
   ....

(R) Therefore, sense perception is a reliable source of belief.[89]

But there can be more complex arguments to the same effect. For example, some theorists have argued that perceptual systems wouldn't exist now if they weren't generally reliable. Traits possessed by organisms in the present are to be explained in part by their having been selected for increasing the organism's fitness; representational systems, e.g. perceptual ones, contribute to fitness only if they reliably represent the organism's environment. Therefore, the fact that perceptual systems have been in fact selected is evidence that they are reliable. An 'evolutionary explanation' of this sort also relies on perception in supporting the claim that perception is reliable. The theory says that the prevalence of a trait within a group of organisms is to be explained (in part) by that trait's contributing to the biological fitness of organisms within the group. This theory has been arrived at by *observing* how changes of traits are correlated with survival success and by making hypothesis about those correlations.

There can be complex arguments for the truth-conducivity of perception which do not utilise evolutionary considerations but still rely on perceptual evidence. For example, the empirical study of perceptual systems identifies and describes the features of the human visual system that enable it to yield veridical representations in

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[89] Alston 1986: 9.

a normal environment; that involves a detailed physiological explanation of the functions of the different parts of the system, as it is now, and how their assemblage results in representing veridically some salient aspects of the environment. But the study of human vision involves experimental settings where *observable* results about, for example, the reactions of various cone and rod cells and neurons under controlled conditions are registered and compared. Therefore, the physiological explanation also relies in complex ways on perception in supporting the claim that perception is reliable. The dependence of both the evolutionary and the physiological evidence for the truth-conducivity of perception on perceptual appearings is much more mediated than the evidence of a simple track-record evidence, but the dependence is there nonetheless.

The attitude of philosophers that want to study the prospects of establishing that perception is a truth-conducive belief source has largely been to set the complex arguments on the side and focus entirely on the simple track-record ones.[90] This attitude might understandably awake some suspicion. The complex arguments seem clearly a better, more robust support for the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source, they give us some insight into the how and why of the reliability of perceptual systems which a simple track-record argument doesn't. To this extent the complex arguments seem to supply *much better reasons* than the simple ones. Why not focus then on the stronger rather than on the weaker candidate? The underlying justification for the choice of the weaker, simpler case seems to be that those philosophers assume that *if* the circularity involved disqualifies the simple arguments, it would also disqualify the complex ones. It is then reasonable to examine the disease in the simpler specimens since the result, given the previous conditional, can be safely generalised to the complex ones. Is the conditional statement on which this generalisation is based, justified? We will discuss this issue in (III.1.1). Before we need to get a better understanding of the kind of circularity that infects the simpler type of argument and determine in which way it is epistemically damaging for the project of explaining an epistemic principle about perception. Those are the tasks of the rest of this chapter.

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[90] Most of them do not even mention the complex arguments; see for example Alston 1986 and Van Cleve 2003. Alston 1989b and 1993a sympathetically discusses the value of the complex arguments, and thus departs from the assumption that if the simple type collapses, so does the complex type. See (III. 1.1) below for discussion of Alston's view on this matter.

Each of the premises of a track-record argument consists of a conjunction; the first conjunct ascribes the formation through perceptual means of a belief p to a subject S, the second asserts the content p of that belief. If the argument is run in the first-person then we will assume that the justification for the first conjunct of each premise is a piece of authoritative self-knowledge, if the argument is not run in the first-person then we will assume that the justification for the first conjunct is some kind of behavioural evidence of the subject of the ascription. On the first assumption the justification for the first conjunct is not essentially perceptual, on the second assumption it is; but regardless of whether the argument is run in the first-person or not the justification for the second conjunct of each premise is bound to be perceptual. It is the essentially perceptual nature of *this* justification that makes track-record arguments look somehow circular. We need an initial characterisation of this felt circularity.

The simple fact that seems to account for the impression that (TRA) is somehow circular is that the justification for its premises[91] depends on the actual truth-conducivity of the capacity which its conclusion affirms to be truth-conducive. This form of dependence of the justification for the premises of (TRA) on its conclusion is a joint consequence of the *basicness* of perception and of a *truth-conducive constraint* on perceptual justification. Say that a belief-source is basic if checking its truth-conducivity necessarily involves the use of that very same source. We can construct track-record arguments for *non*-basic belief-sources that do not exhibit the epistemic dependence exhibited by (TRA). For example, a track-record argument for the reliability of a newspaper need not use a newspaper to justify its premises. In contrast, a track-record argument for the reliability of perception necessarily justifies its premises on perception. But the basicness of perception is not enough to yield the epistemic dependence that we are attributing to (TRA); a truth-conducive constraint needs to be in place as well. For suppose there's no truth-conducive constraint on perceptual justification, then even if perception is necessarily used in justifying (TRA)'s premises it would not be the case that such justification depends specifically on what (TRA)'s conclusion asserts, i.e. the *truth-conducivity* of perception; for it could be argued that it depends on some other aspect of perception, e.g. its phenomenology. It is the basicness of perception together with

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[91] For brevity's sake and unless otherwise indicated, we will use 'the premises of (TRA)' for 'the second conjunct of each of the premises of (TRA)'.

a standing truth-conducive constraint on perceptual justification that makes (TRA) exhibit the suspicious epistemic dependence. We will work with the following formulation of that dependence:

>(DT) The justification for the premises of the argument depends on what its conclusion asserts, i.e. that perception is a truth-conducive belief source.

(DT) describes a specific way in which the justification for the premises of an argument may depend on its conclusion. It is natural to phrase an epistemic dependence of that sort by saying that the justification for the premises 'presupposes', 'relies on' or 'takes for granted' its conclusion. However, we will avoid this terminology because it encourages the idea that there is a doxastic attitude *mediating* the dependence in question, as if one could obtain perceptual justification for the premises only if one believed, and in that sense presupposed, the general claim that perception is reliable. But this is obviously incorrect, for even subjects that lack the conceptual sophistication to articulate and believe the proposition that perception is reliable can still have perceptually justified beliefs. Yet, some philosophers think that the relevant dependence of justification for premises on conclusion is indeed mediated by *some* form of doxastic attitude, more precisely by what they call an *entitlement* to some form of acceptance of the conclusion, so that one cannot have perceptual justification for the premises without having an entitlement to some form of acceptance of the conclusion. In (II.4) we discuss *this* form of dependence and whether it could be charged against track-record arguments. Here we only want to distinguish (DT) as a form of epistemic dependence of justification for premises on conclusion that is not mediated by *any* form of doxastic attitude. Because the terminology of *presupposing* and *assuming* carries doxastic suggestions we will instead use the term 'epistemic dependence', which is neutral between dependences that involve a doxastic component and those that don't. Whether an argument exhibits an epistemic dependence that involves a doxastic component or not is crucial for determining what kind of epistemic shortcoming afflicts the argument. It is therefore important to contrast (DT) with other possible epistemic dependences and their attendant epistemic shortcomings, that's the task of next section.

II. 3. Some Epistemic Dependences and Some Epistemic Vices

We have offered (DT) as the initial diagnosis of the type of epistemic dependence exhibited by (TRA):

> An argument exhibits (DT) if and only if the justification for its premises depends on what its conclusion asserts.

The notion of dependence used here is simply the notion of a necessary condition, so (DT) merely says that the truth of (TRA)'s conclusion is necessary for a subject's beliefs in their premises to be warranted. As already indicated, given a truth-conducive constraint for perceptual justification it is obvious that (TRA) exhibits (DT). The substantial question here is how vicious (DT) is for (TRA), i.e. what kind of epistemic shortcoming (DT) engenders, if any. Before addressing that question we will contrast (DT) with other forms of epistemic dependence and the shortcomings they engender, and discuss whether they can be charged against (TRA) as well. That will determine whether (TRA) is infected by any other forms of epistemic dependence beyond (DT).

An argument that exhibits (DT) will also exhibit a further type of dependence we will term (DD):

> An argument exhibits (DD) if and only if the justification for its premises depends on the absence of evidence against what its conclusion asserts.

If C is a necessary condition for having justification for p, a reason for thinking that C does not obtain will *ipso facto* be a reason that undermines the warranting force of the purported justification for p. This is to say that the evidence against C acts as an undermining defeater of the justification for believing p, in the sense that in the context of such evidence the purported justification does not in fact justify the belief that p. Clearly, (TRA) exhibits (DD). Suppose you have been running a track-record argument for your visual perception for the last three days, writing down in a notebook the results of various trials of you vision, which have been carried out in a variety of circumstances, etc. On the fourth day you are given strong evidence that for the last week you have been the subject of an experiment where an amnesic and hallucinogenic drug has been administered to you. That evidence certainly is

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evidence against the truth-conducive functioning of your visual system during the days you compile its track-record, and therefore it would undermine the justification you purported to have for the premises of the corresponding track-record argument, in the sense that in the context of such evidence the purported perceptual justification doesn't justify the premises of the track-record argument any more.

(DD) contrast sharply with a type of dependence we will term (DW):

> An argument exhibits (DW) if and only if the justification for its premises depends on having and antecedent and independent warrant for its conclusion.[92]

(DD) only implies that evidence *against* the conclusion C undermines the purported justification for the premises of the argument; (DW) says more, it says that having a *positive warrant* for C, independent of the argument that has C as its conclusion, is a necessary condition for having the purported justification for the premises of that argument. The demand for an independent warrant for C doesn't follow from the fact about the potential defeating effects of evidence against C captured in (DD). Of course, when an argument exhibits (DD) *and one happens to have evidence against its conclusion C* then, in order for one to restore the justificatory status of the purported justification for the premises of the argument one will need some evidence, independent of the argument, which defeats the evidence against C. But such restoring evidence need not constitute independent warrant *for C*. Consider this example. You have what you think is a proof of C. Then someone you take to be an expert tells you that he knows a counterexample to C; later on you find out that the informant is no expert at all, but a fantasist. That defeats the evidence against C constituted by the informant's testimony, but evidently it is not any sort of warrant *for C*! But even in circumstances in which one doesn't have evidence *against C* (DW) requires independent warrant for C as a necessary condition for the purported justification for the premises to have the status of justification.

In what follows we will distinguish the question whether an argument exhibits a given epistemic dependence from the question whether that dependence

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[92] Pryor 2004: 359- 362 discusses both (DD) and (DW).

engenders an epistemic vice, and what it is. One question is what kind of epistemic circularity we are dealing with, a further question is whether it is vicious and how.

(DT), (DD) and (DW) characterise dependences of the epistemic justification for the premises of an argument on its conclusion, in that sense they are different varieties of epistemic circularity. As characterised those *dependences* are not relative to discursive contexts or audiences, in the sense that whether an argument exhibits one of them is not meant to depend on features of the conversational contexts where the argument can be used. However, some philosophers think that the epistemic *vices* some of those dependences engender do depend on features of the conversational contexts where the arguments are used. For example, Bergmann (2004: 717-19) argues that in a context where the conclusion of a track-record argument is doubted the circularity exhibited by the argument, i.e. (DT), "is a bad thing"; in the sense that it prevents the argument from <u>conferring justification</u> on its conclusion[93] because the doubt acts as a defeater of any justification supplied by the belief-source mentioned in the conclusion. He takes as a further crippling effect of such context of doubt that the argument will fail to <u>convince doubters</u>, in the sense of moving them to rational conviction, of the relevant conclusion.[94] But he believes that in a context free of doubt about its conclusion the argument will not be afflicted by any of those disabilities. Bergmann ignores important questions about how those disabling vices, i.e. failure to rationally persuade an audience and failure to confer justification, in fact belong to different kinds and how the epistemic status of the background doubts determine the kind of vice afflicting the argument, but what we want to highlight at this stage is that he thinks that whether an argument that exhibits (DT) engenders an epistemic vice is a matter sensitive to the presence of background doubts in a given conversational context. Taken by itself the epistemic dependence is not judged to be harmful.

Very often the term 'question-begging' is used to refer to some of the vices engendered by epistemic dependences. Jackson (1987) for instance claims that an argument is question-begging if anyone who sanely doubted the conclusion would not regard the evidence implicitly offered for the premises as evidence, so that the justification for the premises would be compromised by doubting the conclusion and then the argument would fail to confer any justification for its conclusion. By

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[93] Bergmann 2004: 711.
[94] *Ibid.*: 721.

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contrast Walton (1994) takes question-beggingness to be a "pragmatic fallacy" in the sense that it consists of the failure to achieve the conversational purpose of convincing a targeted audience that p in a context where it is doubted that p.[95] The vice that Jackson singles out is a failure to confer justification whereas the vice Walton talks about is the failure to persuade an audience. As noted these are different kinds of vices and we will discuss their difference later in this chapter.[96] At this stage it is enough to realise that they constitute different ways in which an argument that exhibits a certain type of epistemic dependence can be 'question-begging'.

In such a usage an argument's being question-begging is some vice engendered by an epistemic dependence, not to the dependence itself, which may naturally be termed 'circularity', for in response to why an argument suffers from one of those vices one is prone to reply that it is circular in some way. Yet, the use of 'circular' with this sense in the present context would need to involve some stipulation, for some philosophers in fact use it to refer to some of the ways in which an argument can be question-begging, i.e. some of the vices that a certain epistemic dependence may engender relative to certain contexts, and not to the epistemic dependence itself. For example, discussing the inductive justification of induction P. Lipton writes:

> ...the notion of circularity is audience relative. The same argument may beg for one audience, yet be cogent for another. So while the inductive justification of induction has no force for an inductive sceptic, it may yet have some value for us.[97]

> Circularity is relative to audience, and the inductive justification of induction is circular for an audience of sceptics, yet not among those who already accept that induction is better than guessing.[98]

The epistemic dependence exhibited by an inductive argument for the reliability of inductive methods is neither (DT) nor (DW). But the dependence it exhibits can also be given a context-independent formulation. On the simplest phrasing, the dependence it exhibits is that the justification for the rule of inference used to reason

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[95] Walton 1994: 127.
[96] Bebee 2001: 356- 60 and Pryor 2004 recognise the difference between those kinds of vices; only Pryor distinguishes carefully between such vices and the epistemic dependences that engender them.
[97] Lipton 2004: 189.
[98] *Ibid.*: 191.

the conclusion from the premises depends on what the conclusion asserts.[99] So understood the epistemic dependence exhibited by the inductive 'justification' of induction is not relative to the doubts of an audience. What is relative to the doxastic background of such an audience is whether that circular argument fails to achieve any of the epistemic and dialectical goals mentioned above, i.e. whether it is question-begging in any of the ways we have mentioned. Maybe Lipton, and others, use 'circularity' to refer to question-begging vices, but then they need a different concept for the epistemic dependence whose presence (partially) explains such vices.

We will opt to avoid altogether the terminology of 'circularity' and 'question-begging'. We will continue to use 'epistemic dependence' for the various forms of dependence of the justification for premises on the conclusion, or dependence of the justification for accepting one of the inferential steps on the conclusion, and 'epistemic vice' for the various epistemic shortcomings that afflict an argument in virtue of its exhibiting an epistemic dependence. The epistemic vices engendered by an epistemic dependence may be related to dialectical vices of the sort mentioned above, but the two kinds of vices are distinct and need not go hand in hand.[100] As noted above some of those vices are produced relative to given backgrounds of doubt of targeted audiences, but some are non-relative to such backgrounds. For instance, the standard treatment of (DW) takes it to produce the single epistemic vice called 'transmission-failure', regardless of the context where a thinker uses the argument exhibiting (DW).

We have diagnosed (TRA) as exhibiting (DT); it also exhibits (DD). Does it also exhibit (DW)? We will argue that the best cases available for charging an argument with (DW) do not succeed, and so, in particular that there's no good reason to charge (TRA) with (DW). Before going into the arguments for the charge we will give the characterisation of the epistemic vice engendered by (DW).

Most philosophers who discuss (DW) agree that it engenders a vice fatal for an argument, for intuitively if one's justification for the premises depends on an antecedent warrant for the conclusion, then the argument is sterile as a way of

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[99] See Salmon 1957: 47 and Achinstein 1962: 140.
[100] Section (II.4.2) discusses the differences between such vices and how they are related to the doxastic background against which they are produced by an epistemic dependence.

gaining warrant for its conclusion.[101] Following the mainstream literature we will call the vice engendered by (DW) 'transmission-failure' and we will work with the following formulation of it:

> (TRANSMISSION-FAILURE): An inference or chain of inferences to C from premises $p_1...p_n$ fails to transmit justification to C for S if and only if S has justification for $p_1...p_n$ but S cannot acquire a warrant for C by competent reasoning from $p_1....p_n$ to C.

If an argument suffers from transmission-failure it is sterile vis-à-vis *gaining* warrant for its conclusion, which is compatible with one having *some* warrant for the conclusion, for it may accrue form a source different from the argument. This compatibility is essential for the formulation of the views to be discussed in the next section, which charge certain arguments with (DW), and hence transmission-failure, but at the same time affirm the possession of some warrant for their conclusions.

(DW) is assumed to be sufficient for transmission-failure. Our discussion will make the same assumption and enquire what the grounds are for attributing (DW), and hence transmission-failure, to particular arguments. The most elaborate accounts of the reasons for attributing (DW) are due to Crispin Wright and Martin Davies. Next section examines their reasons and argues that they are insufficient to justify the charge.

II. 4. (DW) and Transmission-Failure

II. 4. 1. Subjective Indiscriminability and Confusions of Epistemic Levels.

Recall what (DW) asserts:

> An argument exhibits (DW) if and only if the justification for its premises depends on having and antecedent and independent warrant for its conclusion.

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[101] See for example Alson 1986: 17, Davis 2003: 29, 35; Pryor 2004: 360, Wright 2003: 57.

Wright takes some specific arguments as his motivating cases for charging (DW). Here are a couple of them:

(ZEBRA)

(ZEBRA I)   That animal is a zebra.
(ZEBRA II) If that animal is a zebra, it is not a mule cleverly disguised to look like a zebra.
(ZEBRA III) That animal is not a mule cleverly disguised to look like a zebra.

(RED)

(RED I)   That wall is red
(RED II) If that wall is red, it is not white and illuminated by trick red light to make it appear red.
(RED III) That wall is not white and illuminated by trick red light to make it appears red.[102]

These arguments have been widely discussed in the contexts of apparent failures of epistemic closure principles. Wright and Davies think that the issue of failures of closure is independent of the issue of failures of transmission of warrant. They believe that even though (ZEBRA) and (RED) are no counterexamples to closure they are cases of transmission-failure.[103] In their discussion they set closure aside, so we will.

Wright's argument for charging (DW) against (ZEBRA) and (RED) runs as follows.[104] According to him, in order for one's perceptual evidence for the first premise of the arguments to be justification for it some conditions for the proper operation of the cognitive capacities that deliver that evidence must be satisfied; among such conditions there are the conditions for their reliable operation.[105] Let us call such conditions 'justification-enabling conditions'. The possible situations denied in the conclusions of (ZEBRA) and (RED), i.e. disguised mules and tricky lighting, are related in two interesting ways to the justification-enabling conditions

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[102] Wright 2003: 60-61
[103] See Wright: 2003: 57-58.
[104] As it will be clear from what follows Wright uses 'warrant' as the genus of which 'justification' and 'entitlement' are the sub-species. So when we talk about justification he talks about a special kind of warrant, keep this in mind in reading several of the quotations we take from Wright below. We stick to the term 'justification' because this is the term we use throughout the whole thesis.
[105] Wright 2003: 61.

for the first premise of those arguments; (i) they are situations *incompatible with the genuine possession* of justification for the first premise because they block the conditions for the reliable operation of the relevant cognitive capacities. Trivially, when one is deceived in the envisaged manners the capacities involved in the identification of animals through their appearance or in the simple recognition of an object's colour by casual observation are bound not to reliably deliver correct information.[106] And the possibilities are (ii) *subjectively indistinguishable* from those where the relevant cognitive capacities do operate reliably and one genuinely has justification for the first premise.[107]

Let us use the following conventions. 'p' will stand for the first *premise* of the arguments, 'H' for the envisaged deceptive *hypotheses* and 'C' for the negation of such hypothesis, which happens to be the *conclusions* of the arguments.

Wright thinks that from the fact that the envisaged possibilities have features (i) and (ii) it follows that by itself the evidence ordinarily taken to justify *p* strictly only justifies a tentative disjunction of the form: *p or H*. He seems to take it as obvious that features (i) and (ii) entail that only the reserved judgment is justified by one's ordinary evidence. He writes:

> The key question is what, in the circumstances, can justify me in accepting *p*? Should I just not reserve judgment and stay with the more tentative disjunction, either (I have warrant for) *p or H*? For it is all the same which alternative is true as far as what is subjectively apparent to me is concerned. The answer has to be, it would seem, that the more tentative claim would indeed be appropriate unless I am somehow *additionally* entitled to discount alternative *H*.[108]

And that's exactly what he thinks is needed in order to be justified in believing *p*. Wright is supposing that merely because a situation in which one genuinely has justification for *p* and a corresponding deceptive situation *H* in which one doesn't genuinely have justification for *p* would be indiscriminable for one, one's putative evidence never justifies *p* for one but only the disjunction *p or H*, unless one is independently warranted in ruling *H* out. But ruling out or discarding *H* is equivalent to denying that *H* is the case, and this is precisely what the conclusions of (RED) and (ZEBRA) do; so the requirement of being independently warranted in ruling *H* out in

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[106] Wright 2003 : 63 and 2002: 342.

[107] Wright 2002: 343 and 2003: 62.

[108] Wright 2003: 62. His emphasis. I've replaced 'p' for his 'A' and 'H' for his 'C'.

order to be justified in believing p is equivalent to the requirement of being independently warranted in believing the conclusion of those arguments in order to be justified in believing p.[109] Thus the charge of (DW) against (RED) and (ZEBRA) is established.

Clearly, the central contention in Wright's argument is that the subjective indiscriminability of situations, where we have perceptual justification for p with respect to other deceptive situations Hs, where we fail to have perceptual justification for p, requires that in order to have perceptual justification for p we be antecedently warranted in discarding those other uncongenial situations. How can Wright argue for this thesis?

Before tackling this question we have to make three clarifications. The first concerns the *kind of warrant* for the conclusion that Wright thinks is necessary for the justification of the premises; the second concerns the *kind of doxastic attitude* that the special kind of warrant attaches to; and the third concerns the *kind of propositions* that the special kind of doxastic attitude ranges over.

For Wright the needed independent warrant for the conclusion is *default* in the sense that it is "a warrant that does not need to be earned by investigation."[110] He calls this special kind of unearned warrant 'entitlement'.[111] The unearned nature of an entitlement to assume X may suggest that we should interpret it as *merely* lacking reasons to suppose *not-X*. Sometimes Wright himself suggests that reading, he says:

> ...*absent reason to suppose the contrary*, we may take it that we have a standing (though defeasible) entitlement to the suppositions that all is in order with... our vision... that appearances of objects around us are not systematically misleading. In general all non-inferential warrants are conferred subject to such background entitlements.[112]

But Wright's *entitlements* to assume X cannot consist merely in lacking reasons to suppose *not-X*, for then the claim that the justification for the premise depends on an antecedent entitlement to assume C would be tantamount to the claim that it depends

[109] Wright 2003: 62-63.
[110] *Ibid.*: 69.
[111] Other authors develop and use notions of entitlement that are related to but substantially differ from Wright's notion in various ways. Contrast for example with the notions of entitlement developed by Peacocke 2004: Ch. 3 and Burge 2004. The criticisms that follow are intended to apply only to Wright's notion and the use he makes of it.
[112] Wright 2003: 70.

on the absence of reasons to suppose *not-C*; and *this* epistemic dependence is (DD), not the intended (DW). And, as indicated in (II.3), (DW) is distinct from (DD).

Wright's default and apriori entitlement has to be something stronger, a positive epistemic right *over and above* the mere lack of reasons to suppose *not-X*. What could that be? He tries to convey the essence of his notion in this paragraph:

> Such an apriori presumption —or *entitlement* (now to propose a specialized use of this term) —may be counted as a subspecies of warrant. But it is conferred not by positive evidence for the proposition in question but by the operational necessity, so to speak, of proceeding on the basis of such so far untested assumptions if one is to proceed at all.[113]

According to Wright the desired entitlement to assume *p* is conferred on us by what he calls the 'operational necessity of proceeding on the basis of such so far untested assumptions if one is to proceed at all'. This means for him that engaging in any project or task that aims at gaining evidence requires us to leave at least the proposition concerning the general reliability of one's cognitive capacities outside the scope of that task, if the task is to be carried out at all. Wright is extracting an entitlement from a need. He says that we have this need:

> (N) To proceed in gathering evidence for certain propositions on untested assumption X if one is to proceed at all.

And he thinks that the mere fact that we have need (N) gives us the epistemic entitlement:

> (E) To assume that X is true, or to proceed as if X is the case.

Do we have a positive epistemic entitlement for (E), merely because we have a need like (N)? For the sake of argument let us assume that we do.[114] The question remains if it plays the epistemic role that Wright thinks it does: Is an entitlement of that sort necessary for the achievement of ordinary perceptual justification? Maybe we do have a default entitlement to assume the general reliability of our cognitive capacities,

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[113] Wright 2003: 68.
[114] Wright 2004a and 2004b address in some detail questions concerning the nature of entitlements and of the doxastic attitudes they attach to that his previous work had left unanswered. Wright's more recent views deserve separate scrutiny; we will discuss them in chapter IV, for the moment we will only be taking into account his pre-2004 views.

which goes over and above merely lacking reasons against that general reliability, and is grounded on a procedural need like (N). But granting this it still needs to be *argued* that our ordinary justification for the premises of the targeted arguments depends on that entitlement, for it is not obvious that it does. Firstly, the hypothesis that that justification depends merely on the reliable operation of the relevant cognitive capacities and the absence of reasons for supposing that such reliability is frustrated, is not just a rival to Wright's but one into which Wright himself sometimes slips (see below). And secondly, the fact that the entitlement in question is conferred by a *procedural* need suggests that its role might not be epistemic but rather prudential: it wouldn't condition any epistemic justification, even if it would condition the execution of activities wherein justification are obtained. It is not obvious that entitlements, as Wright understands them, play the role that he assigns to them; we need an argument that they do.

The second preliminary point of clarification concerns the kind of doxastic attitude that entitlements attach to. Wright talks about *assuming*, but this is not *believing*, for then his view would hyperintellectualise perceptual justification by making a condition for them that the individual is entitled to believe that certain facts concerning the reliability of his faculties obtain, a condition that could not be fulfilled by someone who lacks the concept 'reliability'. Wright's view would imply that only conceptually sophisticated subjects could have perceptual justification, which is extremely implausible. 'Assuming' has to mean something different that believing. Wright gives a clue on an alternative reading of 'assuming' when he explains that because of its unearned nature an entitlement is an "apriori presumption that the relevant defeaters do not obtain".[115] This suggests that he takes 'entitle to assume *p*' as quite close to 'entitled to ignore certain possibilities where *not-p*', where such *not-p* possibilities could potentially act as defeaters for some perceptual justification. So for example, being entitled to assume the conclusion of (ZEBRA) would be being entitled to ignore the possibility of disguised mules.[116] This reading avoids the charge of hyperintellectualisation, for conceptually unsophisticated

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[115] Wright 2003: 69.

[116] Compare with Davies' remark (2003: 28) on how to understand *his* notion of assumption:

> ...the notion of making an assumption should be construed in a thin way so as to include the case where it simply does not occur to a thinker to doubt that something is the case. Being epistemically entitled to make an assumption thus include being epistemically entitled to ignore, or not to bother about, certain possibilities.

subjects *a fortiori* ignore possibilities of error they cannot conceptualise. We will assume that Wright's notion of 'assuming' includes at least ignoring possibilities of error; none of our criticisms of Wright's view on the epistemic role of entitlements will depend on this assumption.

The third preliminary issue of clarification concerns the range of propositions which one may be entitled to assume. The fact that (ZEBRA) or (RED) exhibits (DW) is supposed to be a specific case of a more general phenomenon. According to Wright any process of enquiry or taking something as evidence in support of a proposition requires leaving some key propositions untested or outside the scope of that enquiry, for otherwise the process of enquiry could not be carried out at all; it would not be legitimate for us to take anything as evidence in support of any of the propositions we enquire about. Ordinary justification depends on our being entitled to assume such pivotal propositions; our entitlements attach to them. One problem in assessing Wright's view is that it isn't clear what falls within that category of special pivotal propositions. Initially Wright includes extremely general propositions to the effect that some overarching conditions for the reliable and proper operation of one's cognitive capacities and methods, like "There is an external world", "The Earth has a past of millions of years" and "My perceptual systems are generally reliable". In Wright's Wittgensteinian terminology our entitlements attach to that kind of "hinge proposition". For a moment let's accept that an entitlement to assume at least one hinge proposition is necessary for the justification for the first premises of (RED) and (ZEBRA); that would still fall short from his charge that those arguments exhibit (DW). For the conclusions of (RED) and (ZEBRA) are far too specific to count as hinge propositions. However, Wright thinks that other propositions that are more specific can and do play, relative to a given context, a similar role. He tells us for example that: "I have a similar entitlement, ceteris paribus, to assume the proper functioning of my perceptual apparatus *on a particular occasion...*"[117]Although the propositions indicated here are specific to a time and place, they are still distinct from the conclusions of (RED) and (ZEBRA), for these rule out *determinate* ways in which a perceptual capacity could fail to work properly or reliably, whereas the time-place specific proposition is not determinate in that way, for it rules out failure to work properly *tout court*. So, even if we accept that perceptual justification depends

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[117] Wright 2003: 68. My emphasis.

on an entitlement to assume the time-place specific proposition(s), that would fall short of the claim that (RED) and (ZEBRA) exhibit (DW).

One might think that the more specific hinge propositions entail, fixing the contexts, the conclusions of (RED) and (ZEBRA), for if a context-specific proposition rules out failure of reliability in general it rules out *any determinate* failure of reliability. Let us assume that the envisaged entailment holds. If this is going to be of use to Wright he would still have to show that 'entitled to assume _' is closed under entailment, for only if it is he could argue from these two facts:

(a) in order to obtain perceptual justification we need an entitlement to assume a context-specific proposition, and

(b) such propositions entail the conclusions of (RED) and (ZEBRA),

that in order to obtain perceptual justification for the premises one needs an entitlement to assume the conclusions of (RED) and (ZEBRA), i.e. that these arguments exhibit (DW).

Is 'entitled to assume _' closed under entailment? Suppose it is. It would then follow that on every occasion where we obtain an ordinary perceptual justification our doing so requires us to be entitled to assume a huge number of propositions which rule out a huge number of *highly determinate* ways in which the relevant perceptual capacity can fail to operate reliably, for such a huge number of propositions is entailed by any context-specific proposition of the envisaged sort. But it is exceedingly implausible that our achieving an ordinary perceptual justification requires entitlements for all those highly determinate propositions. There might be some plausibility in the idea that in treating a perceptual episode as evidence for p we must somehow assume the conducivity for this practice of some *general* and *indeterminate* facts about the world and us, but that does not confer any plausibility to the different thought that each time we so treat a perceptual episode we must assume many *highly determinate* things about the world and us. But if 'entitled to assume _' is not closed under entailment it is hard to see how Wright can accommodate his claim that particular arguments exhibit (DW) as a special case or as a consequence of the general phenomenon of dependence of ordinary justification on entitlements that he describes.

In setting up his case for the charge of (DW) Wright is initially interested in distinguishing two types of justification, which he calls 'inferential' and 'non-inferential'. The former consist of evidence E for p such that E licenses a defeasible inference to p only in the presence of some collateral information I. He gives as an example one's observation of a kettle brought to boil on a camping stove. He claims that such observations justify an inference to the proposition that the liquid inside is 100 Celsius only if one is assumes that the liquid is water and that the atmospheric pressure is around that of sea level. In contrast non-inferential justification do not consist of a piece of evidence that justifies a defeasible inference to p; rather they are acquired "directly, via the operation of some cognitive faculty -perception, or memory [etc.] -which we regard as directly responsive to the subject matter in question..."[118] The word 'directly' here is meant to exclude the involvement of a defeasible inference in the acquisition of the justification, but *not* the dependence of the justification on other warrants; for as it turns out Wright's treatment of non-inferential justification makes it dependent on an antecedent warrant (entitlement) for discarding uncongenial possibilities. This is exemplified in his treatment of (RED) and (ZEBRA), where the involved justification for the premises is viewed by Wright as non-inferential. So the difference between inferential and non-inferential justification that Wright recognizes is overshadowed by the deeper similarity that he thinks unifies the two types of justification. It is very telling, however, that when he intends to give explicit formulation to that similarity he ends up with something different. He writes:

> The unifying thought is that warrants -both inferential and non-inferential- are characteristically *conditional*: inferential empirical warrants are characteristically conditional on collateral information..... and non-inferential warrants, presumed acquired by the direct operation of some germane cognitive faculties, are conditional on such an operation genuinely taking place (contrast: the occurrence of some subjectively indistinguishable *ersatz*) and on the circumstances being conducive to the reliable operation of the faculties in question.[119]

But this unification is not the one Wright needs. Although he is saying here that both types of justification are conditional on *something else*, what they are conditional on

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[118] Wright 2003: 60.
[119] Wright 2002: 345. His emphasis.

in fact marks a sharp contrast, rather than unification, between them. Whereas inferential justification is conditional on *collateral information*, non-inferential justification is conditional on the *reliable operation* of the cognitive capacities that produces them. To get the unification he needs he should say that non-inferential justification is *also* conditional on some other warrants, for this is in fact his view: non-inferential justification is conditional on having an antecedent warrant to assume that the relevant cognitive capacities work reliably. In his view this warrant is an entitlement, which in virtue of its default nature differs significantly from evidence and collateral information; but its classification as *warrant* in claiming that non-inferential justification is conditional on it is essential for the charge of (DW) against particular arguments. To say that non-inferential justification is conditional merely on the reliable operation of relevant cognitive capacities, doesn't make them conditional on *any* warrant, and so the charge of (DW) against specific arguments will be waiting for an argument. In what follows we will see how Wright struggles and ultimately fails to work out his way to the charge of (DW) against particular arguments from the admitted fact that non-inferential justification are conditional on the reliable operation of relevant cognitive capacities.

We can now examine Wright's argumentation for his view about the epistemic role of entitlements; we will argue that it slips on one kind of structural fallacy where different epistemic levels are mixed up. We will now spot and describe that fallacy.

The question Wright needs to answer is why we should accept that the subjective indiscriminability of a situation, where we have perceptual justification for the first premise of (RED) or (ZEBRA), from other situations where we fail to have perceptual justification for such propositions, requires that in order to have perceptual justification for *p* we be antecedently entitled to assume that those uncongenial possibilities do not obtain. Wright answers this question by holding that without such antecedent entitlement our epistemic practice would be riddled with a pervasive fallacy. He writes:

> So long as it is granted that perception and delusion can be subjectively indistinguishable, there *is* a weaker claim which is justified whenever, as one would ordinarily suppose, the corresponding perceptual claim is justified, viz. precisely the disjunction:

> *Either* I am perceiving thus-and-such *or* I am in some kind of delusional state.
>
> ..... it is our practice to treat one in particular of the disjuncts as justified –the left-hand one- whenever the disjunction as a whole is justified and there is, merely, *no evidence for the other disjunct*! That's a manifest fallacy unless the case is one where we have a *standing reason* to regard the lack of any salient justification for a disjunct of the second type as reason to discount it.[120]

It is unclear what the fallacy is supposed to be. Whenever one has justification for believing p one has justification for p or q, regardless of considerations of the indiscriminability of q from p. Obviously, in insisting in treating p, and not merely its disjunction with anything else, as justified one is not guilty of any fallacy. Wright cannot be objecting to that simple logical point; he is rather objecting to our treating p as justified by experience that does not rule out or disconfirm an alternative q that conflicts with p but is subjectively indistinguishable from it. His point about this type of case is that if in the absence of evidence for q we insist in treating p, and not merely its disjunction with q, as justified we would be guilty of a fallacy unless we have reason to take 'there's no justification for q' as 'justification for *not-q*'. But this is so only on the assumption that we need a justification or reason for *not-q* in order to be justified by our experience to believe p; if we don't need that justification for *not-q* our taking our experience to justify p wouldn't be fallacious. So Wright's claim that our practice would be fallacious unless the role he assigns to entitlements is accepted already presupposes that we need such entitlements in order for our experience to justify p and not merely p or q. What Wright needs to argue for is his assumption that one's evidence on its own *only* justifies the tentative claim that p or q, and not p alone. If this assumption is correct, in order to get past the disjunction without fallacy one would indeed need a further reason to discount q, as Wright supposes. But he gives no reason for his needed assumption that one's evidence on its own *only* justifies the disjunction and not its first disjunct alone. Such assumption not only is not obvious but is incongruous with ordinary epistemic practice, for ordinarily we take perceptual evidence to justify the first disjunct and not merely the disjunction with its indiscriminable twin. Of course, this is the bit of our practice that Wright says is fallacious unless his view about the epistemic role of entitlements is

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[120] Wright 2002: 346. His emphases.

accepted; but it is precisely this claim of his that rests on the unwarranted assumption that our evidence on its own *only* warrants tentative disjunctions.

Nevertheless, for the sake of argument let us assume that an antecedent entitlement to discount the second disjunct is necessary for our perceptual evidence to genuinely justify the first disjunct alone. Surprisingly that still falls short of the claim that Wright needs to charge the arguments with (DW), namely, that an antecedent entitlement for their conclusions is necessary for having justification for the premises; for the premises of the arguments are propositions about the *perceptible environment* of a subject while the first disjunct is a proposition about a *subject's genuinely perceiving* his environment. For example, while the first disjunct is that: *I am perceiving thus-and-such*, the first premise of (RED) is: *That wall is red*. Even if it is correct that an antecedent entitlement to assume the reliability of perception is necessary to get past the disjunction and be justified in believing that I am genuinely perceiving that *p*, that leaves open whether that antecedent entitlement is *also* necessary for being justified in believing that *p*. For *I am genuinely perceiving that p* and *p* are distinct propositions and so one should not expect the conditions for being justified in believing the former to be the same as the conditions for being justified in believing the latter. A piece of evidence can justify belief in *p* but not belief in *I am genuinely perceiving that p*, for one might have not done anything to check that the evidence is a genuine perceptual episode. The conditions for being justified in believing that I am genuinely perceiving that *p* outbound the conditions for being justified in believing that *p*. Therefore, in implying that from the fact that one needs an antecedent entitlement to be justified in believing that one is genuinely perceiving that *p* it follows that one needs that entitlement to be justified in believing that *p*, it is Wright who looks to be at risk of falling into a fallacy. We can see more clearly what the fallacy is by comparing different formulations he makes of the charge of (DW), which he seems to take to be equivalent but which are not. For example, he writes:

> To recap. In no case can I *rationally claim warrants for the premises* of an argument unless I am entitled to take it that all the conditions necessary for the reliability of the cognitive functions involved in the acquisition of those warrants are met.[121]

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[121] Wright 2003: 75. My emphasis.

Here he is talking about the conditions for *rationally claiming that one possesses justification for p*,[122] and claims that among those conditions one must be entitled to take it that the relevant cognitive capacities are working reliably. But the role he assigns to entitlements is not one as a condition for *rationally claiming that one possesses justification for p*, but rather as a condition for *possessing justification for p*. This is explicit in the following passage:

> Since the *conditions for the possession of warrant* for a perceptual claim which apply in ordinary circumstances.... presuppose an entitlement to dismiss the skeptical possibility, there should be no question of a warrant provided under their auspices being transmissible to the denial that the skeptical possibility obtains.[123]

We have then two distinct claims, on the one hand that an antecedent entitlement is needed to *rationally claim that one possesses justification for p*, and on the other the claim that an antecedent entitlement is needed to *possess justification for p*. There might be some plausibility in the first claim, for it may be argued that in claiming that one possesses justification for p one somehow implies that the conditions for that possession are fulfilled, and so one is justified in claiming what one does only if one has an antecedent warrant for assuming that such conditions are indeed fulfilled. But from this it does not follow that the envisaged warrant (entitlement) is *also* needed for possessing the justification for *p*. For the conditions for rationally claiming that one possesses justification for *p* outbound the conditions for having a justification for *p*, a subject can fulfill the latter without fulfilling the former. Thus, if Wright is implicitly inferring that the antecedent entitlement is necessary for possessing justification for *p* from the claim that it is necessary for rationally claiming that one possesses justification for *p*, he is committing a special case of the fallacy: "*W* is

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[122] See also this passage:

> ...I must have some sort of appreciable entitlement to affirm *C* already, independent and prior to my recognition of its entailment by [the premises], if I am to *claim to be warranted* in accepting [*p*] in the first place. The inference from [the premises] to *C* is thus not at the service of cogently generating conviction that *C*, and my warrant does not transmit. (2002: 343. Emphasis moved). Compare with 2003: 63.

Although the words 'rationally' or 'justifiably' don't appear attached to 'claim to be warranted', it is obvious that here he is conceiving the antecedent entitlement as a condition for *rationally* claiming that, and not merely for uttering the words involved in the claim.

[123] Wright 2002: 345. Emphasis moved.

necessary to justifiably claim that one has justification for p, therefore W is necessary for having justification for p".

In his argumentation for a first-level dependence of justification for the premises of an argument on an antecedent entitlement for its conclusion Wright switches to a second-level dependence of justification to claim that one has justification for the premises of the argument on an antecedent entitlement for its conclusion. The first-level dependence is just (DW) and inferring it from the second-level dependence would be fallacious. At the beginning of our discussion we indicated that in line with the relevant literature we assume that (DW) is sufficient for transmission-failure. Could it be that the second-level dependence into which Wright slips is also sufficient for transmission-failure? If that were so Wright's failure to present a cogent case for charging the arguments with (DW) would be relatively inconsequential, for he could retreat to a charge of the second-level dependence which would engender the *same* epistemic vice.

Let us have a clear formulation of the second-level dependence that Wright ends up ascribing to the arguments, we will call it (DW2):

> An argument exhibits (DW2) if and only if having independent warrant for its conclusion is necessary to justifiably claim that one has justification for its premises.

Sometimes Wright writes as if (DW2) does engender transmission-failure. Thus he says:

> Very simply, a warrant, w, for a belief, p, *cannot transmit* to any of its consequences, C, if -in context- one would need an entitlement (earned or standing) to C in order to *defend the claim* that conditions for the acquisition of w were satisfied. That is the common pattern of all our examples.[124]

On a charitable interpretation we can take 'defending the claim that p' as implying that one has a justification for the claim that p. Then, Wright is effectively saying here that an independent entitlement for the conclusion of the argument is needed to justify the claim that one has justification for the premises, *and that this is sufficient for transmission-failure*; in short, he is saying that (DW2) suffices for transmission-

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[124] Wright 2002: 345. My emphases.

failure. Why should we accept this? Recall that the intuitive basis for the claim that (DW) suffices for transmission-failure is that when an argument exhibits (DW) the justification for its premises cannot become a warrant for the conclusion because the justification for the premises has been acquired only courtesy of an independent warrant for the conclusion. Nothing similar holds for the claim that (DW2) suffices for transmission-failure. When an argument exhibits (DW2) the independent warrant for the conclusion is at the service of a justification for the claim that one has justification for the premises, not at the service of having a justification for the premises. The independent warrant enables one to acquire a justification for the claim that one has a justification for the premises, not to acquire *that* justification for the premises. Then, whether or not that independent warrant obtains has, by itself, no implication on whether or not one has justification for the premises, and so if one does have justification for the premises and one reasons competently there's no reason to think that one will not acquire warrant for the conclusion. Intuitively, (DW2) does not suffice for transmission-failure.

Wright's attempts to support his charge of (DW) against the arguments he considers do not succeed. In arguing that an antecedent entitlement is needed to get past merely tentative disjunctions of the first premises of the arguments with deceptive states, he seems to infer fallaciously the claim that the arguments exhibit (DW), which concerns the conditions for having justification for the premises, from the claim that they exhibit (DW2), which concerns the conditions for having a justification for claiming that one has justification for the premises. He cannot retreat and claim that even if the arguments do not exhibit (DW), they do exhibit (DW2), for there's no intuitive basis for accepting that (DW2) is sufficient for transmission-failure. We've assumed that (DW) does indeed suffice for transmission-failure, but Wright fails to show that the arguments exhibit it; even if (DW2) is exhibited by the arguments, there's no reason to suppose that it produces transmission-failure. His attempts to justify charging the arguments with transmission-failure do not succeed.

(TRA) possesses the features that Wright exploits in his charge of (DW) against the arguments he discusses. First, the conclusion of (TRA) expresses a condition for the reliable operation of the cognitive capacities and thereby, given veritism, for the justification of the premises. Second, the situation in which (TRA)'s

conclusion is true, and thus one genuinely possesses justification for its premises, is subjectively indistinguishable from a perfectly deceptive situation which is nonetheless incompatible with the truth of (TRA)'s conclusion; and thus incompatible with one genuinely possessing justification for its premises. Given that (TRA) has the relevant features, a charge of (DW) exactly parallel to the one Wright makes against (ZEBRA) and (RED) is constructible. The claim would be that an antecedent entitlement to discount possibilities H, which are subjectively indistinguishable from but incompatible with the situation where perceptual capacities are reliable, is necessary for the justification for the premises. As before, the argument for this claim would trade on a confusion between conditions necessary for rationally claiming that one possesses justification for p and the conditions necessary for possessing a justification for p. The argument for the charge would then be fallacious. A retreat to (DW2) would be ineffectual here too, for with respect to (TRA) the hypothesis that (DW2) suffices for transmission-failure also lacks intuitive plausibility.

If Wright's charge is successful against the arguments he discusses it would be successful against (TRA), for the elements grounding the charge are present in both. We have argued that his charge against the arguments he discusses fails, therefore a hypothetical parallel charge against (TRA) would also fail.

II. 4. 2. The Effects of Doubting and Their Explanation

Let's move on to M. Davies' reasons for charging an argument with (DW). Davies is not very explicit about his reasons for charging an argument with (DW); so in his case we will have to do some digging to extract his reasons.

Like Wright, Davies also thinks that (DW) suffices for transmission-failure, and like him he also conceives the independent warrant on which the justification for the premises of the targeted arguments depends as a default entitlement.[125] He thinks that our ability to engage in 'epistemic projects' where we seek for and obtain evidence for certain propositions, depends on our being entitled to certain background assumptions. [126] Each 'epistemic project' may require different

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[125] Davis 2003: 28-29.
[126] On Davies' notion of 'assumption' see footnote 116 and the text it is attached to.

background assumption. To take an example we've been discussing, a background assumption for the project of determining the color of objects through casual observation is that our color vision's reliability is not frustrated in certain ways, for example by tricky lighting conditions. Our ability to obtain perceptual justification for propositions about the color of objects depends then on our being entitled to that background assumption.[127] Davies calls the justification which depends on such entitlement 'question-settling justifications'. Now, the conclusion of (RED) is precisely the claim that one of those backgrounds assumptions obtains, for this reason we cannot 'redeploy' the question-settling justifications, which we marshaled courtesy our entitlement to that assumption, as a question-settling justification to believe the assumption itself:

> ....because I am entitled to the background assumption, I do have an epistemically adequate question-settling justification for believing the premise.... But even given my appreciation of the entailment [from premises to conclusion], I cannot redeploy that justification for believing the premise as a question-settling justification for believing the conclusion.[128]

In other words, because the targeted argument exhibits (DW) the justification for its premises fails to transmit to its conclusion.

What reason does Davies offer to charge an argument with (DW)? Like Wright, Davies is more interested in spelling out the consequences of that charge rather than in *arguing* for it. That makes it hard to see if he is actually giving any reasons to support the charge. But I believe his views about the general conditions where transmission-failure occurs suggest that he assumes that doubting the conclusion of a putative case of transmission-failure has certain effects *because* the targeted argument exhibits (DW). We will discuss what those effects are and whether explaining them supports charging the arguments with (DW), as Davies seems to suppose.

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[127] Davies faces similar problems to the ones we described for Wright in specifying the range of propositions that one may be entitled to in their special sense. Does the practice of determining the colour of objects through casual observation require us to be entitled to assume anything as specific as that there's not tricky red lighting or merely that our colour vision is generally reliable? And if only the former, how to go from there to the demand for the more specific entitlement, as the (DW) charge implies?

[128] Davies 2003: 29-30, see also 35.

According to Davies transmission-failure is the solipsistic counterpart of the dialectical phenomenon of begging the question.[129] In a dialectical scenario:

> The speaker begs the question against the hearer if the hearer's doubt rationally requires him to adopt background assumptions relative to which the considerations that are supposed to support the speaker's premises no longer provide that support.[130]

For example, suppose that I try to convince you that the wall behind you is red by bringing you to see it with a naked eye. In Davies' view the method I'm suggesting will be effective in yielding justification and so in convincing you only given an entitlement to assume that our vision's reliability is not frustrated in certain ways. So, if you have a standing doubt that our vision could be operating unreliably in some of those ways your doubt would 'rationally require' you to abandon the assumption that is necessary to obtain perceptual justification in the present case; for you cannot rationally both doubt and assume that our vision's reliability is not frustrated in certain ways. By changing the background assumptions that you can and cannot make your doubt stops the method I suggest (i.e. casual observation) from delivering evidence that supports the claim that the wall is red. In these circumstances invoking the method to support the claim that the wall is red begs the question, in Davies sense.

In Davies' view transmission-failure is the analogue of that dialectical phenomenon within the thought of one single subject. It is hard to see how this can be the case. As Davies understands it, begging the question occurs when a standing doubt reshapes the set of assumptions a hearer is entitled to make; relative to the reshaped set his perceptual experiences don't provide him with justification to believe propositions about the color of objects, for the doubt has ruled out from that set an assumption which is a necessary condition for perceptual experiences to give any justification for such propositions. Therefore, an argument, whose premises are to be justified by perceptual experience, will not settle his doubt about whether the reliability of his visual perception is frustrated in certain ways, for his doubt rules out a necessary condition for his perceptual experience to give him any perceptual justification. The epistemic failure of a question-begging argument, as Davis understands it, is that *there's no justification* for the premises to be transmitted to its

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[129] Davies 2003: 36.

[130] *Ibid.*: 41. He adopts this conception of question beggingness as a dialectical phenomenon from Jackson 1987.

conclusion, or as he puts it, that "the considerations that are supposed to support the speaker's premises no longer provide that support".[131] But this is *not* the *kind* of epistemic vice labeled as 'transmission-failure'. Transmission-failure occurs when *one has justification* for the premises and one competently reasons to a conclusion, but one fails to thereby acquire warrant for the conclusion. This cannot be analogous to a case of question-begging, for in this there is a doubt that robs the hearer from his perceptual justification to believe the premises, and so *one has no* justification to be transmitted to the conclusion via competent reasoning.

After mentioning a case where there are 'question-settling justifications' for the premises of an argument but they fail to transmit to its conclusion, Davies says:

> The reason for this nontrasmission of question-settling warrant is that the thinker's operative considerations amount to epistemically adequate justifications for believing the premises only against the background of certain assumptions that the thinker is entitled to make.[132]

Given that one of such background assumptions is the conclusion of the argument itself, this is tantamount to say that the failure of transmission of justification is due to the argument exhibiting (DW). But then he goes on to say:

> ... a doubt about the truth of the conclusion would rationally require the thinker to adopt different background assumptions relative to which the operative considerations would no longer amount to epistemically adequate justifications for believing the premises. The proposal is that, in such a case, the thinker cannot consistently make use of the original background assumptions within the context of an epistemic project that begins with the thinker regarding the question of the truth of the conclusion as open.[133]

This might be true, but again it is a different phenomenon from transmission-failure. It might be true that a doubt about the truth of (RED)'s conclusion would *block our ability to obtain* perceptual justification for its first premise, and so within the 'epistemic project' where we are trying to settle that doubt we could not rationally rely on the background assumption that would otherwise enable us to obtain perceptual justification. But this is different from the case where we *do* have

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[131] Davies 2003: 41 .

[132] *Ibid.*: 42-43.

[133] *Ibid.*: 43.

justification for the premises of (RED) but we fail to obtain a warrant for its conclusion by reasoning from the premises.[134]

Nevertheless, there seems to be a connection between transmission-failure and question-beggingness, as Davis understands it. It seems that when there is a doubt about the conclusion of an argument that is a *putative* case of transmission-failure it becomes a case of begging the question. Such is the effect of doubting the conclusion of a putative case of transmission-failure. We can now ask if explaining this effect of doubting the conclusion of an argument requires us to charge it with (DW), as Davies seems to suppose.[135] Here, there really are two questions. First, whether doubting the conclusion of the relevant arguments can have the effects that Davies supposes, and secondly, whether explaining those effects requires charging the arguments with (DW).

Recall that the alleged effects of doubting the conclusions of the targeted arguments are that perceptual experiences *stop supplying justification* for the premises and that the argument is of no use to *convince* the doubter or to *rationally settle* his doubt. Can doubting the conclusion have these effects? This is a difficult question to answer because Davies does not seem to consider that doubts can themselves be justified or unjustified, and whether they are one or the other is crucial for assessing their epistemic effects. In order to answer our first question then we need first to distinguish the potential effects of doubts depending on their epistemic status. For this purpose we will use some recent work of J. Pryor's. He distinguishes one *being rational in believing* that p from one *having justification* to believe that p. One is rational in believing that p if "none of your other beliefs or doubts rationally oppose or rationally obstruct you from believing p".[136] A belief q *rationally opposes* another belief p if justification for q would be a reason against p; and a belief q *rationally obstructs* another belief p if justification for q would undermine your grounds for believing p. The point of defining these relations in the subjunctive mode ('would be') is to allow for them to hold even when one does *not* have justification to

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[134] Beebee 2001: 257 also notes that question-begging, as Davies understands it, is not the same phenomenon as transmission-failure.

[135] The two quotations from Davies at page 92, which split one single paragraph, suggest that this is how Davies views things. In the first one he says that the fact that an argument exhibits (DW) explains that it suffers from transmission-failure, since he assimilates transmission-failure to question-beggingness, the second quotation -which describes what happens when an argument begs the question- is meant to gloss over further facts that are also to be explained by the argument exhibiting (DW).

[136] Pryor 2004: 364.

believe *q*. So a belief *q* can rationally oppose or obstruct another belief *p* even if one lacks justification to believe *q*. If unjustified beliefs and doubts can rationally oppose or obstruct belief in *p* and thereby prevent one from being rational in believing *p*, then *being rational* is different from *having a justification*; since one's having a justification cannot be prevented by unjustified doubts one may have:

> A subject can *have some justification* to believe P, but be unable to *rationally* believe P on the basis of that justification, because of some (unjustified) beliefs and doubts he also has. Consider your belief that your color vision is defective. Suppose that this belief is unjustified (but you don't realize it). Because you don't have *justification* to doubt your color vision, I don't think the justification you get from your color experience will be *undermined.* You'll still *have justification* to believe the wall is red. But your actual doubt will *rationally obstruct* you from relying on your color experiences.[137]

Unjustified beliefs and doubts can prevent one from *being rational* in believing that *p*, but do not prevent one from *having justification* to believe that *p*; they do not have undermining effect upon whatever justification one has for believing *p*. But justified beliefs and doubts would prevent one not only from being rational in believing *p* but also from having a justification for *p*, for in such a case the justifications for the beliefs and doubts would act as *defeaters* of one's justification to believe *p*.

For our purposes it will be useful to bring in a further distinction that Pryor makes between *having justification to believe p* and having *a belief* that is justified. A condition for the later, but not for the former, is that one is rational in believing *p*, in the sense explained above:

> Suppose you believe P on the basis of what are in fact good reasons for believing P. But you also have doubts that rationally oppose P, or rationally obstruct you from believing P for the reasons you do. Those doubts will render your belief in P *irrational* even if they don't affect your justification *to* believe it. And if your belief in P *is* irrational, then it can't be a justified or well-founded belief. In this way, then, even unjustified doubts can affect what justified beliefs you're able to have.[138]

Since justified beliefs and doubts also make one irrational in believing *p*, it follows that both justified and unjustified beliefs and doubts prevent one from *being rational in believing p* and thereby from *being justified in believing p*; but only justified

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[137] Pryor 2004: 365.
[138] *Ibidem.*

beliefs and doubts prevent one from *having a justification* for *p*, because the justification for those beliefs and doubts would act as a defeater of one's justification for *p*.

With these distinctions in hand let's go back to our question. Can a doubt about the conclusion of a targeted argument have the effects that Davis assumes it has? We must note that the effects he points out are heterogeneous; on the one hand he says that the doubt prevents perceptual experiences from supplying *justification* for the premise of the argument; on the other that it renders the argument incapable from *rationally settling* the thinker's doubts. Now we can see that these are different *kinds* of effects that need not go hand-in-hand. If doubting the conclusion is a mere unjustified whim of the thinker then it would not be able to operate as a defeater for whatever justification his perceptual experiences may be giving him to believe the premise of the argument, there's no reason why we should suppose that such a doubt would prevent perceptual experiences from supplying any justification for the premise. Such unjustified doubt, however, could have the other type of effect that Davies mentions; it could rationally obstruct the thinker from believing the premise of the argument on the basis of his perceptual experiences and therefore impede him from using the argument to settle his doubt. Therefore, in the presence of (even an) unjustified doubt the argument would be unable to move him to rational conviction of its conclusion or to rationally settle his doubt. Unjustified doubts about the conclusion can have the second but not the first kind of effect that Davies describes.

Justified doubts, on the other hand, would not only rationally obstruct one from accepting the premise on the basis of one's perceptual experiences and in that way render the argument incapable of rationally settling one's doubt, but they would also act as defeaters of whatever justification one's perceptual experiences give one for believing the premise of the argument. Justified doubts about the conclusion of the argument can have the two types of effects that Davies describes.

Let's move now to our second question. Does explaining these effects of doubting the conclusion of one of the targeted arguments require charging them with (DW)?[139] We think the answer to this is negative. Consider first the effects of justified doubts. They prevent one's perceptual experiences from conferring

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[139] In the terminology of (II.3) those effects are different *vices* that infect an argument relative to a context of doubt. Those vices are what Davies calls question-beggingness. The question we will address now is whether explaining such question begging vices requires us to ascribe (DW) to the infected arguments.

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justification upon one's belief in the first premise because the doubt, or more precisely the justification for those doubts, acts as a defeater of whatever justification perceptual experiences may provide for believing the first premise. But this defeating power of justified doubts is sufficiently explained by supposing that the argument in question exhibits (DT). For if the truth of the conclusion is necessary for having justification for the premise of the argument then it is an elementary fact of epistemic defeat that evidence that undermines the conclusion, i.e. that justifies a doubt about it, is *ipso facto* a defeater for the justification for the premise of the argument. The effects of justified doubts about the conclusion can be explained without charging the argument with (DW).

The same holds for the shared effect of unjustified and justified doubts. An unjustified doubt could rationally obstruct one from believing the premise of the argument on the basis of one's perceptual experiences, and thereby render the argument incapable of moving one to rational conviction of its conclusion. This again can be explained by charging the argument with (DT). To say that an unjustified doubt rationally obstructs belief in the first premise on the basis of perceptual experience is to say that if the doubt *were* justified, its justification would undermine the perceptual grounds on the basis of which one believes the premise. As explained above, this undermining effect can be explained by ascribing (DT) to the argument; consequently the obstructing effect of unjustified doubts can also be explained by that ascription, since such effect is itself defined in terms of what the effects of the doubt *would be* were it justified. The effects of unjustified doubts about the conclusion can be explained without charging the argument with (DW).

Davies thinks that transmission-failure is the analogue within the thought of one single subject of the dialectical phenomenon of begging the question. Taken strictly this claim is false. Nevertheless, doubting the conclusion of a putative case of transmission-failure seems to render it into a case of begging the question, as Davies understands it. Since (DW) explains why an argument suffers from transmission-failure, Davies seems to suppose that (DW) is also required to explain the effects of doubting the argument's conclusion. It is not. Those effects are heterogeneous, they vary depending on the epistemic status of the doubts, but none of them requires charging the argument with (DW); they are sufficiently explained by the hypothesis that the arguments exhibit (DT). If Davies is putting forward the effects of doubting

the conclusions of the targeted arguments as evidence for thinking that they exhibit (DW), his evidence is insufficient to warrant his charge.

(TRA) possesses the features that make an argument susceptible of Davies' charge of (DW). Doubting (TRA)'s conclusion seems to render it into a case of begging the question, as Davies understands it. The doubts, even if unjustified, make (TRA) inefficient as a way of moving to rational conviction of the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source; if the doubts are justified they do not merely have that dialectical effect but also act as defeaters of whatever perceptual justification there might be for the premises of (TRA). But these kinds of effects of doubting (TRA)'s conclusion can be sufficiently explained by the hypothesis that it exhibits (DT), therefore explaining such effects does not warrant charging (TRA) with (DW).

If Davies' charge is successful against the arguments he discusses it would be successful against (TRA), for the elements grounding the charge are present in both. We have argued that his charge against the arguments he discusses fails, therefore a hypothetical parallel charge against (TRA) would also fail.

II. 5. (DT), Externalism and Internalism.

The previous section argued that the best available cases for charging (DW) against specific arguments fail to cogently argue for the charge. Then, we lack cogent reason to suppose that (TRA) exhibits (DW) and hence that it suffers from transmission-failure. This leaves us with the question whether there is any epistemic vice affecting (TRA) in virtue of the fact that it exhibits (DT). Recall (DT):

> An argument exhibits (DT) if and only if the justification for its premises depends on what its conclusion asserts.

If (TRA) does not suffer from transmission-failure, then it is difficult to see what *epistemic* vice could infect it in virtue of exhibiting (DT), for if one has justification for its premises and one reasons competently one obtains justification for its

conclusion; (TRA) would seem to be in good order vis-à-vis gaining justification for its conclusion. Indeed, some philosophers seem to think that the *only* way an epistemic dependence of premises on conclusion can make an argument suffer from an epistemic vice is by making it suffer from transmission-failure. Alston seems to suggest this when he writes:

> ...*the* crucial requirement for S's being justified by [the premises] in accepting [the conclusion] is that justificatory status be transferred from the belief in [the premises] to the belief in [the conclusion].......[140]

Epistemic dependence (DW) does interfere with that "crucial requirement", for it implies that justificatory status is not transferred from premises to conclusion. But (DT) does not interfere with the transmission of justification from premises to conclusion. It is true, as we have seen, that in the presence of a suitable background of doubt an argument that exhibits (DT) could indeed suffer from various vices, some epistemic and some merely dialectical; but (DT) *on its own* is insufficient to bring them about.

If (TRA) is in good order vis-à-vis gaining justification for its conclusion, could (DT) make it suffer from any epistemic vice? It has been suggested that (DT) by itself doesn't engender *any* epistemic vice, that an argument may exhibit it and be epistemically perfectly respectable. Here are some illustrations of the point:

(A)
(A0) Whoever believes he exists is justified in so believing.
(A1) I believe I exist.
(A2) So I'm justified in believing I exist.
(A3) So there are at least some cases of people having justification.[141]

(B)
(B0) I am conscious.
(B1) So somebody is conscious.[142]

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[140] Alston 1986: 17. My emphasis.
[141] Taken from Pryor 2004: 358-359, with a small modification on premise (A0).
[142] Davis 1998: 352.

(A) and (B) do exhibit (DT): one has justification for their premises only if what their conclusions assert is true, and (A) and (B) are epistemically in good order, for they are perfectly good ways to gain justification for their conclusions. We don't see how (DT) could interfere with obtaining justification for the conclusion of an argument that exhibits it.

Could then the veritistic philosopher safely conclude that (TRA) confers justification to believe its conclusion? That we have justification to believe that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source? No, for it is one thing to say that the conditions for (TRA) to confer justification are indeed fulfilled and a different, weaker thing to say that (DT) does not interfere with those conditions. Even if one knows that (DT) does not interfere with those conditions, it's still an open question whether the conditions are fulfilled. The problem we want to investigate concerns this latter question, whether the veritistic philosopher can know that (TRA) fulfils the conditions to confer justification on its conclusion. Section (II.6) argues that there's an obstacle for the possibility of answering this question satisfactorily. But in order to explain what that obstacle is we first need to have clear in focus what are the conditions that (TRA) has to fulfil in order to confer justification on its conclusion.

We'll call 'self-support argument' an argument, like (TRA), that relies on a given belief-source to show that it is truth-conducive. Veritism imposes restrictions on the conditions a self-support argument has to fulfil to confer justification on its conclusion, in particular it entails that the truth-conducivity of the belief-source mentioned in the conclusion is necessary for having justification for the premises. This is a consequence of a truth-conducive constraint on perceptual justification. But the presence of a truth-conducive constraint leaves open whether anything else is needed for the argument to confer justification. In our discussion of how one can answer the question whether (TRA) indeed satisfies the conditions to give justification for its conclusion we will divide up the possibilities concerning what those conditions could be according to the role that truth-conducivity can play in them. There are four mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive ways in which the truth-conducivity of a perceptual belief-source may be constitutively related to the justification for the beliefs it produces:

1. Truth-conducivity is necessary and sufficient for their *prima facie* justification

2. Truth-conducivity is necessary but insufficient for their *prima facie* justification

3. Truth-conducivity is unnecessary but sufficient for their *prima facie* justification

4. Truth-conducivity is unnecessary and insufficient for their *prima facie* justification

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Any proposal about the conditions for a self-support argument, like (TRA), to give justification for its conclusion will fall in one of these possibilities. We will enquire if answering the question whether (TRA) indeed satisfies the conditions for giving justification for its conclusion becomes more or less problematic depending on whether one conceives those conditions according to each of those abstract possibilities.

Option (1) corresponds to what we might call 'crude externalism', whereas options (2)-(4) are typically uphold as part of views we might call 'crude internalism'. Such crude positions allow for refinement, but the core of the refined positions would still be determined by the attitude taken towards the role that the truth-conducivity of *S*'s sources can play in the constitution of epistemic justification for *S*'s beliefs. This usage of the terms 'internalism' and 'externalism' may not correspond to some current in the literature, but in the next chapter we will see that so drawn the distinction usefully classifies important current positions according to the role they assign to the veritistic condition of truth-conducivity in the constitution of justification. We will now briefly illustrate the kind of position that typically corresponds to each of the options (1)-(4).

Crude externalism, option (1), regards truth-conducivity as necessary and sufficient for *prima facie* justification. A widely discussed feature of truth-conducivity as a condition deemed to be necessary and sufficient for *prima facie* justification is that the subject of the justification can fulfil it without knowing, or even believe, that he has fulfilled it. Conceptually undeveloped infants and unreflective subjects provide the clearest examples of how this is possible. A three year old child whose perceptual systems work in a perfectly reliable manner can fulfil the truth-conducivity condition for having *prima facie* justification for various perceptual beliefs, but he is incapable of knowing that those beliefs are the outcome of a truth-conducive belief-source simply because he lacks the concepts 'belief-source' and 'truth-conducive'. An unreflective adult under practical pressures could also fulfil the externalist condition for having justification for certain perceptual

beliefs, even though he doesn't do anything to check on the truth-conducivity of his perceptual sources and doesn't even devote a thought to the matter. Conceptually sophisticated and reflective individuals would be able to wonder about the truth-conducivity of their belief-sources and enquire on the matter, but of them it's still true that they can fulfil the truth-conducivity condition without knowing that they do, for they could not wonder, not enquire or not succeed in their enquiry. We could say that the truth-conducivity condition is one that can be fulfilled *blindly*, in the sense that one is able to fulfil it without knowing that one has. Crude externalism does not deny that the justified individual could come to know that the truth-conducivity condition obtains in a particular case; it only denies that knowing that the condition obtains is a condition for the subject to be justified.

Views can oppose crude externalism by denying the sufficiency, the necessity or both of a truth-conducivity condition for justification. These are the above possibilities (2), (3) and (4) respectively. Option (3), which denies the necessity but accepts the sufficiency of a truth-conducivity condition for justification, has no representatives in the literature; we will then leave it on the side. That leaves us with option (2), which accepts the necessity but denies the sufficiency of a truth-conducivity condition for justification, and option (4), which denies both the necessity and the sufficiency of a truth-conducivity condition. Because (2) and (4) coincide in denying the necessity of a truth-conducivity condition, when discussing option (4) we will concentrate on what is distinctive of it, i.e. its negation of the sufficiency of a truth-conducivity condition. In this way we are left with two broad types of views that oppose externalism: those that deny the *sufficiency* of a truth-conducivity condition for justification and those that deny its *necessity*. Views of the former kind deny the sufficiency of a truth-conducivity condition by imposing a further condition on justification under the form of a second-level epistemic requirement (in a sense to be explained below); views of the latter kind deny the necessity of a truth-conducivity condition and replace it by a condition which supervenes on the intrinsic constitution of the subject of the justification. A view that opposes crude externalism in either of these two ways will be labelled 'crude internalism'.

Forms of crude internalism that deny the necessity of a truth-conducivity condition for justification attempt to replace it with a type of condition which

allegedly supervenes on some aspect of the internal constitution of the justified individual, for example on those of his internal states to which he has a special kind of cognitive access.[143] A truth-conducivity condition does not supervene on the internal constitution of the justified individual. For example, in an unfavourable environment the truth-conducivity of a belief-source can vary without there being any change in the intrinsic constitution of the subject. We noted that a truth-conducivity condition can be blindly fulfilled, in the sense that one can fulfil it without knowing that one has. Some of the internal conditions that the present kind of internalism puts in place of truth-conducivity are thought to be different from it in this respect, for they are thought to be such that if one fulfils them then one knows one has or at least one is strongly positioned to know that one has. For example, if a condition necessary for one's having justification for p is that one is in states E_1, E_2 and E_3, which one has access to by introspection alone, then if one fulfils that condition one is in a position to know one does.[144] A complication arises from the fact that one can know by introspection alone that one is in states E_1, E_2, E_3 without knowing by introspection alone that being in those states constitutes the fulfilment of the condition necessary for justification, maybe because one lacks the relevant concepts to conceptualise one's introspected states in that way. When this is the case it would seem that one could fulfil the internalist condition without knowing that one has. The internalist could reply that by fulfilling the condition one knows that one has at least under *some* description, say as the condition *being in sates E_1, E_2, E_3*, even if not as *fulfilling the conditions necessary for justification*. This is still controversial. Timothy Williamson has recently argued that there aren't *any* non-trivial conditions whose occurrence puts one in a position to know that they occur, let alone imply that one actually knows that they occur.[145] According to Williamson even conditions such as *feeling cold* are such that one can be in them without being in a position to know that one is them. If his arguments are correct they would imply that the internalist conditions for justification can be fulfilled blindly, in the present terminology; in that respect they would not be different from the truth-conducivity condition that they aim to replace.

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[143] Internalist views of this sort are discussed in (III.1.2).
[144] This phrase assumes a natural reading of 'access' in which it entails *knowing*.
[145] Williamson 2000: Ch. 4.

Whether there's a contrast between the truth-conducivity condition and its internalist replacements in terms of one's being able to fulfil the former, but not the latter, blindly is not crucial for our purposes. The contrast that is crucial for us is uncontroversial. The externalist view constitutes a veritistic epistemology to the extent that it accepts a truth-conducive constraint on justification; the internalist who denies the necessity of a truth-conducivity condition for justification is effectively lifting any such constraint on justification; hence this form of internalism constitutes a non-veritistic epistemology. In (III.1) we examine whether non-veritistic approaches of this sort can help in overcoming the obstacle for the project of showing that we are justified in accepting epistemic principles that will be discussed in (II.6).

The other type of approach under the label 'crude internalist' does not deny the necessity but the sufficiency of truth-conducivity. Internalists of this sort argue that fulfilling a truth-conducivity condition is not enough by itself to make the individual justified; they argue that fulfilment of further conditions is also necessary. Those further conditions standardly consist of second-level epistemic states that have the fulfilment of a truth-conducivity condition as its object. An example of such a condition for having justification for p would be that one *knows* that one's belief in p is the outcome of a truth-conducive belief-source. This knowledge is knowledge about one's belief fulfilling a condition of *epistemic* significance, in that sense it's a second-level epistemic requirement.[146]

Among the internalists that deny the sufficiency of a truth-conducivity condition for justification, some do not couch the second-level requirement they want to impose in terms of knowledge but of some other positive epistemic status or quality. For instance, one such internalist could say that if the subject is to have justification for belief in p he needs to have a *justified* belief that his belief in p is the outcome of a truth-conducive belief-source. The fact that a second-level requirement in the style that these internalists seek to impose can be couched in terms of different positive epistemic qualities makes it hard to classify some views. For example, the Wright-Davies view discussed in (II. 4) above can be seen as imposing a second-level requirement on epistemic justification in terms of the positive epistemic quality

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[146] Internalist views of this sort are discussed in (III.2).

they call 'entitlement'. In their view in order for a subject to have perceptual justification for believing *p* it is not sufficient that his perceptual beliefs are the outcome of a truth-conducive belief-source, he also needs to be entitled to assume that his belief-source is truth-conducive. It is clear that for them this entitlement is a positive epistemic status and that what they mean by 'assuming' is some form of doxastic attitude. Thus his view imposes a second-level requirement on epistemic justification. However, the *default* nature of that entitlement contrasts with the prototypes of internalist second-level requirements we are considering here. For these typically are, to use Davies' terminology, cognitive *achievements*, i.e. something achieved through a piece of enquiry (even if it is as simple as introspecting one's own mental states) and not a default background presupposition of enquires.

But despite this difference the structural similarity between the Wright-Davies view and the sort of internalism under discussion is striking: both make perceptual justification depend on the fulfilment of a second-level epistemic requirement. In particular, both their view and its internalist relative have the effect of rendering arguments that typify self-support, like (TRA), cases of transmission-failure. For if in order to have justification for the premises of (TRA) one needs to know or have justification to believe that one's perceptual sources are truth-conducive, then one cannot *gain* justification for (TRA)'s conclusion by competently reasoning from its justified premises, for the justification for the premises is in place only if one *already* knows or has justification to believe (TRA)'s conclusion.

Given that the phenomenon of transmission-failure occurs when *there is* justification for the premises of the argument, the present kind of internalism has the effect of rendering (TRA) a case of transmission-failure only if the relevant second-level requirement it imposes on perceptual justification *is fulfilled*. But recent discussion of this type of internalism emphasises the difficulties in explaining how one could fulfil such a condition. If one needs to know or be justified in believing that one's perceptual systems are truth-conducive in order to get *any* perceptual justification through their exercise, and if one can investigate the truth-conducivity of one's perceptual systems only through their own exercise, how can one get started in getting the perceptual justification one needs to know or to be justified in believing that one's perceptual systems are truth-conducive? The internalist seems to be demanding to be already there in order to get there. It looks as if that internalist

condition cannot be fulfilled and that it then leads to a form of scepticism concerning perceptual justification and knowledge.[147] In fact, the Wright-Davies view can be seen as an improvement on the kind of internalism that appears to lead to such scepticism, for since the entitlement that Wright and Davies posit is a *default* position there's no question of how to *earn* it through a perceptual enquiry, and then no intuitive problem of needing it as a fulfilled condition in order to attempt to fulfil it. This is a substantial difference between the Wright-Davies view and the internalism that we are comparing it with.

The upshot of this comparison is that at best, i.e. assuming that the internalist second-level requirement can be fulfilled, the internalist view has the same effect upon self-support arguments, like (TRA), as the Wright-Davies view: it renders them cases of transmission-failure. And at worst, i.e. assuming that the second-level requirement cannot be fulfilled, the internalist view leads to wholesale scepticism. In any case the correctness of an internalist view of the sort in question has disastrous consequences for the validation of self-support arguments and so for the project of establishing epistemic principles which relies on them. Earlier we argued that Wright and Davies fail to soundly argue for the view about the dependence of ordinary justification on the fulfilment of their proposed second-level epistemic requirement. We will need to explore if their internalist relatives have better arguments for their own versions of that kind of view. If they do, the project we are examining will be doomed, for reasons different from the ones we elaborate in the next section. (III. 2) below examines the arguments those internalist offer for their view and how much they accomplish.

The previous paragraphs sketch very roughly the basis of a partition of types of views where we can locate possible proposals as to the conditions for a self-support argument to give justification for its conclusion. We have made the partition in terms of the attitude one can take towards the role that a veritistic condition of truth-conducivity can play in the constitution of justification. Crude externalism treats fulfilment of a truth-conducivity condition as necessary and sufficient for justification, crude internalism treats it either as unnecessary (and then replaces it for a surrogate that supervenes on the internal constitution of the subject) or as

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[147] See Van Cleve 2003 for discussion of what the problem exactly is concerning the fulfilment of the second-level internalist condition and of different ways the internalist could attempt to advert it.

insufficient (and then imposes a second-level epistemic requirement) for justification. As pointed out above the partition we have made does not match distinctions that go under the same name in the literature, yet as the next chapter manifest there is substantial extensional overlapping between our distinction and others. We underline that our rationale for drawing the distinction as we have is that it puts the emphasis on the role one assigns to a veritistic condition of truth-conducivity in the constitution of justification. This will allow us to appreciate to what extent the problem to be described in the next section confronting the philosophical project about establishing epistemic principles becomes more or less tractable depending on how one treats that veritistic condition for epistemic goods.

II. 6. The Conditional Position Problem.

We have three kinds of approaches to the epistemology of justification in terms of how a veritistic condition of truth-conducivity is treated. The options are exhaustive: any epistemology of justification will either treat it as necessary and sufficient or as at least unnecessary or as at least insufficient. We will discuss how each approach fares in dealing with arguments that involve self-support, like (TRA), and the project they serve. We will begin with the externalist approach.

Let us recall the basic epistemic principle about perception:

> (EP) If on the basis of its perceptually appearing to one that p one believes that p, one is *prima facie* justified in believing that p.

As explained in (II.1), the explanation of the justification defined by this principle requires showing that believing on the basis of perceptual conditions mentioned in the antecedent satisfy a truth-conducive constraint. Because showing that p entails at the very least be justified in claiming that p, in his explanatory task the veritistic philosopher seeks to be justified in claiming that

> (P) *perception is a truth-conducive belief-source.*

(P) is the explanans in the veritistic explanation of the correctness of (EP). The problem we want to consider emerges when one tries to answer the question whether one is justified in claiming (P). There is a simple reason why the veritistic philosopher must answer this question. He believes himself to be in possession of an explanation of why one is justified in forming beliefs on the basis of perception, i.e. an explanation of why (EP) is correct. The explanation he believes himself in possession of says that one is justified in forming beliefs on the basis of perception because perception is a truth-conducive belief-source, i.e. because (P). But a theorist cannot remain neutral regarding whether he is justified in the explanation he puts forward, for if he is putting it forward as an explanation at all he is taking it to be justified. In particular, the veritistic philosopher cannot remain neutral as to whether he is justified in claiming (P), for if he is putting it forward as an explanation of why one is justified in forming beliefs on the basis of perception, he is taking his believing (P) to be justified. So, he believes that

(WP) *he is justified in claiming (P).*

The veritistic philosopher is committed to believing (WP) as a particular case of a general commitment any theorist has of regarding his explanations as justified or supported by reasons. No theorist can remain neutral or agnostic as to the epistemic standing of his explanations, for it is self-defeating to affirm that the explanation of an actual phenomenon X is that W, and then add that one doesn't know whether one is justified in claiming that W. In particular, it is self-defeating to claim that the explanation of our actual perceptual justification is (P), and then add that one doesn't know whether one is justified in claiming (P). The veritistic philosopher does believe (WP), for he believes that (TRA) gives him justified for (P). The question is whether he knows that this is so.

How can the veritistic philosopher know (WP), i.e. that his explanation of our perceptual justification is justified? Given that the source of his justification for (P) is (TRA), the question whether he knows he's got justification for (P) is equivalent to the question whether he knows that his method, i.e. (TRA), gives him justification to believe (P). Because (TRA) does not exhibit (DW),[148] it will give one justification for its conclusion if two conditions are met: first, that one is justified in believing its

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[148] As argued on (II. 4) above.

premises and second, that one reasons competently to its conclusion. In order to know that (TRA) gives one justification to believe (P) one must know that one fulfils these two conditions. We can assume that one reasons competently from (TRA)'s premises to its conclusion, and let's abbreviate this as '(TRA) COMP'. We can assume that one knows (TRA) COMP. This leaves us with the first condition. Given externalism, in order for one to be justified in believing (TRA)'s premises it is necessary and sufficient that (P). Therefore, given externalism, (P) is necessary and sufficient for (TRA) COMP to give one justification to believe (P). And then, given externalism,

if (P) then (TRA)COMP gives one justification to believe (P).

So, given that one is aware of one's endorsement of externalism one knows that in order to know that (TRA) COMP gives one justification for (P) it is sufficient for one to know (P). Note that there's no route to knowledge that (TRA) COMP gives one justification to believe (P) that eschews (P), for externalism entails that (P) is also *necessary* for (TRA)COMP to give one justification to believe (P). So all routes to that knowledge have to go through knowledge of (P).

Does one know, or at least is justified in believing, (P)? One is if one reasons competently from (TRA)'s premises and one is justified in believing those premises, for (P) is the conclusion of (TRA); but given externalism one is justified in believing the premises of (TRA) *if* (P), which makes the needed justification again conditional on (P). Because any evidence one can appeal to in order to try to, as it were, cancel out the above conditionalisation is bound to be perceptual, we will always find that the evidence does not advance one's position beyond the merely conditional one that one began with: *if (P) then (TRA)COMP gives one justification to believe (P).* The efficacy of one's methods to yield knowledge that (P) remains perpetually conditional on the truth of (P).

Note that the conditional position the veritistic philosopher cannot get past, i.e. if (P), then (TRA)COMP gives one justification for (P), can be reached *apriori*, for the claim that (P) is sufficient for (TRA)COMP to deliver justification for (P) is a consequence of endorsing externalism with respect to perceptual justification, which is a philosophical analysis of justification, not an empirical claim. The veritistic philosopher is confined to that position, for any attempt to get past it towards

knowledge of the unconditional claim that $(TRA)_{COMP}$ gives one justification for (P) uses a method whose epistemic efficacy depends once again on perception's being a truth-conducive belief-source, which only reiterates the conditionality of his position. We will call the impossibility of getting past this conditional position the "Conditional Position Problem" (CPP).

There's something evidently unsatisfactory about an epistemic position which is conditional in the above way. For the theorist who finds himself in it cannot conclude that the explanans of his explanation is justified, but only that it is justified if the explanans is true. The conditionality of one's position carries over from one's explanans to what it is meant to explain, i.e. the correctness of the epistemic principle:

> (EP) If on the basis of its perceptually appearing to one that p one believes that p, one is *prima facie* justified in believing that p.

One cannot conclude that one is justified in thinking that (EP) is correct, but only that if perception is a truth-conducive belief source then one is justified in thinking that (EP) is correct. As a theorist one cannot claim to have explained one's explanandum, but only to have explained it if one's explanans is in fact the case. The position of such a theorist is explanatorily vacuous, if that kind of conditional is the most that one's methods achieve one has not explained what one wanted to explain.

We can see that the conditional position of the externalist is indeed explanatorily vacuous by noting that assuming externalism an exactly parallel conditional position can be reached with respect to any belief-source, *regardless of its truth-conducivity*. For example, take crystal ball gazing as a belief-source and allow that the deliverances of particular readings can be used to check the general reliability of that belief-source. We can then construct a track-record argument to show that crystal gazing is a truth-conducive belief-source. Let's call it (TRA*), the premises of which are based on crystal gazing. Given externalism $(TRA*)_{COMP}$ succeeds in justifying that crystal gazing is a truth-conducive belief-source if crystal gazing is in fact a truth-conducive belief-source, which means that the externalist crystal gazer has arrived at the position:

If crystal gazing is a truth-conducive belief-source, then (TRA*)$_{COMP}$ gives one justification for believing that crystal gazing is a truth-conducive belief-source.

This conditional position is exactly parallel to the position reached by the externalist philosopher who relies on perception in constructing his philosophical explanation of epistemic principles. As with the externalist philosopher the conditionality of the position of the crystal gazer would carry over to the explanation of an epistemic principle concerning crystal gazing, so that he could only conclude that if crystal gazing is truth-conducive then one would be justified in thinking that the relevant epistemic principle is correct. Because crystal gazing is a disreputable belief-source we will say that unless the externalist philosopher gets past *his* conditional position he is in bad company.[149]

Some philosophers build into (CPP) elements that we think are inessential to the formulation of the problem. In the next paragraphs we try to detach those elements from (CPP).

(i) (CPP) arises with respect to knowing that *(TRA)$_{COMP}$ gives justification for believing (P)*; the problem arises for the veritistic philosopher who is after that knowledge. Some philosophers would see with suspicion the idea that the veritistic philosopher has a good motivation or rationale to pursue that knowledge as something he needs given his theoretical purposes. If he lacks any such rationale the impossibility of getting past a conditional position in seeking that knowledge would be inconsequential for his project. We think that suspicion regarding his motivation here arise primarily from misconceiving it by attaching it to dubious doctrines that in reality have nothing to do with his motivation. We will now clear up some of those possible misunderstandings.

In the first place, it must be emphasised that the veritistic philosopher's seeking knowledge that *(TRA)$_{COMP}$ gives justification for believing (P)* in not

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[149] I borrow the term 'bad company' from Boghossian 2001: 11, who uses it to denote the problem faced by a philosopher who uses an argument to show that a fundamental rule of inference is truth-preserving, where such an argument proceeds by taking at least one step in accordance with that very rule. If such 'rule-circular' arguments are sanctioned as acceptable then parallel arguments can be constructed for the claim that *disreputable* rules of inference are truth-preserving. The philosopher who sanctions the use of such arguments, like the externalist in our discussion, is then in bad company. Analogously, because externalism sanctions as acceptable arguments where a belief-source is used to establish it's own reliability he finds himself in bad company. Alston 1989: 3 and 1993: 17 regards bad company as a major problem for the externalist.

motivated by the general assumption that a condition for a method to give justification to a subject is that the subject knows that the method gives him justification . From such an assumption it would follow as a special case that his own method (TRA) will give him justification only if he knows that it does. This would be tantamount to imposing an internalist second-level requirement on justification of the sort mentioned in (II. 5) above. But (CCP) does not arise out of any such internalist idea; it arises from the theoretical need of the veritistic philosopher to know that his explanation is justified, which involves knowing that $(TRA)_{COMP}$ gives *justification for believing (P)*. We are assuming that the veritistic philosopher for whom (CPP) arises is an *externalist*; as such he does not conceptualise that second-level knowledge as a condition for (TRA)'s capacity to confer justification on the beliefs it leads to. His rationale for seeking that knowledge has nothing to do with that internalist view.[150]

Some philosophers do not see an internalist idea at the beginning of (CCP), as motivating the need to know that $(TRA)_{COMP}$ does give justification to believe (P), but rather, as it were, at the end of (CCP), as something one has to endorse in order to judge the position of the externalist philosopher as unsatisfactory. For example, in assessing the unsatisfactoriness of reapplying the externalist view at a second-level in an attempt to get past (CPP), Stroud draws a moral that encourages a superficial dismissal of the problem, he writes:

> It is difficult to say precisely what is inadequate about that kind of response, especially in terms that would be acceptable to an "externalist". Perhaps it is best to say that the theorist has to see himself as having good reason to believe his theory in some sense of "having good reason" that cannot be fully captured by an "externalist" account.[151]

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[150]At some point Sosa 1994: 282 seems to make just this mistaken interpretation in discussing why the veritistic philosopher should know that his method affords him with justification, he asks: "Why need we *see W as reliable* in order for its reliability to lend us epistemic justification for using it?" But this question is irrelevant, for the veritistic philosopher does not seek knowledge that his method is truth-conducive and delivers justification *because* he takes it to be a condition for us to be justified in using it or for its ability to deliver justification. The internalist view Sosa's question asks about could be mistaken and that would have no bearing on the soundness of the veritistic philosopher's rationale for seeking knowledge that his method affords him with justification.

[151] Stroud 1989: 47.

Effectively, this invites the superficial response that the formulation of the problem begs the question against the externalist, for it relies on a non-externalist analysis or understanding of *justification, having reasons* or *knowledge*.[152]

But in describing the unsatisfactoriness of (CCP) we did not rely on any non-externalist assumption. In (II.5) we explained that forms of internalism divide into two broad categories, one that denies the necessity and other that denies the sufficiency of truth-conducivity for justification. We can see that neither of these types of views is surreptitiously involved in reaching the verdict that the position of the externalist is unsatisfactory. In judging (CPP) as an unsatisfactory position the key thought has been that it is explanatorily vacuous with respect to our perceptual justification; its vacuousness is illustrated by the ease with which it can be replicated with respect to the (putative) justification delivered by *any* other belief-source. But in judging that the conditional position of the externalist is explanatorily vacuous we have denied neither that truth-conducivity is necessary nor that it is sufficient for justification; on the contrary, in describing the bad company that illustrates the vacuousness we assumed that the truth-conducivity of the disreputable belief-source is necessary and sufficient for its delivering justification. So, we make no internalist assumption in judging the conditional position to be an unsatisfactory position.

An internalist premise is presupposed neither as a motivation for the task that eventually lands the philosopher in (CPP), nor as a requisite to appreciate the unsatisfactoriness of that position. (CPP) arises for an externalist who is consistent with his own commitments. Because the problem arises precisely out of a thoroughgoing externalist treatment of the kind of self-support typified by (TRA), forms of internalism can indeed be seen as attempts to *circumvent* (CPP), for they are different ways of denying the externalist treatment at the base of the problem. Next chapter examines such internalist attempts.

(ii) For some it might look as if the rationale of the veritistic philosopher for seeking knowledge that *(TRA)COMP gives justification for believing (P)* can only derive from a commitment to pursue the unrealistic goal of validating or justifying

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[152] Kornblith 2004: 190, 198 offers this kind of response to (CPP). Compare with Fumerton 1995: 179-180 who criticises Alston for basing his dissatisfaction with his own externalist treatment of (TRA) also on apparently surreptitiously endorsing a non-externalist notion of justification. See also Sosa 1994: 272-274 where he implies that the externalist is judged to be in an unsatisfactory position only from an internalist standpoint.

the methods he uses in reaching the conclusion (P) and then justifying every premise involved in that justification and so on. The result of this task would be that his beliefs to the effect that his methods are truth-conducive are what Alston calls "fully reflective justified":

> ...in seeking "fully reflective assurance" with respect to his belief [that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source], S has committed himself to seeking the same for any belief employed in showing [his belief that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source] to be justified, any belief employed in showing any of those beliefs to be justified,. . . Let us say that when this enterprise has been completed the belief with which we started has been "fully reflective justified".[153]

But fully reflective justification (FRJ) is an impossible ideal because justification has to stop at some point, on pain of infinite regress or vicious circularity:

> It is clear that either this quest for FRJ generates an infinite regress and cannot succeed for that reason, or at some point it is vitiated by circularity, either because we encounter a basic source or because our reasons for a given source are obtained from a source we were relying on at an earlier stage. Whichever of these possibilities is realized we get the same conclusion that FRJ of any principle of reliability is impossible, and hence that FRJ of any belief is impossible.[154]

From this point of view the circularity we have encountered, which produces (CPP), emerges for someone in the quest of (FRJ) for the claim that a basic belief-source, like perception, is truth-conducive. The problem is a symptom of the impossible, and to that extent unreasonable, task we have embarked into. If the problem is impossible to overcome that *only* shows that (FRJ) is impossible to achieve:

> The point is that the impossibility of FRJ is the *only* significant implication epistemic circularity has for the epistemic status of principles of reliability and of our beliefs generally.[155]

This suggests that nothing of epistemic value beyond (FRJ) is endangered by the circularity that produces (CPP), because that circularity becomes problematic only in

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[153] Alston 1986: 23.
[154] *Ibid.*: 25.
[155] Alston 1986: 27. My emphasis.

the context of the quest for (FRJ). Giving up that impossible quest would be the obvious way of avoiding whatever problems it generates.

It must be granted that maybe someone who *is* engaged in the quest for (FRJ) will seek knowledge that (TRA) gives justification for the claim (P), for the first step in that quest is to justify by argument the claim that (TRA) meets the conditions for giving justification, and if other things are favourable such a justifying argument will yield knowledge that (TRA) gives justification to believe (P). But not everyone who seeks this knowledge is engaged in the quest for (FRJ). That's the case of the externalist philosopher. After constructing the argument, call it (A₁), to show that (TRA) fulfils the conditions to yield justification, the philosopher in the quest for (FRJ) is, to use Alston's words, "still driven by the thirst for reflective assurance.. [and so].. he wants to know whether he is justified in accepting those premises",[156] i.e. the premises of (A₁). So he attempts to accomplish that knowledge with a further argument, call it (A₂), to show that he is justified in believing the premises of (A₁). This chain of justifying arguments would go on *ad infinitum*, but Alston argues that in fact it quickly falls into logical circularity.[157] What matters here is that the externalist philosopher is not committed to set off that chain of reflective arguments, because it constitutes an escalation in levels of knowledge, something he has no reason to pursue. If circumstances are favourable, argument (A₁) will yield knowledge that (TRA) fulfils the conditions to give justification for its conclusion. But since (A₂) purports to justify the claim that (A₁)'s premises are justified, it will yield knowledge that (A₁) fulfils the conditions to yield knowledge that (TRA) fulfils the conditions to give justification for its conclusion; or in short, (A₂) will yield *knowledge that one knows*, via (A₁), that (TRA) fulfils the conditions to give justification for its conclusion. Each justifying argument in the process of (FRJ) will add one iteration to one's knowledge. The externalist philosopher is not after any of those iterations of the knowledge that (TRA)COMP gives justification for (P). As we pointed out earlier he is interested in that knowledge simply because it is tantamount to knowing that his explanation of the relevant epistemic principle is justified. This is a special case of the motivation any theorist has to know that his explanation is justified and clearly one can have this motivation and lack one to know that one knows that one knows...etc... that one's explanation is justified. The knowledge the

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[156] Alston 1986: 21.
[157] *Ibid.*: 22.

externalist philosopher seeks is not embedded in the impossible enterprise of a fully or ideally reflective agent that attempts to make all his justifications argumentatively explicit.[158]

(iii) Some philosophers think that (CPP) arises only when one asks a question in the first-person, about *one's own* justification, but parallel question about someone else's justification would not lead one to that problem. Barry Stroud, for example, argues that endorsing an externalist theory obstructs one's ability to understand how *one's own* knowledge qua externalist theorist comes about. He writes:

> Even if this [externalist story] were in fact true, if we didn't know that it was, or if we didn't have some reason to believe that it was, we would be no further along towards understanding our knowledge than we would be if the theory were false. So we need some reason to accept a theory of knowledge if we are going to rely on that theory to understand how our knowledge is possible. That is what I think no form of 'externalism' can give a satisfactory account of.[159]

The obstacle Stroud sees here for the externalist is essentially (CPP): endorsing the externalist theory lands the veritistic philosopher in a merely conditional position with respect to whether he knows or is justified in believing the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. He writes:

> 'Externalism' implies that if such-and-such is true in the world, then human beings do know things about what the world is like. Applying that conditional proposition to ourselves, to our own knowledge of the world, to our own knowledge of how that knowledge is acquired, and so on, even when the antecedent and so the consequent are in fact both true, still leaves us always in the disappointingly second-best position I have tried to illustrate..... We want to be in a position knowingly to detach that consequent about ourselves...[160]

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[158] Sometimes Alston writes of the process of fully reflectively justifying a truth-conducivity claim as something the philosopher is pushed to as *an attempt to overcome (CPP)*. If Alston is right that the process of (FRJ) falls into logical circularity that would mean that it offers no successful way of overcoming (CPP). The quest for (FRJ) is neither the motivation of the philosopher to seek the knowledge that a self-support argument like (TRA) gives justification for its conclusion, nor a successful route to overcome the Conditional Position Problem.

[159] Stroud 1989: 43.

[160] Stroud 1994: 305. See also his 1989: 46:

> It must be granted that if, in arriving at his theory, he did fulfil the conditions his theory says are sufficient for knowing things about the world, then if that theory is correct, he does in fact know that it is. But still, I want to say, he himself has no reason to think that he does

Stroud takes the explanandum of the externalist to be knowledge, whereas we have formulated (CPP) with respect to justification, but clearly he is describing a problem exactly parallel to (CPP). The 'such-and-such' in the antecedent of Stroud's conditional is the claim that perception is truth-conducive and the consequent is the claim that the (perceptual) evidence the externalist uses in his explanation of our justification does give him justification. The problem he is referring to is that of getting past the conditional and, as he says, knowingly detach the consequent. This is (CPP). However, Stroud insists that the problem he is highlighting arises only for the externalist philosopher when he attempts to explain *his own knowledge or justification* of the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source; he thinks he doesn't face that problem when he attempts to explain *someone else's* mundane knowledge:

> The difficulty I have in mind does not show up in understanding the knowledge which other people, not myself, have about the world. I understand other's knowledge by connecting their beliefs in the right way with what I know to be true in the world they live in. I can discover that others get their beliefs through the operation of belief-forming mechanisms which I can see to be reliable..... But each of us as a theorist of knowledge is also a human being to whom our theory of knowledge is meant to apply, so we must understand ourselves as knowers, just as we understand others.[161]

But in fact the externalist theory leads to the same conditional position regardless of whether one is explaining one's own perceptual justification to believe that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source or someone else's perceptual justification to believe anything else about the world. For in order to explain someone else's justification the veritistic philosopher has to show that perception is truth-conducive; given externalism that is necessary and sufficient for the targeted justification. But the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source is not available for use in the explanation unless the veritistic philosopher is justified in

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have good reason to think that his theory is correct. He is at best in the position of someone who has good reason to believe his theory if that theory is in fact true....He can see what he *would* have good reason to believe if the theory he believes were true, but he cannot see or understand himself as knowing or having good reason to believe what his theory says.

[161] Stroud 1994: 300. See also 304 and Stroud 1989: 45, 48. Bonjour 2001: 53 also thinks that the externalist lands in an unsatisfactory conditional position *only* when he raises the question of the justification of *his own* beliefs.

accepting it, and he knows that he is justified in accepting it *if* (and only if) perception is truth-conducive. Any evidence he could appeal to try to get past the conditional position he knows himself to be in only creates another instance of the same position. In this way his explanation of someone else's justification reaches the same explanatory impasse that he faces in trying to explain his own justification to believe that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. Stroud thinks that in explaining someone else's justification one can unproblematically 'discover' or 'see' that the belief-sources of that person are truth-conducive, but these claims are as problematic in this case as in one's own case, for in both cases one discovers the truth-conducivity of perception through the use of perception; therefore, given externalism, in both cases one's position will be the vacuous one of having explained the individual's justification *if* perception is truth-conducive.

We have emphasised that the minimal motivation the externalist philosopher has to know that (TRA) gives justification for (P) is a special case of the general motivation a theorist has for knowing that his explanans is justified. *Qua* externalist he knows the effect that his commitments have upon (TRA)$_{COMP}$ as a method for justifiably believing its conclusion: it gives justification for its conclusion *if* perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. Because perception will be used in every attempt to get past that conditional, the most that he can conclude is that for all he's done in competently reasoning from (TRA)'s premises to its conclusion, he will have gained justification for the conclusion *if* perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. The fact that the type of conditional position he's left in can be reached by disreputable methods of belief formation brings out the vacuousness of his position relative to the goal of showing that we are justified in taking it that perception is truth-conducive. No internalist or non-externalist assumption is, incoherently, made in reaching (CPP) nor in judging the unsatisfactoriness of such a position. (CPP) is not motivated either by a commitment to an unrealistic ideal of perfectly reflective justifications, nor does the problem arise only for the egocentric task of explaining one's own perceptual justifications.

(CPP) arises for a thoroughgoing externalist treatment of self-support, which is used in the task of explaining the correctness of an epistemic principle about perceptual justification. (CPP) makes the position of the minimal veritist explanatorily vacuous. If there is a route to a satisfactory demonstration that we are

justified in accepting the basic epistemic principle about perception it has either to eschew self-support altogether or utilize a non-externalist treatment of the conditions for a self-support argument to deliver justification for its conclusion. Next chapter examines whether there is any such explanatory route in reverse order.

Chapter III

Routes

III.1. First Route: Freedom from Truth-Conducive Constraints

III.1.1. The Price of Significant Self-Support

The merely conditional position that the externalist is stranded in is vicious because it is explanatorily vacuous. The vacuousness of his position is aggravated by the fact that he is in bad company: the same conditional position can be reached with respect to disreputable methods of belief formation. In order to shake off bad company the externalist has to overcome his merely conditional position and in that way break the epistemic parallelism that sets him along side the crystal gazer; he must get himself in a position to claim categorically that he is justified in believing that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source and not merely that he is justified in believing that it is if it is.

Reflection on how he can shake off bad company suggests that the externalist has resources available that the crystal gazer simply lacks. It is true that both have a track-record argument at their disposal, but the externalist seems to have much more. Apart from the evidence of a simple enumerative induction the externalist also has at his disposal complex evolutionary and physiological theories and supporting evidence that allow him to explain and gain a kind of rich insight into how and why perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. Nothing like that is at the disposal of the crystal ball gazer; he lacks the analogous support of complex theories and accompanying evidence for his claim that crystal gazing is truth-conducive. The availability of complex forms of evidence for the externalist seems to strengthen his epistemic position relative to the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source; the lack of any such complex support for the crystal gazer seems to weaken his epistemic position relative to the claim that crystal gazing is truth-conducive.

They do not seem to be in the same kind of epistemic position and it looks as if we could reach the conclusion that the two theorists are in a parallel, merely conditional epistemic position only because we perversely fixed on the availability to both of a simple track-record argument, in disregard of more complex form of support that in fact break the parallelism.

In (II.2) we anticipated this kind of response to our decision to fix on a simple track-record argument in assessing the attempt to establish the basic epistemic principle about perception. There we pointed out that the more complex forms of arguments still seem to exhibit the same kind of epistemic dependence that infects track-record arguments. The question we posed then was: If that kind of dependence ruins a track-record argument, does it also ruin the more complex arguments? In the context of the Conditional Position Problem (CPP) the question becomes whether the contribution of the complex arguments enables one to overcome (CCP), for that's precisely where the evidence of a simple track-record fails.

W. Alston has argued that the contribution of the complex forms of arguments, which he calls 'significant self-support', constitute an element that genuinely enables the externalist to shake off bad company, but despite that it exhibits the same kind of dependence that makes the evidence of a track-record useless for that purpose. As Alston puts it:

> To be sure, an argument from these fruits [i.e. successful predictions and insight into its own operation] to the reliability of [perception] is still infected with epistemic circularity; apart from reliance on [perception] we have no way of knowing the outcome of our attempts at prediction and control, and no way of confirming our suppositions about the workings of perception. Nevertheless, this is not the trivial epistemically circular support that necessarily extends to every practice. Many practices cannot show anything analogous; crystal ball gazing and the reading of entrails cannot. Since [perception] supports itself in ways it conceivably might not, and in ways other practices do not, its *prima facie* claims to acceptance are thereby strengthened; and if crystal ball gazing lacks any non-trivial self-support, its claims suffer by comparison.[162]

Significant self-support for the reliability of perception comprises evolutionary and physiological discoveries about how our perceptual systems work, why they have

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[162] Alston 1989: 19.

come to work that way and what enables them to represent reliably, while no similar discoveries support the claim that a disreputable method is truth-conducive. There's no doubt that significant self-support marks a difference between the externalist and the crystal ball gazer, but what we need to ask is if such a form of evidence has the epistemic significance needed to overcome (CPP). There are reasons to doubt that it does. For consider a specific piece of significant self-support, for example the results of an experiment designed to identify the reactions of cone and rod cells in response to certain changes in luminosity. As Alston notes, there's no way of 'confirming' or 'knowing' the outcomes of such experiments other than by relying on perception; our epistemic justification for believing such results essentially depends on perception, specifically on perception being truth-conducive. But then it looks as if the contribution of significant self-support doesn't advance the position of the externalist in the desired way, for given that his justification to believe the complex results of the experiments depends on perception being truth-conducive, when he ask the question whether he is justified in believing his results he will not be able to conclude categorically that he is but only that he is if perception is truth-conducive. Because any attempt at getting passed this conditional position requires establishing that perception is truth-conducive, which is what significant self-support is meant to achieve, the attempt will just create another instance of that conditional position. As happened with appeal to the simple evidence of a track-record, the externalist who appeals to significant self-support is trapped in a conditional position. The difference marked by significant self-support between the externalist and its bad company doesn't have the effect of enabling one to overcome an explanatorily vacuous position.

The diagnosis of why significant self-support fails to have the desired effect is clear: as long as arguments from perceptual evidence exhibit the epistemic dependence already present in a track-record argument, the complexity of the perceptual evidence will make no difference with respect to overcoming (CPP). Because that dependence is a consequence of a truth-conducive constraint on perceptual justification, this means that as long as we insist in conceiving perceptual evidence as subject to a truth-conducive constraint the complexity of the evidence will make no difference with respect to (CPP). Given this diagnosis it would seem that in order for significant self-support to have the intended effect we must lift the truth-conducive constraint from perceptual justification. If significant self-support is

not constrained by truth-conducivity then answering the question whether one is justified by significant self-support in believing that perception is truth-conducive will not take one to a positive answer conditional on perception being truth-conducive, for the epistemic justification supplied by significant self-support will no longer be conditional on the truth-conducivity of perception.

Perhaps Alston is aware that appeal to significant self-support needs to be supplemented by lifting truth-conducive constraints, for he remarks that one can possess the justification of significant self-support for the claim that perception is truth-conducive *without* perception being truth-conducive, he writes:

> It is clear that all this could be the case [i.e. that we have significant self-support], and hence that we are rational in engaging in [the perceptual doxastic practice], *even if it were in fact unreliable.*[163]

The thesis that significant self-support constitutes a species of epistemic justification which isn't subject to truth-conducive constraints signifies a radical departure from the externalism that we started with, for the externalist takes truth-conducivity to be necessary and sufficient for warrant. At the end of last chapter we pointed out that one way of attempting to overcome (CPP) would involve lifting truth-conducive constraints on justification, for (CPP) arises out of treating truth-conducivity as *necessary* for justification acquired through self-support.

But lifting truth-conducive constraints doesn't seem to be a palatable move for the theorist trapped in (CPP), for truth-conducive constraints seem to be deeply entrenched in an adequate understanding of epistemic goods. Alston himself voices this point when he writes:

> How can I support the thesis that it is....reasonable for me to believe [p] in the present situation? If I'm unable to ascertain that it is formed in a reliable fashion, what other epistemically relevant recommendation can I give to this particular belief? I am at a loss to say.[164]

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[163] Alston 1989: 20. My emphasis.
[164] *Ibid.*: 23. See also his 1985: 111.

Alston is not being rhetorical here. He fully endorses truth-conducive constraints on warrant in arguing against other views that purport to explain what our justification for the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source consist in; he conceives those views as rival to his own which explains that justification in terms of significant self-support. One of the views that Alston criticises argues that we are justified in believing that perception is a truth-conducive belief source because such hypothesis is the *best explanation* of the patterns that our sensory experience exhibits. This view attempts to show that the truth-conducivity of perception is the best explanatory hypothesis arguing that it is favoured by criteria such as simplicity, economy and explanatory depth.[165] Alston objects to this view that the criteria used to pick out the allegedly best explanation constitute no evidence for the truth of the favoured hypothesis; he objects that such criteria are not truth-conducive.[166]

The other view that Alston wishes to discard in favour of his own is *coherentism*. According to him:

> From this stand point there's nothing disturbing about the circle involved in using perceptual beliefs to support the principle that perception is reliable. Particular perceptual beliefs, on the one hand, and the belief in the reliability of sense perception, on the other, support each other, thereby increasing the coherence of the system that contains both.[167]

We need not go into the details of this kind of view, we only want to underline that Alston's objection to it is essentially the same that he swings against the abductive reasoning, he writes:

> ...if we are not already entitled to take sense perception to be mostly reliable, the fact that some of its outputs confirm others would seem to be of little epistemological significance. For all we would have reason to suppose, it might be one of those vast coherent systems of fancy that are regularly thrown up as an objection to the idea that the coherence of a system is a sufficient indication of its truth.[168]

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[165] Alston 1993: 90ff.
[166] *Ibid.*: 97
[167] *Ibid.*: 20.
[168] *Ibid.*: 21.

Alston believes that coherence does not in and by itself increases the likelihood of the coherent beliefs and that's why he thinks it has 'little epistemological significance'. In his view positive epistemic status is constituted precisely by what coherence does not guarantee: that beliefs have a truth-conducive provenance.

Alston fully endorses truth-conducive constraints in criticising rival views. That's symptomatic of how entrenched truth-conducive constraints are in his understanding of epistemic goods. But as we have seen above if one maintains truth-conducive constraints throughout Alston's own appeal to significant-self support does not succeed in enabling one to overcome (CPP); in order to achieve this significant self-support has to be conceived as not subject to truth-conducive constraints, as Alston himself does. But then we find here something incongruous in Alston's position, for he cannot coherently suppose that significant self-support is *not subject to truth-conducive constraints* and then criticise other views, like inference to the best explanation and coherentism, on the grounds that the considerations they adduce as warrant for the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source *are not subject to truth-conducive constraints*. A defender of any of such views has a ready *tu quoque*, he can simply point out that the considerations adduced by Alston, as he himself-recognises, are not subject to such constraints either (!)

If in order to overcome (CPP) we invoke a conception of justification not subject to truth-conducive constraints we cannot object to the views criticised by Alston that they are not subject to such constraints. This point raises a general question: if truth-conducive constraints are lifted what then should constrain the considerations adduced as justification for a proposition and why should we conceptualise those constraints as epistemic in nature. Chapter I articulated some reason to doubt that there is principled reason why we should conceive of considerations not constraint by a relation to truth as epistemic in nature. Here we will not return to this question, we will rather tackle the prior issue of why we should lift truth-conducive constraints at all. So far we have only seen that such a move will contribute to overcoming (CPP), but without further argument helping ourselves a notion of justification with that desired property looks like an *ad hoc* move. We must look at the independent arguments for freeing epistemic justification from truth-conducive constraints.

III.1.2. Freedom from Truth-Conducive Constraints

Let's recall the basic epistemic principle about perception:

(EP) If on the basis of its perceptually appearing to one that p one believes that p, one is *prima facie* justified in believing that p.

For the externalist establishing (EP) involves establishing the empirical truth that it falls under a truth-conducive constraint; but the claim that (EP) is under a truth-conducive constraint is not itself an empirical truth for the externalist; he treats it as a *conceptual truth*. Externalists are rarely explicit on this point,[169] but the methodology they adopt in articulating their externalist theories revels that that is the status they attach to such constraints. For example, A. Goldman claims that he is *analysing* the ordinary *concept* of justification;[170] thus his analysis, if correct, is a conceptual truth. Not only externalists treat truth-conducive constraints as conceptual truths, the methodology their opponents use to argue *against* them also reveals that they treat them as conceptual truths. The arguments of the externalist's opponent consist of *thought experiments* that are supposed to falsify what the externalist takes to be a conceptual truth. We will now examine the master argument against the claim that (EP) is under a truth-conducive constraint.

Suppose that our perceptual systems are truth-conducive so that basing our beliefs on our perceptual experiences, memories, inferences, etc. constitutes truth-conducive ways of belief-formation. Now, imagine a Matrix-World where everybody has his/her brain artificially stimulated to have a totality of experiences, memories, etc. that is an exact phenomenal duplicate of the totality of our experiences, memories, etc. Most of their cognitive states are not veridical; the Matrix implants in its victims experiences, beliefs, etc. that are massively mistaken; the way the Matrix interferes with their cognitive mechanisms renders them systematically unreliable. However, all those Matrix-people have lives exactly like ours 'from the inside', for each of us there is an individual in the Matrix world, call it a 'counterpart', whose mental life duplicates to the smallest detail the life of the corresponding person in

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[169] Cohen 1984: 281 is one of the few who note that truth-conducive constraints are normally treated as conceptual truths.
[170] Goldman 1979: 346.

this world. Your counterpart seems to have exactly the same experiences and memories, seem to engage in the same reasonings and imaginings, seem to entertain the same intentions, desires, etc. that you do. 'From the inside' what it is like to be your counterpart is exactly what it is like to be you. Now, the allegation here is that there's a powerful intuition that if your beliefs are justified *so are those of your Matrix counterpart*, in spite of the fact that yours have been (*ex hypothesi*) reliably produced whereas those of your counterpart have not. But if that is so, truth-conducivity is not necessary for epistemic justification. Thus (EP) is not subject to a truth-conducive constraint.[171]

What is exactly the intuition this thought experiment is supposed to awaken? What is called here an 'intuition' is just an inclination to judge that your counterpart is as justified as you are with respect to the beliefs you both hold. That inclination is our response to an apparent commonality in justificatory status between you and your counterpart that the thought experiment confronts us with. So, the thought experiment attempts to falsify the claim that (EP) is under a truth-conducive constraint by producing an inclination to judge which, if correct, entails that justificatory status is not constrained by truth-conducivity but by something else, i.e. whatever constitutes the apparent justificatory commonality that prompts our inclination to judge.

The internalists that use the thought experiment in the attempt to free epistemic principles from truth-conducive constraints take the appearance of justificatory commonality at face value, thus rendering one's inclination to judge correct and the claim that (EP) is under a truth-conducive constraint incorrect. But historically different internalists that have taken the appearance of justificatory commonality at face value have proceeded to *conceptualise* it in different, non-equivalent ways. What I mean by this is that different internalists *explain* what that justificatory commonality consists in by means of different thesis about what it is that justificatory status supervenes on. The supervenience base of each of those different supervenience theses captures the constraints on justification that those internalists seek to put in place of truth-conducive constraints. Later we will look at

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[171] The use of this style of thought experiment against truth-conducive constraints dates back to Lehrer & Cohen 1983. Since then many philosophers have thought that the experiment constitutes a serious objection to externalism, see for example Foley 1987, Goldman 1986, 1988, Fumerton 1995, Kornblith 2004a.

several of those internalist supervenience theses to see how they conceptualise in different ways the appearance of justificatory commonality prompted by the thought experiment. But before going into that we want to highlight an interesting fact about the controversy unleashed by the thought experiment in question.

It is remarkable that even *externalists* accept the crucial first step in the internalist argument against truth-conducive constraints, i.e. they also take the appearance of justificatory commonality between one and one's counterpart at face value, even if they resist giving truth-conducive constraints up and try instead to modify their theory to accommodate within it the intuitions whose correctness they have accepted.[172] But the very first question one should ask is why should one take the appearance of justificatory commonality *at face value*? There are reasons to distrust the appearance of justificatory commonality. First, those who accept the face value attitude rely on the deliverances of counterfactual thought, of what we would judge concerning the epistemic status of one's counterpart's doxastic attitudes; but they do not explaining the basis of such reliance. What could be an argument for such an attitude? Here is a natural suggestion: One may presume that one's counterfactual inclination to judge in the Matrix scenario is *prima facie* justified; in the absence of overriding considerations one is justified in taking the judgement as correct and the corresponding apparent justificatory commonality as real. Since there are no overriding considerations one *is* justified in taking appearances at face value and one's judgement as correct. But it is unclear if an argument like this would be available to the internalist. The argument uses as a premise an epistemic principle about counterfactual thought; it says that the judgements issued by this mental ability are *prima facie* justified in the relevant circumstances. But what does this epistemic justification consist in? The internalist cannot understand the justification in question in terms of truth-conducivity, for the aim of his overall strategy is to *free* epistemic principles from truth-conducive constraints. But he cannot understand that justification in terms of his preferred constraints either, for such constraints are motivated for the need to account for an apparent justificatory commonality that has been taken at face value, and the present issue concerns precisely if one is justified in taking such appearance at face value; before settling this issue the internalist

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[172] See for example Goldman 1988: 59-60, 62-66 and Fumerton 1995: 114-115 for discussion of Goldman's attempts to accommodate the intuition uncongenial with truth-conducive constraints.

constrains on justification lack motivation. Explaining the basis for the face value attitude turns out to be a hard task for the internalist.

Another reason to distrust that appearance of justificatory commonality comes from externalism about intentional content. Given externalism about content one and one's counterpart cannot have the same beliefs, and then *a fortiori* cannot have the same *justified* beliefs. So the appearance of justificatory commonality must be a mere appearance. This reason to doubt the appearance of justificatory commonality doesn't beg any question against the internalist about justification, because the reasons to accept externalism about content are independent from the present debate.

Our treatment of the intuitions prompted by the Matrix thought experiment will be extremely concessive to the internalist. For the sake of argument we will ignore the previous reasons to distrust the correctness of the intuitions he takes at face value. We will explore what the internalist does with those intuitions, how he explains them by introducing supervenience theses, and whether these theses yield acceptable constraints on epistemic justification.

One of the theses that has been motivated by the Matrix-style thought experiment can be called 'accessibilism'. Different philosophers state it in slightly different terms; Pryor states it as the claim that "whether one is justified in believing *p* supervenes on facts one is in a position to know about by reflection alone".[173] Kornblith calls a similar thesis the "*Internalist Credo*: no difference in justificatory status without internally accessible differences",[174] which is equivalent to the claim that justificatory status supervenes on 'internally accessible differences'. We will work with the following formulation:

> [ACCE] The justificatory status of S's doxastic attitudes supervenes on facts S is in a position to know about by reflection alone.

By the meaning of 'supervene', [ACCE] entails:

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[173] Pryor 2001: 109.
[174] Kornblith 2004a: 5

[ACCE]* If S1 and S2 differ in justificatory status of any of their doxastic attitudes, then S1 and S2 differ in facts they are in a position to know by reflection alone.

And by contraposition [ACCE]* is equivalent to:

[ACCE]** If S1 and S2 are identical in facts they are in a position to know by reflection alone, then their doxastic attitudes have identical justificatory status.

[ACCE]** explains the justificatory commonality between one and one's counterpart by identifying a commonality which determines justificatory status; such supervenience commonality is given by facts one and one's counterpart are in a position to know by reflection alone. Since facts about truth-conducivity are not the sort of thing one can know about by reflection alone, the supervenience commonality alluded to in [ACCE]** excludes truth-conducivity. Therefore, [ACCE]** excludes truth-conducivity from the supervenience commonality that is sufficient for commonality in justificatory status, and so it implies that truth-conducivity is unnecessary for justification. [ACCE]** implies the negation of negation of truth-conducive constraints.

[ACCE] appears to handle successfully our intuitions in the thought experiment. By description of the thought experiment one and one's counterpart are identical as regards facts that the two are in a position to know by reflection alone, therefore [ACCE] entails that one and one's counterpart are identical in the justificatory status of all beliefs held by the two. In this way [ACCE] explains our intuitions in the thought experiment as a correct inclination to judge that one's counterpart is as justified as one is in believing everything the two believe. In light of [ACCE] the appearance of justificatory commonality is real, not a mere appearance. So [ACCE] fulfils the explanatory role it was designed to play.

But [ACCE] has rivals. Some internalists prefer not to impose any specific accessibility constraint on the supervenience base for justificatory status. Because the supervenience base has still to preserve the idea that one and one's counterpart are alike 'from the inside' these internalists suppose that one and one's counterpart are

mental duplicates, since perfectly matching mental lives would seem to guarantee likeness 'from the inside'. This gives us a second internalist view we can call 'mentalism':

> [MENT] The justificatory status of S's doxastic attitudes supervenes on S's ocurrent and dispositional mental states, events and conditions.[175]

In order for [MENT] to play the explanatory role it is supposed to play the notion of the mental involved must be *narrow*. The nature of the mental must *not* itself supervene on relations between the subject and his environment, for if it did then the justificatory status of one's and one's counterpart's doxastic attitudes would also supervene on the corresponding subject-environment relations, because supervenience is transitive. But since the subject-environment relations are *different* in one's case and in one's counterpart's case, the justificatory status of doxastic attitudes would be *different* in each case too, contrary to one's inclination to judge in the thought experiment, which is what [MENT] is supposed to explain. Therefore, in order to play its explanatory role [MENT] must assume a narrow conception of the mental; we can then reformulate it this way:

> [MENT]-N The justificatory status of S's doxastic attitudes supervenes on S's ocurrent and dispositional narrow mental states, events and conditions.

By the meaning of 'supervene' and contraposition [MENT]-N entails:

> [MENT]-N** If S1 and S2 are identical in narrow mental states, events and conditions, then their doxastic attitudes have identical justificatory status.

In this case the supervenience commonality which is held to determine justificatory status is given by the narrow mental states, events and conditions of one and one's counterpart. Because the notion of the mental here is narrow the truth-conducivity of one's cognitive mechanisms by means of which one interacts with one's environment

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[175] Conee & Feldman 2001: 234

makes no difference to the nature of the mental conditions one is in. Therefore, [MENT]-N** excludes truth-conducivity from the factors that make a difference for the supervenience commonality that is sufficient for commonality in justificatory status, and so it implies that truth-conducivity is unnecessary for justification. [MENT]-N** implies the negation of truth-conducive constraints.

[MENT]-N also appears to handle successfully our intuitions in the thought experiment. By description of the thought experiment the totality of the mental conditions of one and one's counterpart are identical, and so [MENT]-N entails that one and one's counterpart are identical in the justificatory status of doxastic attitudes. As [ACCE], [MENT]-N explains our intuitions in the thought experiment as a correct inclination to judge that one's counterpart's doxastic attitudes are as justified as one's. In light of [MENT]-N the appearance of justificatory commonality is real, not a mere appearance. [MENT]-N fulfils the explanatory role it was designed to play.

Some internalists who accept [ACCE] have sought to support the issuing idea that one has to have the intended kind of access to the facts that determine one's justificatory status by using an argument that has as a premise the claim that epistemic justification consists in fulfilment of epistemic duties. This is the *deontological* conception of justification.[176] Some externalists have argued that there's no sound argument from deontologism to [ACCE],[177] and even some internalists do not believe there is any such argument; so they motivate their preferred internalist supervenience thesis on different grounds.[178] However, we can agree that deontologism gives no good motivation for [ACCE] internalism but note that deontologism itself can provide an independent supervenience thesis that explains our intuitions in the thought experiment.

Let's say an *epistemic* duty is a requirement to have whatever doxastic attitudes best fit one's evidence. Concrete epistemic duties can be fleshed out, but we need only work with the general idea. The thesis we can formulate is that

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[176] Internalists that argue from deontologism to some version of [ACCE] include Chisholm 1989, Ginet 1975: 36-7 and Steup 1998: 375-6.
[177] See for example Goldman 1999b: 222-3
[178] Examples of internalists who do not rely on deontologism in motivating their view include: Fumerton 1995; Conee & Feldman 2001: 239-40; Pryor 2001: 114-115.

justificatory status is determined by whether or not one best adjusts one's doxastic attitudes to one's evidence, i.e. by whether or not one fulfils one's epistemic duties:

[DEON] The justificatory status of S's doxastic attitudes supervenes on S's fulfilment of her epistemic duties.

By the meaning of 'supervene' and contraposition [DEON] is equivalent to

[DEON]** If S1 and S2 are identical in fulfilment of their epistemic duties, then their doxastic attitudes have identical justificatory status.

Best adjusting one's doxastic attitudes to one's evidence is compatible with such adjusting not being truth-conducive, because one's evidence can be spurious or otherwise itself truth-*obstructive*. Therefore, [DEON]** makes truth-conducivity unnecessary for the supervenience commonality that in this case is sufficient for commonality in justificatory status, and so it implies that truth-conducivity is unnecessary for justification. [DEON]** implies the negation of truth-conducive constraints.

[DEON] also opens a way of explaining our intuitions in the Matrix thought experiment. By description of it what it is like to be in one's situation is exactly what it would be like to be in one's counterpart's; on this basis the advocate of [DEON] supposes that the evidence available to one and to one's counterpart is the same. This would be true only given a purely phenomenal conception of evidence, i.e. only if evidence is conceived as itself supervening on the phenomenal aspects of one's mental life. Given this conception of evidence this internalist supposes that one and one's counterpart adjust doxastic attitudes to evidence in exactly the same way, then one and one's counterpart are on a par in relation to fulfilment of epistemic duties. Therefore, if one is epistemically blameless, so is one's counterpart; by [DEON] this entails that the doxastic attitudes of one and one's counterpart have the same justificatory status. So, [DEON] explains our intuitions in the thought experiment as a correct inclination to judge that one's counterpart's doxastic attitudes are as justified as one's. In light of [DEON] the appearance of justificatory commonality is

real, not a mere appearance. [DEON] fulfils the explanatory role it was designed to play.

III. 1. 3. Failures of Freedom and the Ultimate Explanatory Role of Truth-Conducive Constraints

The three internalist theses we have reviewed appear to explain equally well our intuition in the Matrix thought experiment by rendering it a correct inclination to judge that one is as justified as one's counterpart. However, we have to note that the theses are not equivalent, simply because the supervenience bases they postulate have different *extensions*. Facts about fulfilment of one's epistemic duties may overlap, but do not coincide, with facts one is in a position to know by reflection alone; for one can know by reflection alone facts which are not facts about one's fulfilment of any epistemic duty. Even more clearly, the set of such deontological facts is distinct from the set of one's narrow mental conditions; for even if every fulfilment of one's epistemic duties is a narrow mental condition, not all narrow mental conditions constitute the fulfilment of an epistemic duty of one. Similarly, the set of one's narrow mental conditions may overlap, but do not coincide, with facts one is in a position to know by reflection alone; since, for example, obvious logical relations between propositions one believes can be known by reflection alone but they are not narrow mental conditions of one.

The non-equivalence of the supervenience theses should raise some suspicion on whether any of them is correct, for how can the *same* property, i.e. justificatory status, supervene on *different* sets of facts? A possible reaction to this is worry is to say that there's actually not one single property being explicated in different ways but several different properties; we should regard each supervenience thesis as providing a supervenience base for a *different* epistemic property.[179] This pluralistic

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[179] Alston 1993b develops an approach along these lines. Compare it with Plantinga 1993: Chapter I. The idea that there are distinct epistemic properties whose differences can be misleadingly blurred by the uniform use of the term 'justification' is common nowadays. In (II.4) we discussed how Wright and Davies use a distinction between justification and entitlement. Burge 2004 also makes a distinction between justification and entitlement, arguing that both are sub-species of the genus *warrant*; but Burge's notions of justification and entitlement do not exactly match the notions introduced by Wright and Davies. We cannot go into a comparison between the several distinct epistemic properties that have been introduced and that have been put to some theoretical use in recent

position concedes that the various properties corresponding to the supervenience theses are *epistemic* properties, and hence that there are epistemic properties, namely those corresponding to the supervenience theses, that are indeed free from truth-conducive constraints. We think that there are reasons to question the concession of the pluralist.

Let us first note that each of the supervenience theses issues a constraint on justification, or whatever is the alleged epistemic property that corresponds to the supervenience thesis. For simplicity let's work with the idea that the epistemic property in question is justification. Let's call *X-Int* the conditions that constitute the different supervenience bases of each supervenience thesis; so that conditions that one is in a position to know by reflection alone and narrow mental conditions are two different types of *X-Int* conditions. Our point is that the supervenience thesis that corresponds to justification issues an *X-Int* constraint for justification: the conditions that constitute justification must be *X-Int*. For suppose that there are conditions that constitute justification but are *not X-Int*. That would mean that one's justification doesn't supervene on *X-Int* conditions; since there could be a case where there's no change in our *X-Int* conditions and yet there is a change in justification, for by hypothesis there would be conditions that constitute justification and are not *X-Int*. Therefore, if the property of justification supervenes on *X-Int* conditions such property is under an *X-Int* constraint.

Why should we accept that *X-Int* constraints are *epistemic* constraints? Why should we accept that fulfilling them results in an *epistemic good*? A central reason to think that such constraints *by themselves* fail to constitute epistemic constraints comes from reflection on the phenomenon of epistemic defeat. Consider the basic epistemic principle about perception:

> (EP) If on the basis of its perceptually appearing to one that *p* one believes that *p*, one is *prima facie* justified in believing that *p*.

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literature; we only want to indicate that we are not going to question the reality or the theoretical use of *those* properties. What we are going to question is that the supervenience theses reviewed in the text, *which free epistemic properties from truth-conducive constraints*, succeed in issuing adequate constraints for *epistemic* properties at all.

The supposition that (EP) is under an *X-Int* constraint, and not under a truth-conducive constraint, means that the perceptual conditions mentioned in its antecedent must fulfil that *X-Int* constraint in order to be sufficient for the *prima facie* epistemic good mentioned in the consequent of (EP). So, for example, if (EP) is under the accessibilist constraint, and not under a truth-conducive constraint, the perceptual conditions mentioned in the antecedent of (EP) must be known to obtain by reflection alone in order to be sufficient for the *prima facie* epistemic good mentioned in the consequent of (EP).

However, we acknowledge that the *prima facie* epistemic good mentioned in the consequent of (EP) can be defeated by evidence that suggests that our perceptual grounds are *not* truth-conducive, for example evidence that suggests that we are hallucinating. The question then arises: if perceptual justification is constrained by accessibilism alone, why does evidence that suggests that one's grounds are not truth-conducive have precisely this defeating effect upon one's justification? If being knowable to obtain by reflection alone is the constraint that our grounds must fulfil in order to be sufficient for *prima facie* justification, it becomes obscure why evidence that suggests lack of truth-conducivity should have any undermining effect on our justification; such evidence should be irrelevant if our justification is truly under no truth-conducive constraint and only under an accessibilist constraint.

So we have reason to believe that the *X-Int* constraints that purport to replace truth-conducive constraints fail to constitute *epistemic* constraints, i.e. constraints whose fulfilment results in *prima facie* epistemic goods, for they constrain epistemic goods in a way that fails to make their defeat by undermining evidence intelligible. But if *X-Int* constraints fail to constitute adequate epistemic constraints for their inability to explain epistemic defeat, how should we conceive an adequate epistemic constraint on epistemic goods? If we reject *X-Int* constraints and with them the corresponding supervenience theses, we are left with no explanation of the intuitions that the Matrix thought experiment generated. Since such intuitions are incompatible with truth-conducive constraints we cannot simply readopt these as the adequate constraints on epistemic goods. We still seem to be burdened with the demand of constructing a constraint on epistemic goods that respects those intuitions.

In view of our foregoing remarks concerning epistemic defeat there is a natural suggestion of a constraint on epistemic goods that is both suitable for the

explanation of epistemic defeat and respectful of the intuitions prompted by the Matrix thought experiment. If undermining evidence suggests that one's grounds are not truth-conducive, and this suggestion defeats the justificatory force of such grounds, it seems that the justificatory force of the grounds must be essentially due at least to a *standing conviction* or *presumption* to the effect that such grounds are truth-conducive. The presumption need not be *actually true* in order for it to be undermined by the adverse evidence, therefore such presumption could still play the explanatory role we are envisaging for it in the Matrix-World, where it is false. The suggestion would then be that epistemic goods mentioned in the consequent of epistemic principles are constrained by a standing conviction or presumption that the conditions mentioned in the antecedent are truth-conducive.

We should not overlook that the only reason that pushes us to adopt this kind of 'subjectivised' truth-conducive constraint, instead of a straightforward truth-conducive constraint, as the adequate constraint on epistemic goods is the attempt to respect the intuitions prompted by the Matrix thought experiment. We should enquire if the subjectivised constraint is acceptable independently of those intuitions. In (III.3.1) below we argue that it is not; it will then be suggested that we should reject the intuitions that appear to motivate freedom from truth-conducive constraints.

III.2. Second Route: Access and Higher-Level Requirements

The Conditional Position Problem (CPP) is a consequence of a treatment of justification acquired through self-support that takes truth-conducivity to be necessary and sufficient for justification. In the previous section we saw how denying the necessity clause in that treatment opens up a route for overcoming (CPP), but we argued that the independent reasons usually given for lifting truth-conducive constraints lead to inadequate constraints for epistemic goods. How promising would it be to deny the other clause in the treatment? Denying the sufficiency clause in the treatment of self-support does not even seem to open up a way of overcoming (CPP). For suppose that *further* conditions on justification were imposed and they could be fulfilled without relying on perception. Even if that is so it would still be true that truth-conducivity is deemed necessary for justification and so long as the way of ascertaining truth-conducivity is empirical the theorist will still land in a merely

conditional position in trying to ascertain whether he's justified in believing that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. But denying the sufficiency clause not only does not seem to help in overcoming (CPP), it actually seems to leave the veritistic theorist in a worse epistemic position, for it has been argued that the kind of further conditions typically imposed on justification seem to have unpalatable sceptical consequences. Given that our aim in this chapter is to examine ways of *overcoming* (CPP), it might look irrelevant to stop to assess the independent arguments for denying the sufficiency clause, given that this move only seem to have a *worsening* effect. But the issue is relevant for the feasibility of the overall veritistic project, for if there are good reasons to support that move then the veritistic project would be thwarted by the unpalatable sceptical consequences such move brings about and not only by (CPP).

In this section we will not be concerned with exploring the unpalatable sceptical consequences that the typical negations of the sufficiency clause allegedly bring about, nor with possible ways of making such consequences less unpalatable; we will rather be concerned with the prior issue of examining the reasons for denying the sufficiency clause *at all*, if such reasons are inadequate to support a move with such consequences we shouldn't be worried about them.

Objections to the sufficiency clause in the treatment of epistemic goods have taken the form of counterexamples that are supposed to prompt intuitions adverse to the idea that the truth-conducivity of a belief-source is sufficient for it to yield justification. The counterexamples divide into two broad kinds, in both kinds of counterexample there's a subject who fulfils the truth-conducivity condition but one is inclined to judge that she is not thereby justified; in the first kind of case because she disrespects her evidence and in the second because she lacks anything that she could cite as her evidence for her belief. I'll examine these kinds of counterexamples in that order.

Some of the well-known examples of clairvoyance described by L. Bonjour are counterexamples of the first kind.[180] Bonjour describes three cases in which a subject *S* does have the reliable power of clairvoyance but believes without any reason that she does. The cases differ as follows: In CASE I *S* has *rebutting* defeaters

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[180] See Bonjour 1980: Sec. III.

for her clairvoyance-formed belief that the US president is in Washington; i.e. defeaters that are reasons to think that this belief is false. In CASE II *S* has *undercutting* defeaters, i.e. reasons to think that *she* doesn't posses the clairvoyance power or that her power is not a truth-conducive process of belief-formation. In CASE III *S* has *undercutting* defeaters but now in the form of reasons to think that the clairvoyance power *in general* doesn't exist or that it is not truth-conducive. In all cases the defeaters are spurious since the US president is in fact in Washington, clairvoyance power does exist, it is truth-conducive and S possesses it.[181]

The three cases serve to make the same point: despite that the subject's belief is the outcome of a truth-conducive process of belief-formation it is not epistemically justified because the subject is irrational in disregarding evidence she possesses that appears to undermine in different ways the epistemic credentials of her belief. The evidence happens to be spurious, but this doesn't save her from irrationality since what makes her irrational is that she disregards that evidence *without a reason*. What makes her irrational is that from her own point of view she is disrespecting her evidence; this is what makes her belief unjustified despite the underling truth-conducivity:

> If the acceptance of a belief is seriously unreasonable or unwarranted from the believer's own standpoint, then the mere fact that unbeknownst to the believer its existence in those circumstances lawfully guarantees its truth will not suffice to render the belief epistemically justified.[182]

Bonjour concludes that truth-conducivity is not sufficient for epistemic justification and that at least a no-defeater clause needs to be added to the account. Interestingly, some *reliabilists* contemplated cases structurally similar to Bonjour's clairvoyance cases in articulating their analyses of epistemic justification, and they also concluded from those cases that a no-defeater clause needed to be added to the analysands. Goldman's early reliabilist analysis of justification is an example.[183] He describes a case about a man, Jones, who is presented with overwhelming evidence that his apparent memories of childhood are wholly misleading, that he suffered from a kind of amnesia that resulted in his memories from childhood been deleted and replaced

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[181] Bonjour doesn't use the terminology of 'rebutting' and 'undercutting' defeaters; I take this terminology from Pollock & Cruz 1999, who use it to mark the kinds of undermining evidence that Bonjour employs in the construction of the examples.
[182] Bonjour 1980: 20.
[183] See Goldman 1979: 350.

by apparent memories that have nothing to do with what actually happened in his early years. However, that evidence, like the defeaters in Bonjour's clairvoyance cases, is spurious: Jones episodic memory is pretty reliable; he never suffered from that kind of amnesia. Suppose that Jones has an apparent memory of his having his sixth birthday party, and he comes to believe that he had such a party. Goldman acknowledges that Jones is not justified and without hesitation amends the analysands of his theory by including a clause that rules out defeaters. Goldman construes this clause in purely reliabilist terms as the non-availability of a reliable process which, had it been used by the subject, would have lead him to not believing that p.[184] Some internalists might object that this construal of the required no-defeater clause doesn't in fact rule out all possible ways in which a subject can disrespect apparent defeaters, and the externalist can respond by patching again the analysands of his theory. I don't want to look at the details of this potential debate but rather at the interesting fact that both, internalists and externalists, take the kind of counterexample at hand to be decisive against the sufficiency of truth-conducivity. They both agree that a no-defeater condition is also required, even if they might disagree again on how to construe it.

We can agree that a subject who irrationally disregards apparent defeaters of his justification cannot be justified in persisting in his belief, if he is to be justified such apparent defeaters must be absent. A clause ruling out defeaters is well taken. However, such a clause would be a clause for what it's sometimes called 'ultima facie' justification, justification that *has not been defeated* after 'other things' have been considered. But if we recall the basic epistemic principle about perception:

> (EP) If on the basis of its perceptually appearing to one that p one believes that p, one is *prima facie* justified in believing that p.

It gives conditions for *prima facie* justification, justification that *can be defeated* after 'other things' have been considered. The *prima facie* qualification of the justification in question absorbs the intuitive impact of the counterexamples described above. For we can grant that it is true that a subject who irrationally disregards apparent defeaters that undermine his perceptual justification for p is not justified in believing that p. But truth-conducivity is not meant to be a sufficient

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[184] Goldman 1979: 351.

condition for justification after 'other things' have been considered, but precisely for justification that can be defeated by consideration of things other than the perceptual state that represents *p* as being the case. The first kind of counterexample against the sufficiency condition does not motivate a further condition for (*prima facie*) perceptual justification.

The second kind of counterexample to the sufficiency of truth-conducivity describes a subject who meets the sufficiency condition by having certain of her beliefs produced by a cognitive mechanism that is truth-conducive but that operates in such a way that doesn't provide her with anything on which she could *base* her beliefs, the beliefs *simply pop into the subject's mind*. This kind of case, once again, is supposed to encourage the idea that there's something irrational and unjustified in someone believing things in this way, regardless of the truth-conducivity of the underlying process of belief-formation. Bonjour modifies his clairvoyance cases to yield cases of this type. He describes a CASE IV in which *S* believes that the US president is in Washington as a result of her reliable clairvoyance power but this time she possesses no defeaters of any form for her belief, now she is simply ignorant of the power she has;[185] her beliefs about the whereabouts of the US president and other matters just pop into her head. There is also an apparent real-life case of chicken-sexers who are unaware of the clues their discriminatory ability exploits; they also are reliable believers that do not base their beliefs on any identifiable evidence.[186]

Counterexamples of this second kind were taken to show that the advocate of the sufficiency condition was overlooking the significance of the 'basing relation' in our understanding of epistemic justification. One cannot be justified if one doesn't base one's belief on something *one* can take as evidence or as a reason for it, or at least one must have some sort of access to something that can play such a role. As Alston puts it:

> We find something incongruous, or conceptually impossible, in the notion of my being justified in believing that *p* while totally lacking any capacity to determine what is responsible for that justification.[187]

In order to avoid the incongruousness that Alston mentions we should amend our conception of the conditions for justification and specify that the grounds that

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[185] Bonjour 1980: Sec. IV.
[186] See Fumerton 1995: 117-118.
[187] Alston 1988: 235.

constitute our justification must be something on which we could base our beliefs.[188] We can agree that this is indeed a clause for justification but point out that it is implicitly contemplated by the nature of the justifying conditions mentioned in the antecedent of (EP); for perceptual experiences are typically the sort of thing on which one can base one's beliefs. Given that this is in the very nature of perceptual experiences it would be redundant, in spelling out the sufficient conditions for perceptual experiences to justify belief, to include a clause specifying that they must be the sort of thing on which typically one can base one's beliefs. The point about the basing relation raised by the example is well taken, but it is already contemplated by the very nature of the kind of justification whose conditions we are trying to spell out. The second kind of counterexample to the sufficiency of truth-conducivity for justification does not motivate a further condition for *perceptual* justification.

But some philosophers think that the second kind of alleged counterexample to the sufficiency condition does not simply raise a point about the significance of the basing relation for justification, they think that such counterexample in fact motivate a quite drastic revision of the sufficiency condition. Bonjour, for example, makes the following remarks:

> ….. [the subject's] acceptance of the belief [that just pops into his head] is epistemically irrational and irresponsible and thereby unjustified, whether or not he believes himself to have clairvoyant power so long as he has no justification for such a belief. Part of one's epistemic duty is to reflect critically upon one's beliefs, and such critical reflection precludes believing things to which one has, to one's knowledge, no reliable means of epistemic access.[189]

If one should not believe what one does not know one has reliable access to, that must be because one should believe only what one knows one has reliable access to. Effectively, Bonjour seems to be saying here that in order for the subject to be justified he must not only base his belief on what he can take as a ground for it, but he must also *know* that basing his belief on those grounds constitutes a truth-conducive process of belief-formation. Bonjour is imposing a higher-level epistemic requirement on justification, in the sense of demanding knowledge of the fulfilment of a condition that itself has epistemic import, namely that the process of belief

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[188] As Alston 1989a: 5 says, a ground for belief must be "the sort of thing that is typically fairly directly accessible on reflection to the subject" that possesses them. See also his 1988: 237-38.
[189] Bonjour 1980: 22. My emphasis.

formation is truth-conducive. Because the subject in the examples does not fulfil such higher-level requirement they are not justified in believing what they do.

Fulfilment of a higher-level requirement is Bonjour's diagnosis of what the subjects in the examples lacks, but he gives no *argument* for such radical diagnosis. It might be obvious and intuitive that the subject in the example lack something of epistemic significance, but that doesn't make obvious Bonjour's account of what the subject needs to remedy her lack. In fact, other philosophers who would share the initial intuitive reaction that the subject lacks something of epistemic relevance would accuse Bonjour of hyperintellectualising what the subject lacks;[190] for he demands that the subject fulfils a condition that can only be thought of by intellectually sophisticated subjects, and this would deprive infants and conceptually unsophisticated adults from something intuitively as simple as perceptual justification.[191]

Hyperintellectualisation is not the only unpalatable consequence typically charged against imposing higher-level requirements on justification; some opponents of such requirements argue that such requirements lead to infinite regresses of justified beliefs.[192] If in order to be justified in believing that *p* one must know that one believes *p* through a truth-conducive belief process, and knowledge involves justified belief, then in order to fulfil the higher-level requirement one must also know that one's belief that one believes *p* through a truth-conducive belief process is itself the result of a truth-conducive belief-process. But for the same reason one must know that a third-level belief about fulfilling a truth-conducive constraint is the result of a truth-conducive belief-source, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Only very strong argument should compel us to accept a view that seems to have such unpalatable consequences. But that strong argument is precisely what is missing in someone's position, like Bonjour's, who takes the second kind of alleged counterexample described as *sufficient* motivation for the drastic move of imposing higher-level requirements on justification. Such examples raise a legitimate point about the importance of the basing relation, but the point is harmless and the very nature of perceptual justification makes justice to it. The first kind of alleged

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[190] For example Alston 1991: 10, who says that imposing such higher-level requirements on justification "gives us a distorted picture of human knowledge, representing it, even in its lesser manifestations, as much more intellectualized, sophisticated and systematic than it really is". Audi 1989: 337-38 also rejects higher-level requirements on justification for having that distorting effect.
[191] See Alston 1988: 241 and 1991: 14-15.
[192] See for example Audi 1989: 340 and Alston 1988: 239, 1991: 19.

counterexamples discussed also raise a legitimate point, this one about the *prima facie* status of the perceptual justification for which the truth-conducivity of one's perceptual grounds can be held to be sufficient. But this point is also harmless and the *prima facie* qualification in the formulation of the basic epistemic principle about perception makes justice to it. The only harmful revision of the sufficiency condition would be the imposition of higher-level requirements, but such drastic move is insufficiently supported by the counterexamples described. If such counterexamples are the strongest case for revising the sufficiency condition, the veritistic philosopher should not fear that his project of establishing epistemic principles could be thwarted by such unpalatable consequences of that kind of requirement. He should only be worried about how to overcome the Conditional Position Problem; let's then go back to that problem.

III.3. Third Route: The Apriority of Epistemic Principles

III.3.1. The Significance of Entrenchment

The last resort to try to avert the Conditional Position Problem is to eliminate reliance on self-support altogether in explaining the correctness of the basic epistemic principle about perception. Elimination of reliance on self-support here means that we should be able to establish the correctness of that epistemic principle without relying on perception; we will take this to be equivalent to being able to establish it apriori.

Is there an apriori route to show that we are justified in accepting the epistemic principle about perception? We will examine two attempts to develop a route of that kind. The first one exploits considerations closely related to the considerations that the argument for freedom form truth-conducive constraints led us to. At the end of (III.1.3) we explained how strict freedom from truth-conducive constraints leads to inadequate epistemic constraints that seem incongruous with the defeating effect of evidence that undermines perceptual justification. We tentatively suggested that in order to account for such defeating effect it seemed that we needed

to suppose that perceptual justification is constrained at least for a *presumption* or *standing conviction* that the conditions that confer justification are truth-conducive. The first route to attempt to establish apriori epistemic principles develops this idea that the principle is constrained by such a presumption or conviction; it is argued that so constrained the principle is establishable apriori. We will now expound and examine this position.

As we have pointed out earlier in (III.1.1) the externalist treats truth-conducive constraints as conceptual truths establishable on the basis of an apriori analysis, but he thinks that showing that an epistemic principle fulfils any such constraint is an empirical matter. R. Audi agrees with the externalist that the basic epistemic principle about perception

> (EP) If on the basis of its perceptually appearing to one that *p* one believes that *p*, one is *prima facie* justified in believing that *p*,[193]

can be shown to fulfil a truth-conducive constraint only empirically, but disagrees with him in thinking that the principle is not under a truth-conducive constraint; so showing that it is correct does not commit one to show that it fulfils any such constraint. He believes, however, that justification is not free from *a* connection to truth, that the correctness of (EP) is constrained by *a* connection to truth. He articulates such a connection that doesn't amount to subsumption of (EP) under a truth-conducive constraint and argues that (EP) can be known apriori to fulfil the issuing constraint. The connection between (EP) and truth that Audi develops is that (EP) is partly constitutive of what he calls the practice of *trying to show in a proper way that our beliefs are true*, the practice of *justifying in the right way* our beliefs. He writes:

> ... there is an a priori teleological relation between justification and truth. Reflection alone shows that the process of justifying a belief has, as its appropriate –even intrinsic- aim, showing or arguing for its truth (or at least probable truth).[194]

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[193] The exact wording of the principle that Audi discusses is "P2: If S has an spontaneous perceptual experience in which S has the impression that x is F ..... , and on this basis attentively believes that x is F, then this belief is prima facie justified". (Audi 1988: 308).

[194] Audi 1988: 319.

While reliability is apparently not built into [epistemic principles] as a priori principles, they can be seen a priori to provide grounds for holding belief. [Such principles]...... are partly constitutive of epistemically permissible attempts to show truth. Thus, justification does not necessarily imply truth or (objective) probability of truth; yet it is necessary that the process of justification "aims" at truth. Truth is the teleological aim of the practice to which that process belongs........ The sorts of generative factors figuring in [the antecedent of epistemic principles] are intrinsically suited to this process: given a proper appeal to them, one aims right, in the sense of 'properly', whether or not one hits the target.[195]

In his view we cannot know apriori that basing one's beliefs on the conditions mentioned in the antecedent of (EP) is truth-conducive, but Audi holds that we can know apriori that so basing one's beliefs is constitutive of the practice of properly attempting to show that our beliefs are true.[196] (EP) does not seem to say anything about *what to do to show* that a belief is justified; it rather only mentions conditions for the *property* of being justified. But Audi believes that the *process* of showing that a belief is justified and the *property* of being justified are intimately connected by the function played in both of the type of conditions mentioned in the antecedent of (EP). He thinks that we know apriori the function of those conditions through what he calls "conceptual reflection" applied to the concept 'justification'.[197] But he rejects the suggestion that epistemic principles can be established and known simply by reflecting on the linguistic meaning of 'justification'.[198] His view is rather that apriori reflection on our concept of justification reveals that the property of a belief of being justified is essentially constituted by conditions that an individual could cite in the process of attempting to show that the belief is true, which is the practice of justifying it. The property of being justified is then yielded by the same conditions that can be cited in the process of justifying. Audi acknowledges that in order to attain the property one need not go through the process, but the process is necessarily a way of attaining the property. It is the role of the very same type of condition in both constituting the *property* of being justified and in their usability in the *practice*

[195] Audi 1988: 320
[196] As he puts it: "Those element apparently cannot be known a priori to be truth-conducive, but we can show a priori that justification has a teleological connection with truth" (1988: 330)
[197] Audi 1993a: 367.
[198] *Ibid.*: 368. "I do not think that [epistemic principles] could be known on the basis of empirical linguistic knowledge about 'justification'".

of justifying that can be known apriori.[199] Although (EP) does not formulate what to do in the attempt to show that a belief is true, we know apriori that the conditions it mentions as sufficient for the property of justification are intrinsically suitable for citation in the practice of trying to show that a belief is true. This is why we know apriori that (EP) is constitutive of the practice of properly trying to show truth.

In Audi's view the reason why the conditions mentioned in (EP) are conditions for justification is that citing such conditions is constitutive of the 'proper' or 'right' way of trying to show truth. But what makes that one the 'right' or 'proper' way of trying to show truth? Audi's answer is that we *conceive of* the conditions mentioned in the epistemic principles as truth-conducive. This is not to say that such principle partially define justifiedness because the conditions it mentions have been empirically *discovered* to be truth-conducive, that would make (EP) empirical, exactly what Audi wants to deny; it is rather that the conditions are *merely conceived* as truth-conducive. I'll quote him at large:

> Since the property of justification is, teleologically speaking, truth-conducive, the sorts of factors that we conceive as justifiers should also be factors that we think of as tending to produce true beliefs. This is not because we have discovered the (contingent) reliability of these factors and subsumed them under the principle that reliable belief-generators confer justification; it is more nearly because given the purposes of our justificatory practice, nothing could serve, in the basic way they do, as a justificatory element, unless we *conceived* it as (at least contingently) truth conducive.[200]

> ...because our justificatory practice is based largely on a concern to grasp truths, it is to be expected that justification will supervene on properties of a belief (such as perceptual generation) in virtue of which we *conceive* it as likely to be true.[201]

It must be emphasised that what makes a particular way of belief-formation the proper way of aiming at truth in Audi's sense is not its *factual* truth-conducivity but just that we so conceive it; he explicitly indicates that the *correctness* of our conception about what conditions are truth-conducive is irrelevant:

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[199] Audi calls the thesis that postulates that the conditions that yield the property of justification must be capable of being cited in the process of justifying the belief, the "Integration Thesis", for it integrates the property and the process without making the property *dependant* on the process.
[200] Audi 1988: 323. Audi's emphasis
[201] *Ibid*.: 324. My emphasis.

> If we are trying to show that a belief has a property which is truth-conducive, the base properties we cite will clearly be ones we take to conduce to truth. *We may err about the reliability of a given factor*; but as we come to believe that a type of factor does reliably indicate truth, we tend to count citing it as providing (at least indirect) justification.[202]

The fact that we conceive of certain conditions or belief-sources as truth-conducive presumably is knowable apriori; since it is our so conceiving perceptual conditions that makes (EP) constitutive of the proper way of trying to show truth and hence a correct epistemic principle, it follows that we can know (EP) to be correct apriori.

Audi's view consists of two claims: first, that (EP) is constitutive of the practice of properly trying to show truth, and second, that what makes it constitutive of that practice is that we conceive of the justifying conditions it mentions as truth-conducive. These two claims together constitute a constraint on the correctness of an epistemic principle: in order to be adequate an epistemic principle must be partly constitutive of the proper way of trying to show truth, which means that we must conceive of the conditions it mentions in its antecedent as truth-conducive. We can take this constraint as Audi's replacement for a straightforward truth-conducive constraint on epistemic principles. Audi thinks that we can know apriori if an epistemic principle fulfils his constraint, for he thinks that we can know apriori, through 'conceptual reflection', whether an epistemic principle is partly constitutive of the proper way of trying to show truth. We can then easily know apriori that we are justified in accepting (EP), for we know apriori that we conceive that conditions it mentions as partly constitutive of the proper way of trying to show truth. We will not dispute the apriori knowability of fulfilment of Audi's constraint. What we will dispute is that his constraint is a constraint that corresponds to the epistemic good that (EP) is meant to define.

We should ask then if the mere fact that we conceive of a certain type of condition as truth-conducive explains why such conditions are conditions for an epistemic good. Certainly the crystal ball gazer's beliefs do not acquire justification merely because he conceives of his method as truth-conducive. Audi seems to think that the conceiving he is invoking must reflect or be backed by an *entrenched* conviction that the conditions in question are truth-conducive, for he remarks that

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[202] Audi 1988: 323. My emphasis.

refusing to ascribe justification in the presence of such conception of the justifying factors as truth-conducive will indicate conceptual deviance:

> ...we will justify beliefs in terms of properties we believe are truth-conducive; and when a property is so conceived denying its relevance to the justification of a belief that has it will seem conceptually deviant.[203]

Our conception of perception as a truth-conducive belief-source reflects a highly entrenched communal conviction, whereas the conviction of the crystal ball gazer about his belief-source lacks such ancient communal backing. For that reason incapacity to appreciate the relevance of perception for justification of belief about our surrounding environment would suggest that a radically different concept of justification for those beliefs is being applied, one that is not rooted in the entrenched communal conviction that enables one to appreciate the relevance of perception for justification. Audi acknowledges that our entrenched convictions about which sources are truth-conducive may change over time and as a consequence our conception of what justifies may change as well:

> ...the element we regard as justificatory, such as sensory and memorial experiences, are elements that we also normally take to be at least in fact reliable indicators of truth; and as our beliefs about reliability change, our conception of what justifies, and even of justification itself, can evolve.[204]

But as long as there are stable conceptions about which sources are truth-conducive, there will be stable ideas as to what are the proper ways of trying to show that a belief is true, and we will be able to know which those proper ways are through apriori reflection on those stable conceptions integral to our practice of justifying.

Nevertheless, the entrenchment of convictions about truth-conducivity should not conceal the fact that Audi invokes them as *mere* convictions that could be mistaken. No matter how entrenched our conceptions about which sources are truth-conducive invoking them as mere conceptions does not seem to explain the original explanandum of the veritistic philosopher, i.e. that perceptual conditions are sufficient for an epistemic good, but at best only why we *think* that they are conditions for an epistemic good. Effectively, citing the fact that we *think* or

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[203] Audi 1988: 323.
[204] *Ibid.*: 330-31.

conceive of certain conditions as truth-conducive could explain why we *think* subjects are justified if they fulfil those conditions, but the original explanandum of the veritistic philosopher was not "We *think* that S is perceptually justified in believing that p" but "S *is* perceptually justified in believing that p". Audi's constraint seems to be a constraint for the former, not the latter; accordingly, his position seems to have the effect of shifting the veritistic explanandum from the later to the former. On the face of it this shift looks like a retreat to a more modest explanatory goal, but it should be recognized that the original explanatory goal has then been abandoned. Unlike Audi, Goldman is aware of the shift in explanandum produced by replacing truth-conducivity with a mere conception of truth-conducivity as a constraint on justification; he even holds that explaining the more modest explanandum is all that the veritistic theorist really wants:

> What we really want is an explanation of why we count, or would count, certain beliefs as justified and others as unjustified. Such an explanation must refer to our *beliefs* about reliability, not to the *actual facts*. The reason we *count* beliefs as justified is that they are formed by what we *believe* to be reliable belief-forming processes. Our beliefs about which belief-forming processes are reliable may be erroneous, but that does not affect the adequacy of the explanation.[205]

The falsity of our beliefs as theorists concerning which belief-sources are truth-conducive would not affect the adequacy of our explanation only if our explanandum is "we *count* S as justified in believing that p"; it would affect it if the explanandum is "S *is* justified in believing that p". For our *conceiving* (truly or falsely) that X is truth-conducive seems to explain why we *think* (truly or falsely) that S is justified only because we think that X *being* truth-conducive would explain why S *is* justified; if we don't acknowledge this latter explanatory relation among the *facts* it becomes obscure why should we see our *conceptions* about truth-conducivity as relevant to the explanation of our *beliefs* about justifiedness. But then our thinking (unbeknownst to us *falsely*) that X is truth-conducive cannot account for S *being* justified, although it would still account for why we think he is. The falsity of our beliefs about truth-conducivity does not affect the adequacy of a veritistic explanation only if the original explanandum is replaced with the subjectivised surrogate: "We think that S is justified".

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[205] Goldman 1979: 349. My emphases.

But there is a point in Audi's and Goldman's view. The veritistic philosopher is indeed interested in the first place in knowing why we *count* people as justified. Since the epistemic appraisals that people make are based on people's *beliefs* about the truth-conducivity of the individuals' sources, it follows that the veritistic philosopher is interested in people's beliefs about which belief-sources are truth-conducive as well. But we recognize the difference between merely *counting* people as justified on the basis of beliefs about truth-conducivity that could be erroneous, and people *actually being* justified. As Goldman himself indicates:

> People's appraisals of doxastic attitudes as justified or unjustified reflect *only* *their beliefs* about justifiedness, *not the facts* of justifiedness. When Smith judges Jones' belief to be justified ..... this indicates that Smith's *believes* that Jones' belief accords with the right [epistemic principle]. It doesn't mean that Jones' belief *does accord* with the right [epistemic principle], nor even that Smith is justified in believing that it so accords (though doubtless Smith *thinks* that he is justified).[206]

But if we recognize the difference between people's beliefs about justifiedness and the facts of justifiedness, our mere entrenched convictions about which sources are truth-conducive could serve merely to *formulate* putatively correct epistemic principles; whether they are really correct or not cannot be determined on the basis of whether they fulfil the constraint imposed by our entrenched conceptions about truth-conducivity; they trivially do, for they were formulated on the basis of those convictions. If a veritistic philosopher insists that our entrenched convictions about which types of conditions are truth-conducive, and hence which ones are constitutive of the proper way of trying to show our beliefs to be true, constitute an adequate constraint on the correctness of an epistemic principle that mentions a certain type of conditions in its antecedent, he is really surrendering the initial explanandum of the veritistic explanation and replacing it with a subjective surrogate; for only our *mere opinions* about when we are justified can be explained by our *mere opinions* about which of our belief-sources are truth-conducive.

If a mere entrenched conviction or presumption that the conditions mentioned in the antecedent of (EP) are truth-conducive is not an adequate constraint on the correctness of (EP), it seems that the adequate constraint on (EP) should be a straightforward truth-conducive constraint. Our mere convictions about truth-

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[206] Goldman 1980: 59.

conducivity are relevant for explaining our beliefs about which epistemic principles are correct only because we think that the factual truth-conducivity of the conditions mentioned in the epistemic principle would help explain the correctness of the principle. If we don't acknowledge this latter explanatory relation among the facts, it becomes obscure why we should take our beliefs about truth-conducivity as relevant for explaining our beliefs about which epistemic principles are correct.

But if respecting the original veritistic explanandum requires us to leave truth-conducive constraints in place, we are left with the task of dealing with the intuitions prompted by the Matrix scenario described in (III.1.2) above that were used to argue for *freedom* from truth-conducive constraints. The issue of how to explain away such intuitions in the context of a veritistic epistemology that leaves truth-conducive constraints in place is complex and we cannot tackle it here. We will only point out that there are *independent* reasons for explaining those intuitions *away*. In (III.1.2) we mentioned a few reasons to distrust such intuitions; one of those reasons is that such intuitions are incompatible with externalism about intentional content. This incompatibility and the strength of the independent arguments in favour of externalism about content provide excellent motivation for explaining away those intuitions uncongenial with truth-conducive constraints.[207]

III.3.2. Complexity Reduction and Truth-Conducivity

Given our discussion in the previous section it seems that if an apriori attempt to establish the basic epistemic principle about perception is going to respect the original veritistic explanandum, and not weaken it in the way that Audi and Goldman advocate, it has to respect the idea that the principle is subjected to a truth-conducive constraint, and not merely to a weaker constraint concerning our entrenched convictions about truth-conducivity. But then that the principle fulfils a truth-conducive constraint must be establishable apriori, for that's what has to be established in order to explain our perceptual justification, the original veritistic explanandum. In this section we will scrutinize a sophisticated attempt to show

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[207] See Williamson forthcoming, for a forceful critique of those intuitions on the basis of their incompatibility with semantic externalism.

apriori that the basic epistemic principle about perception fulfils a truth-conducive constraint. It has been developed by Christopher Peacocke.

Peacocke's conception of how to show apriori that transitions form the perceptual conditions mentioned in (EP) to belief are truth-conducive is nested in what he takes to be the hallmark of a rationalistic understanding of what makes a way of knowing a proposition apriori. In accordance with his rationalism in order for the truth-conducivity of the transitions described in (EP) to be established apriori it has to be established on the basis of facts about the nature and the identity of the representational contents of the perceptual states mentioned in the antecedent of (EP), facts which must be knowable apriori.[208] Peacocke calls 'apriori abduction' the argument for the truth-conducivity of perception that allegedly complies with this constraint imposed by his rationalism on any way of knowing that is to count as apriori. We will now examine in detail that apriori abduction.

It is important to point out that Peacocke's apriori argument for the truth-conducivity of perceptual states is meant to apply only to perceptual states of the type that he calls 'instance individuated'.[209] The mark of these is that "What makes these perceptions have the content they do is the fact that when the subject is properly related to the world the holding of these contents causally explains such perceptual experiences of their holding".[210] This excludes perceptions with contents such as *Swedish people* or *Mac computer*,[211] for even when the subject is properly related to the world experiences with those contents may not be causally explained by the holding of the correctness condition for that content. There are many questions on how to characterize the instance individuated perceptual contents that Peacocke focuses on, but here we need not go into those questions, as none of our criticisms of Peacocke's apriori abduction depends on the specific characterization of instance individuated contents he offers. Here we just register that this are the only kind of perceptual state that his argument purports to show is truth-conducive. For the sake of brevity we will continue to talk about perceptual states and conditions without qualification, but for the rest of this section it must be understood that we are talking only about perceptual states with instance individuated contents in Peacocke's sense.

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[208] Peacocke 2004: 52.
[209] *Ibid.*: 69.
[210] *Ibidem*.
[211] *Ibid.*: 66.

We can represent Peacocke's apriori abduction as follows:

1. The occurrence of perceptual states is a complex event.
2. Explanations that best reduce complexity show the easiest way for things to come about.
3. Explanations that show the easiest way for things to come about are the most likely to be true.
4. Explanations that best reduce complexity are the most likely to be true. (From 2 & 3)
5. A Natural Selection (NS) explanation of the occurrence of perceptual states best reduces complexity
6. Therefore, a (NS) explanation of the occurrence of perceptual states is the most likely to be true. (From 4 & 5)
7. A (NS) explanation of the occurrence of perceptual states implies that they are predominantly veridical
8. Therefore, on the most likely explanation perceptual states are predominantly veridical. (From 6 & 7)
9. Therefore, transitions form perceptual states to belief are predominantly truth-conducive.

Let's explain the meaning of the central terms in this argument and how Peacocke presents the inferences in it.

Peacocke introduces the notion of complexity reduction with some illustrations where a good explanation of some complex conditions of type X is one that does not cite an explanans that involves conditions of the same type X. One of his illustrations concerns the explanation of the hexagonal structure of snowflakes. The explanation does not cite hexagonal structures at a different level to explain the hexagonal structure of the whole snowflake; it cites different types of facts, for example that frozen oxygen molecules are roughly spherical and arranged in a plane, and that the most efficient way of arranging spheres in a plane results in a hexagonal shape. Peacocke points out that we give good marks to explanations that do not repeat the same type of complexity:

The correct explanation of the shape of snowflakes does not leave us with the same complexity again at another level. It reduces –in this case it eliminates- that kind of complexity.[212]

Similarly the explanation of the occurrence of an intentional state should not repeat the same type of state in its explanans:

> Any explanation of how the subject comes to be in that state, an explanation that accounts empirically for the presence of this complexity, must not simply presuppose similar intentional complexity.[213]

Peacocke goes on to elaborate the notion of complexity implicitly in these judgments as follows:

> When there is an explanation of a complex property of some object or event, there is an explanation of why the object or event has a property which falls within a narrow range of the space of possible properties of that object or event. Shapes with hexagonal symmetry form a small subset of the geometrically possible shapes for a quantity of a frozen liquid. What needs to be explained is why the shapes of actual snowflakes fall within that narrow subset.[214]

According to this, the hexagonal shape of a snowflake is a complex property of this object because hexagonal shapes are a small subset of the set of possible properties the snowflake could have in respect of its shape. Accordingly, if hexagonal shapes formed a bigger subset of the possible properties the snowflake could have in respect of its shape having a hexagonal shape would be a less complex property; and if the sets of actual and possible properties of the snowflake in respect of its shape coincided there would not be an explanation of why the actual property falls in a narrower range from a wider range of possibilities it could have, simply because there wouldn't be a wider range of possibilities for it. *A fortiori* there would not be a complexity *reduction* explanation for such necessary property. We can formulate this notion of complexity saying that the complexity of a property X of an object or event M is proportional to the ratio: possible properties of M in respect Y / actual property

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[212] Peacocke 2004 : 78.
[213] *Ibid.*: 85.
[214] *Ibid.*: 81.

X of M in respect Y, if this ratio is high the complexity of property X is high, if the ratio is low the complexity of property X is low.

According to Peacocke "[a]ny explanation of complexity as I am conceiving it must explain more complex states by less complex states".[215] Given the above notion of complexity this means that an explanation that reduces complexity does so by citing an explaining property X' of an object or event M', whose ratio: possible properties of M' in respect Y' / actual property X' of M' in respect Y' is *lower* than the corresponding ratio for the explained property M. But then it becomes unclear whether the explanation of hexagonal shape of snowflakes that Peacocke mentions really reduces complexity in *this* sense. For that explanation cites the condition that oxygen molecules in frozen water have roughly spherical shape and it is unclear why we should regard the property of this explaining condition, i.e. having spherical shape, as less complex than the property of the condition to be explained, i.e. having a hexagonal shape. The ratio: possible properties of frozen oxygen molecules in respect their shape / actual property of frozen oxygen molecules of having a roughly spherical shape seems to be *at least as high as* the ratio: possible properties of snowflakes in respect of shape / actual property of snowflakes of having hexagonal shape; for hexagonal shapes and spherical shapes form an *equally* small subset of all possible geometrical shapes. If this is so then the explanation Peacocke describes as an example of complexity reduction does not really reduce complexity in the special sense he elaborates. Below we will see that Peacocke's notion of complexity has other damaging consequences for the apriori justifiability of some of his claims.

Peacocke uses reduction of complexity as a criterion for good explanations. Here is what his Complexity Reduction Principle says:

> Other things equal, good explanations of complex phenomena explain the more complex in terms of the less complex; they reduce complexity.[216]

If our explanation doesn't reduce complexity in this sense "one will have explained the apparently unlikely in terms of the apparently unlikely. One will not have shown how the complexity could easily have come about"[217]. So the less complex conditions that a complexity reduction explanation cites as its explanans are

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[215] Peacocke 2004: 82.
[216] *Ibid.*: 83.
[217] *Ibid.*: 82.

conditions that could easily come about. This is premise (2) in his argument. Peacocke holds that conditions that could easily come about are more likely to come about (this is premise (3)):

> ...other things equal, complexity reducing explanations of complex phenomena are more likely to be true than those that do not reduce complexity.[218]

> ...the fact that an explanation reduces complexity counts in favour of its confirmation, because it is an explanation that does not make it hard or excessively improbable for the postulated explaining condition to be true.[219]

According to Peacocke applying the principle of complexity reduction to the complex phenomena of the occurrence of perceptual experiences we find that its best explanation, i.e. the one that most reduces complexity, is a Natural Selection (NS) explanation (this is premise (5)) which says that perceptual states "are produced by a device which has evolved by natural selection to represent the world accurately to the subject".[220] Such explanation succeeds in reducing complexity because it doesn't cite as explaining conditions states or events of the same kind that the states being explained:

> The explanation by natural selection of the existence of roughly accurate perceptual systems reduces complexity. The explanation succeeds by citing states of affairs of lesser complexity than that which is to be explained. The explanation does not postulate the occurrence of other intentional states in the production of perceptual experience. Nor does it postulate other unexplained states of the same relational complexity as those to be explained.[221]

The explanation of perceptual experiences that most reduces complexity happens to be the one which predicts that perceptual experiences of creatures like us predominantly represent the world veridically (this is premise (7)). Since the explanation that most reduces complexity is the most likely to be true, we obtain the result that on the most likely explanation perceptual states predominantly represent correctly:

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[218] Peacocke 2004: 95.
[219] *Ibid.*: 97.
[220] *Ibid.*: 87.
[221] *Ibid.*: 88.

> ... explanations of the occurrence of experiences with instance-individuated contents which succeed in reducing complexity will also result in the representational contents of those instance-individuated experiences being predominantly correct. Such representational contents are predominantly correct in the case that is most likely, that of the complexity-reducing explanation which appeals to the evolution of a perceptual system through natural selection.[222]

If on the most likely explanation perceptual states are predominantly veridical, then the most likely hypothesis is that transitions from perceptual states to belief are truth-conducive. This concludes the apriori case for the claim that the basic perceptual epistemic principle fulfils a truth-conducive constraint.

If Peacocke's argument is going to furnish an apriori case for the conclusion that transitions from perceptual states to belief are predominantly truth-conducive all of its premises must be establishable apriori. I will dispute the apriority of the core steps in the argument that take us from complexity reduction to likelihood of truth, i.e. premises 2-4. Even if we concede that the rest of the premises of the argument are establishable apriori, if these crucial ones are not Peacocke's abduction will not be an apriori one.

Let us begin with the Complexity Reduction Principle (CRP) itself. Why should we accept that the criterion of good (and as the steps from (2) to (4) purport to show, more likely) explanation is one that reduces complexity in Peacocke's sense? He gives no principled argument for the (CRP), he only illustrates its plausibility with a few examples (like the one about snowflakes we mentioned above) and highlights the dissatisfaction we would feel if the principle was violated in some instances, for example, in an explanation of how intelligence comes about that cited capacities of similar intellectual richness.[223] But this kind of argument by example is definitely insufficient as a justification of a principle that states a criterion for acceptable explanations in *full generality* and which Peacocke treats as *apriori correct*. Moreover, as we argued above, the example of snowflakes Peacocke uses does not in fact seem to reduce complexity and so it wouldn't support the (CRP).

In fact there are positive reasons for doubting the (CRP). In general, given Peacocke's special sense of complexity reduction the (CRP) disqualifies as bad

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[222] Peacocke 2004: 97-98.
[223] See *Ibid.*: 88

explanations many paradigmatically *good* explanations in physical science that do not seem to reduce complexity in that special sense. All explanations that cite in the explanans a numerical constant do not seem to reduce complexity in the ratio sense.[224] For example, the gravitational constant G = 6.67 x 10^{-11} newton $-m^2/kg$, is used to calculate, among many other things, the mass of the planets. Given Peacocke's ratio notion of complexity reduction it is unclear why we should regard the property of having the numerical value 6.67 x 10^{-11} newton $-m^2/kg$ as less complex than the property of planet Earth of having a mass of value 5.9742 × 10^{24} kg. The ratio: possible values for gravitational constant / actual value of the gravitational constant seems to be *at least as high as* the ratio: possible values for the mass of planet Earth / actual value of the mass of planet Earth, for the actual value of the gravitational force and the actual value of the mass of planet Earth seem to be *equally* small subsets of all possible values for the gravitational constant and all possible values of the mass of planet Earth, respectively.

In response someone could argue that in fact the range of possible values that the gravitational constant could have taken is not as large as the possible values the mass of the Earth could have taken, and so the ratio that defines the complexity of the gravitational constant is lower then the ratio that defines the complexity of the mass of the Earth. But the question would then be how do we know that the range of possibilities for the gravitational constant is smaller than the range of possibilities for the mass of the Earth? This same question arises with respect to all purported examples of complexity reduction, and one central difficulty in answering it is that Peacocke does not explain what notion of possibility he uses in formulating the ratio notion of complexity reduction. If it is merely *logical possibility* then the explanation of the mass of the Earth which appeals to constant G is a good explanation that does not reduce complexity for the reasons already explained; the same holds for the explanation of snowflakes' shape discussed above. If Peacocke wanted to argue that the ranges of possibilities for the gravitational constant and for the arrangement of frozen oxygen molecules is smaller than the ranges of possibilities for their respective explananda, it seems that he would have to invoke a notion of what is possible for those explaining conditions informed by empirical information, supplied by cosmological science and physics. Maybe these sciences have discovered that the

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[224] I got this point about physical constants in connection with complexity reduction from Marcus Giaquinto.

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value of the gravitational constant, unlike the value of the mass of the Earth, could not be very different from its actual value; and that the arrangement of oxygen molecules in frozen water, unlike the shape of snowflakes, could not be very different from the arrangement it actually takes. But in that case judgments about the complexity of a purported explanans relative to its explanandum would have to be empirically informed; they could not be made apriori as Peacocke needs them to be.

For the sake of argument let us suppose that Peacocke's (CRP) can be justified apriori and let us see if Peacocke succeeds in justifying apriori the other core premises in his abduction.

Premise (2) in Peacocke's argument says that "the aim of complexity reduction in explanation is to show how the apparently unlikely can easily come about".[225] Why should we accept that the explanation that best reduces complexity *in the non-repeating sense* is the one that shows the easiest way things could come about? We can imagine counterexamples to such correlation. Imagine a world where all the brains that have existed in the last 1000 years have been always envated and manipulated by a super-computer designed by an evil scientist. In that world the explanation of perceptual experiences which best reduces complexity still is one that doesn't cite the intentions of an evil scientist, but that explanation does not coincide with the one that shows the easiest way for perceptual experiences to come about, for in that world the easiest way for a perceptual experience to come about is by being a hallucination produced by the manipulations of a super-computer programmed by the evil scientist.[226] In order to align complexity reduction and the easiest way as he needs Peacocke could add the premise that the actual world is not that Matrix world. But such a premise is not available to him neither as a piece of empirical knowledge nor as a piece of apriori knowledge. For if it is a piece of empirical knowledge then relying on would threaten the apriori status of this step of the abduction; on the other

[225] Peacocke 2004: 90-91.

[226] In this counterexample I am interpreting 'the easiest way for X to come about' as *within a world*, but it may be interpreted *over worlds*. A suggestion for this interpretation (which I take from Marcus Giaquinto) is this:

> W is the easiest way for X to come about iif(df) there are more worlds in which X comes about in way W than worlds in which X comes about in any other way.

However, adopting an understanding of 'the easiest way for X to come about' over worlds would create a problem for Peacocke. The problem is that it just does not seem to be knowable apriori that a specific way W for X to come about is the easiest way in the above sense, for how can we know apriori that there are more possible worlds in which X comes via W than worlds in which it comes in any other way?

hand he can't take that premise to be established apriori for that is precisely what he is trying to show, that there is an apriori argument for the conclusion that we are entitled to take perceptual experiences at face value, and hence to take it that we are in a normal, as opposed to a Matrix, world. This counterexample to premise (2) exploits the fact that if the right hypothesis is in place then the easiest way for something to come about is not going to be the one that best reduces complexity. Peacocke is aware of the threat that this fact poses to his view and responds by saying that the judgment that aligns easiest ways with complexity reduction is not relativised to any hypothesis about any empirical conditions that hold in the world. He illustrates the point with the explanation of how a molecule of a specified type of DNA came into existence; he holds that relative to the empirical information that DNA molecules already exist the easiest way for the molecule of the specified kind to come about is for one of the existing molecules to be copied. But he holds that without relativisation to the information that DNA molecules already exists the easies way for a molecule of the specified type to come about is by some form of chemical evolution.[227] He intends his judgment about the easiest way for a perceptual state to come about to be of this unrelativised kind:

> It is a claim of the unrelativised kind I intend when I say that the easiest way for a perceptual experience to occur is one in which it is unlikely to be a hallucination. The case for this claim, whether right or wrong, is made on philosophical grounds, and does not rely for its justification on empirical information attained by perception. There is no relativization in this claim to conditions which are known to hold only on empirical grounds.[228]

That is exactly what the apriority of his explanation demands, i.e. that his judgment about the easiest way for things to come into existence does not rely on any empirical information. But the example he gives is not an argument that such kind of *fully* unrelativised judgments is possible. At best it illustrates independence from *one specific* piece of empirical information. Even conceding that the judgment that the easiest way for a specific type of DNA molecule to come into existence is through chemical evolution is not relativised to the *specific* piece of information that DNA molecules already exist, it is doubtful that it is not relativised to *any* empirical assumption at all. For instance, with what right could we hypothesize that chemical

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[227] Peacocke 2004: 92.
[228] *Ibidem*.

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evolution is the easiest way for a certain type of DNA molecule to come into existence, without assuming some knowledge about how chemical evolution acts on other known DNA molecules? A hypothesis about the easiest way for a type of DNA molecule to come to exist postulated in a strictly empirical vacuum should look arbitrary; in any case Peacocke does not show that a judgment *fully* unrelativised to empirical information about the easiest way for empirical conditions to come into existence is possible, his illustration leaves this question open.

With different terminology Peacocke insists on the possibility of making the fully unrelativised judgments he envisages and that such judgments coincide with the explanation that best reduce complexity. He distinguishes 'merely as-if' states from genuine states. For example, a crowd of actors that behave as if they were playing a soccer game for the filming of a movie and a perfect hallucination that p are 'merely as if' states with respect to the genuine states of playing a soccer game and having a perception that p. He uses the phrase 'as-if state' in such a way that it applies to both merely as-if states and genuine states, although the later are not merely as-if states. Peacocke holds that if the *only* information given is that an as-if state occurs, with no more information about other empirical conditions that hold in the world, then the easiest way for it to come about is the way that best reduces complexity:

> In a significant range of cases given just the information that an as if state qualitatively similar to an instance of S occurs the easiest way for this to be the case is for it to be a genuine instance of S, and not a mere as-if state. For it to be a genuine instance of S is the explanation that most reduces complexity.[229]

But this alleged illustration of the judgment unrelativised to empirical information raises the same doubts as the DNA example. In the same way that the judgment that singles out chemical evolution as the easiest way for a type of molecule to come about does seem to presuppose some empirical knowledge about the processes that govern other DNA molecules, the judgement that singles out the obtaining of a genuine state as the easiest way for a given as-if state to obtain seems to rely on background empirical hypotheses about how things usually come about in a 'normal environment'. In any case Peacocke has not shown that this is not so; he has not

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[229] Peacocke 2004: 105.

shown that the agreement between complexity reduction and easiest ways stated in his premise (2) is establishable apriori.

What should we say about premise (3), which connects easiest ways with likelihood of truth? Schematically premises (2) and (3) give us these connections:

Complexity reduction — Easiest way for X to come about — Most likely to be true

(2)   (3)

We don't need to enquire whether the connection between the easiest ways and the most likely ones, i.e. premise (3), can be established apriori; for even if it could we have argued that Peacocke fails to show that the connection between complexity reduction and easiest ways, i.e. premise (2), is establishable apriori. Therefore, the connection between complexity reduction and likelihood of truth, i.e. premise (4), which is inferred from (2) and (3), cannot be establishable apriori either.

If the foregoing criticisms are correct then even if Peacocke could somehow single out apriori the (NS) explanation as the one that best reduces complexity with respect to the occurrence of perceptual states,[230] which is premise (5), the inference to its being the most likely, i.e. premise (6), will be mediated by (4), which itself depends on (2), which we have argued is not establishable apriori. For this reason the abduction in favour of the explanation that predicts that perceptual states are predominantly veridical cannot be regarded as apriori. Therefore, such abduction does not support an apriori case for the claim that transitions from perceptual states to belief are truth-conducive. Peacocke has not shown an apriori route to establish that the basic epistemic principle about perceptual justification fulfils a truth-conducive constraint.

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[230] But Peacocke also has trouble in defending the claim that the (NS) explanation is the one that best reduces complexity with respect to the occurrence of perceptual states, as he acknowledges (2004: 98):

> The argument is open ended in that I have not shown that explanations by natural selection of the existence of perceptual systems provide the only satisfactory explanation of complexity that succeeds in reducing complexity. I have not proved that there are no others: I have merely not been able to construct any.

Chapter IV

Scope and Limitations

IV. 1. Reconceptualising the Goal of the Project: Vindications and Entitlements

The Conditional Position Problem (CPP) is an obstacle in the task of showing that we are justified in accepting the basic epistemic principle about perception; it obstructs the ability of the veritistic philosopher to conclude that we are justified in taking it that perception is truth-conducive, leaving him in the position of being able to conclude merely that we are justified in believing that perception is truth-conducive only if it is. (CPP) arises from a crude externalist treatment of self-support, its avoidance has to either eschew self-support altogether or give a non-crude externalist treatment of it. In the previous chapter close examination of each of these possible ways of overcoming (CCP) has reveal them as unpromising.

A common characteristic of attempts to overcome (CPP) we have examined is that they somehow attempt to *justify* the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source and then, given minimal veritism, that the basic epistemic principle about perception is correct. This is a shared broad conception of the goal of the project as a *justificatory goal*. We have assumed that such a goal is a legitimate one, but a reaction to our results so far could contest that assumption. If the goal is not a legitimate one, failure to achieve it shouldn't be viewed as philosophically significant. Is the goal legitimate? It could be argued that the justificatory goal is somehow ill-conceived, for it aims to show or justify the claim that a *basic* belief-source is truth-conducive and it is not clear how a belief-source can be shown truth-conducive except by means of other more fundamental belief-sources. The task of testing and establishing the truth-conducivity of a *non*-basic belief source is normally a perfectly achievable goal, but such a task essentially presupposes appeal to independent belief sources which are not the object of testing. But by fixing on a basic belief-source we necessarily deprive ourselves of the requisite independent resources that made that kind of inquiry unproblematic, for there are no independent

belief-sources to investigate the truth-conducivity of a basic belief-source; we must investigate it by itself. Of course it is not immediately obvious what is exactly problematic with such a necessary appeal to self-support. As the previous chapters illustrate, it takes some argument to identify what makes such appeal problematic. But the fact remains that in setting ourselves the task of showing that a basic belief-source is truth conducive we seem to be setting a goal which strangely deviates from similar goals pursued in other areas of knowledge. The deviation in question should make us suspect that the goal itself is illegitimate; the negative results we have obtained in searching the different available routes to accomplish that goal substantiate that suspicion.

The illegitimacy of the justificatory goal means that it is illegitimate to attempt to justify the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. But justification is not the only epistemic standing that one might have in relation to this proposition. Moreover, the fact that we have evidence that it cannot be shown that we have such an epistemic standing with respect to that propositions suggests that we have been misconceiving the kind of epistemic status that we can sensibly aspire to in relation to that proposition. If we are going to retain veritism we still have to conceive of epistemic principles as subject to truth-conducive constraints; what we have to give up is the aspiration of *showing* or *justifying* that they fulfil such constraints. This is the point at which the goal has to be reconceptualised. What can go in place of this piece of showing or justifying? We can find an answer to this question in the approach of some philosophers to the problem of induction. These philosophers distinguished between *validating* and *vindicating* a method of belief formation.[231] Very crudely, to validate a method is to show that it is truth-conducive; to vindicate it is to show that if success in achieving a certain truth-linked goal is possible this method will achieve it. This is a mere slogan, but it's enough to introduce the sense of the contrast. In a vindication no *evidence* if offered for the claim that the method is truth-conducive, it rather consists in a proof that the method will take us to true beliefs, if true belief is achievable at all; this last claim could be true even if true belief is *actually* unachievable and therefore any putative evidence for the truth-conducivity of the method is necessarily spurious. A vindication of a

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[231] See for example Feigl 1952 and 1963; and Reichenbach 1949.

method is distinct from the justification (validation) of the claim that it is truth-conducive.

A vindication was usually also called "pragmatic justification", for its alleged resemblance to the justification underpinning decisions to take courses of action when our information about the conducivity of our means to our ends is incomplete, but where taking the course of action is our only chance to achieve the end. But the term 'pragmatic' is confusing, because it suggests *non-epistemic*, and the vindications of epistemic principles we will be discussing are epistemic in as much as they vindicate a method vis-à-vis a truth-linked goal, not, say, relative to prudential or pragmatic goals. In recent years the essentials in the idea of a vindication have been rehabilitated by Crispin Wright and others.[232] If successful, this view promises a way a carrying forward the veritistic project of explaining epistemic principles. We will now examine how much of this promise is actually fulfilled.

In (II.4.1.) we examined Wright's line of reasoning for charging certain arguments with a vicious form of epistemic dependence we termed (DW). (DW) is exhibited by an argument if and only if the justification for its premises depends on an antecedent and independent warrant for the conclusion. In Wright's conception this latter warrant is an *entitlement*. In recent writings Wright has developed further the notion of entitlement that figures in his charge of (DW). Earlier we pointed out several problems in his characterisation of his notion of entitlement, but we were not as much interested in the notion itself as in the accusation of (DW) of which it is part. Now our interest will focus entirely on how Wright has developed the notion itself and on the conditions on which it has application, for his views on these matters suggest a direction in which the veritistic project of explaining epistemic principles could be pushed forward and away from the difficulties discussed in chapter III.

In chapter II we discuss some problems in the characterisation of the type of doxastic attitude that Wright's entitlements attach to and of the range of propositions that such an attitude ranges over. Wright's developed views on these issues constitute substantive improvements on his former ones. However, we don't need to fix on them. Our discussion will focus exclusively on the conditions for the epistemic right he calls entitlement. For our purposes we need only point out that he calls

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[232] For example Enoch and Schechter MS.

'cornerstones'[233] the propositions that the special doxastic attitude ranges over and that he terms 'taking on trust' the doxastic attitude that entitlements attach to.[234] So that a cornerstone is the appropriate kind of proposition that one can be entitled to take on trust. He remarks that *taking on trust that p* is to be understood by its relation to the central doxastic attitude *believe that p*. Taking on trust that p is like believing that p in that it rationalises action and further belief acquisition, but unlike believing that p it is not rationalised by evidence.[235] So, in Wright's view an entitlement to taking on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source makes it rational to form certain beliefs on the basis of the relevant perceptual experiences. But taking on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source cannot be supported or justified evidentially. The epistemic right that attaches to taking in trust that p is not evidential justification but entitlement. From this point of view the way of carrying out the veritistic project in terms of showing that we are justified in claiming that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source is essentially misguided: it attempts to do the impossible. The aim of the project should be to show that we are *entitled* to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source.

Although Wright is not explicit about this he must share with Peacocke the ambition of building his explanation entirely apriori, for otherwise it would rely on sense experience and so it would fall prey to the problems haunting self-support that we have discussed. Is Wright's explanation apriori? What Wright attempts to establish is that one is what he calls *absolutely strategically entitled* to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. The conditions for this are as follows:

A thinker X is *absolutely strategically entitled* to accept P just in case

| (i) | X has no sufficient reason to believe that P is untrue; and |
| (ii) | In all contexts, it is a dominant strategy for X to act exactly as if he had a justified belief that P.[236] |

[233] Wright 2004b: 167.
[234] *Ibid.*: 194.
[235] *Ibid.*: 183.
[236] *Ibid.*: 183.

And the reasoning that shows that one fulfils the conditions for being absolutely strategically entitled to accept that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source is this:

(a) It is of paramount importance to us to find our way around the world, make use of its resources, avoid danger, and so on. If we are to do these things, we need to be able to form reliable beliefs about the location and dispositions of material objects.

(b) (i) If the world is generally open to our perceptual faculties, ordinary observation will be the most effective way of forming such beliefs.

    (ii) If the world is not generally open to our perceptual faculties, no other capacities that we possess will fare any better.

Therefore

(c) Reliance on ordinary observation is a dominant strategy for arriving at reliable beliefs about the location and dispositions of material objects.

(d) We have no reason to believe that the world is not generally open to our perceptual faculties.

Therefore

(e) We are absolutely strategically entitled to accept that the world is generally open to our perceptual faculties.[237]

The crucial claims towards establishing that reliance on perception is a dominant strategy are (b)(i) and (b)(ii). Are those claims knowable apriori? In order to bring out the difficulties in giving a positive answer to this question it is pertinent at this juncture to compare Wright's claims with the model by which they were inspired: Reichenbach's vindication of induction.

Reichenbach was interested in the vindication of one specific inductive rule: the rule of induction by enumeration. This rule permits the inference that the limit of the relative frequency or proportion of an attribute in an indefinitely extended sequence approximates within a small interval the proportion of the attribute in the observed section of the sequence. The term 'limit' applied to the relative frequency or proportion of an attribute in an indefinitely extended sequence denotes a value such that the *observed* proportion of the attribute in any sufficiently long section of the sequence matches that value to any degree of approximation.[238] This means that

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[237] Wright 2004b: 186.
[238] See Salmon 1963: 88.

the supposition that the relative frequency of an attribute in an indefinitely extended sequence has a limit necessarily implies that the value of the observed relative frequency of a sufficiently long segment of the sequence will approximate to any desired degree the value of the limit. How long the observed segment has to be to approximate the value of the limit to a certain degree cannot be known a priori, but what can be known a priori, from the meaning of 'limit of the relative frequency', is that in the long run the observed relative frequency of the attribute will approximate the value of the limit as much as one likes. Reichenbach's vindication of the rule of induction by enumeration is then captioned in the following thesis:

> (Y) If there exists a limit of the frequency, then if the rule of induction is used in a sufficiently long repeated procedure, then the limit of the frequency will be found to a desired degree of approximation.[239]

(Y) is knowable apriori, indeed in Reichenbach's view tautologically, from the meaning of 'rule of induction by enumeration' and of 'limit of the relative frequency'.[240] From (Y) we can extract claims parallel to Wright's premises (b)(i) and (b)(ii) only to the effect that reliance on the rule of induction by enumeration is a dominant strategy for finding out limits of frequencies of attributes in sequences:

> (b)(i)^ If there's a limit of the frequency, application of the rule of induction by enumeration in the long run will find it to a desired degree of approximation.

> (b)(ii)^ If there's no limit of the frequency, no rule will succeed in finding it.

It must be noted that while Reichenbach attempts to vindicate a *method of belief-formation* (i.e. a rule of induction), Wright's reasoning purports to show that we have an entitlement to a *presupposition for the effectiveness* of a method of belief-formation (in the case we are fixing on: perception). Reichenbach's vindication terminates at something equivalent to premise (c) of Wright's reasoning, with the claim that a certain course of action, more specifically certain <u>policy of belief-</u>

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[239] See Reichenbach 1949: 474. More colloquially at p. 475: "The rule of induction is justified as an instrument of positing because it is a method of which we know that if it is possible to make statements about the future we shall find them by means of this method".

[240] See *Ibid.*: 479: "A synthetic inference is justified by means of a tautology.... The relation between the inductive procedure and the aim of knowledge....is analytic".

formation (i.e. use of an inductive rule) is vindicated. Wright goes farther. From the fact that a relevant policy is vindicated, or in his terminology that it is a dominant strategy for us, and the datum that we lack reason to think that a presupposition for the effectiveness of the policy does not hold he infers that one is strategically entitled to take on trust that <u>such presupposition holds</u>.

Despite the fact that Wright's reasoning goes farther than Reichenbach's in the above way, the Reichenbachian inspired reasoning is part of Wright's reasoning; specifically it corresponds to his premises (b)(i), (b)(ii) and (c). Having emphasised this and assuming that premises (a) and (d) in Wright's argument are knowable apriori we can now rephrase our question: do the premises (b)(i), (b)(ii) and (c) in Wright's reasoning possesses the apriority of the model on which they are inspired? Only if they do would Wright be on firm ground for claiming that he has shown *apriori* that we are strategically entitled to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source.

Wright's premise (b)(i) asserts that the targeted method is "the most effective" on the condition that the world is amenable to the method, but the 'the most effective' qualification is not part of the original idea Wright seeks to generalise. For Reichenbach himself was aware that many other rules, besides the rule of induction by enumeration, would also in the long run find the limit of a frequency, if it exists. This means that those other rules of induction get vindicated as well and for exactly the same reason that the rule of induction by enumeration. The vindication does not uniquely pick any of those rules as "more effective" than the others as far as finding the limit of a frequency goes. If there are grounds for preferring any of those rules over the others those grounds are distinct form the considerations that equally vindicate all those rules.[241] In order to bring Wright's claims closer to the model on which they are inspired we could delete the 'most effective' qualification. Then we have:

> (b)(i)* If the world is generally open to our perceptual faculties, ordinary observation is a reliable way of forming true beliefs about it.

> (b)(ii)* If the world is not generally open to our perceptual faculties, no other capacity we have is a reliable way of forming true beliefs about it.

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[241] See Salmon 1963: 89-95 for a brief discussion of these issues.

An obstacle to determining whether these claims are knowable a priori is that Wright does not explain what 'the world is generally open to our perceptual faculties' means. On his behalf we could stipulate that that phrase means that it is likely that by exercise of our perceptual faculties we will reliably form true beliefs about the world. Although on such understanding b(i)* is close to being analytically true, the stipulation does not have a similar effect on b(ii)*, for even if it is not likely that by exercise of our perceptual faculties we will reliably arrive at true beliefs about the world, it remains as a firmly empirical question whether any other capacities we have could enable us to reliably form true beliefs about the world. It might well be that none of the other capacities we have has this feature, but certainly we cannot deduce that none of them does from the supposition that our perceptual faculties do not have it. Even on the charitable stipulation b(ii)* seems to be knowable only empirically. We could try other stipulations of the meaning of 'the world is generally open to our perceptual faculties' but it is doubtful that they would do anything to overcome the basic problem: the hypothesis that the empirical world is not amenable to the successful exercise of some faculties relative to truth-linked goal, doesn't entail that no other faculties are better fitted to achieve it; this is an empirical question.[242]

If premise b(ii)* in Wright's argument for the claim that we are strategically entitled to take in trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief source is knowable only empirically, then his philosophical argument has not eschewed self-support. This brings Wright's position dangerously close to the position of the philosopher who pursues the old goal of the veritistic project, i.e. to show that there's justification for believing that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source; in both cases the route to the intended conclusion involves reliance on perception. This proved to be fatal for the pursuit of the old goal, for either the attempt assumes a crude externalist treatment of self-support, in which case the philosopher lands in the merely conditional position that there is justification for believing that perception is a truth-

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[242] B(i)* and b(ii)* delete the 'most effective' qualification in Wright's original formulations, putting it back doesn't help on the apriority score, if anything it only makes things worse, since it is then not clear that even b(i) is knowable apriori on the suggested stipulation. For from the supposition that it is likely that by the exercise of our perceptual faculties we will reliably form true beliefs about the world, it doesn't follow that our perceptual faculties are the *most effective* means to reliably form true beliefs about the world. That it is likely that a method M reliably leads to true belief does not imply anything about *how* likely that is, much less that that it is *more* likely than any other method.

conducive belief-source *if* perception is a truth-conducive belief-source (II.6). Or the attempt assumes a non-externalist treatment of self-support which unsuccessfully attempts to lift truth-conducive constraints for justification (III.1.3) or replaces the Conditional Position Problem by worse problems (III.2).

Does the fact that Wright's argument involves self-support cause any similar damage to his attempt to show that we have an entitlement to take on trust that perception is truth-conducive? Wright rejects the kind of non-externalist position discussed in (III.1.2), for he takes truth-conducivity to be necessary for perceptual justification; however he rejects the externalist view that lands the old veritistic philosopher in the conditional position problem, for he thinks the truth-conducivity of the source is not sufficient for perceptual justification, an entitlement to take on trust that perception is truth-conducive is also necessary. This is Wright's view about the role of entitlements. Because such an entitlement is a *default* position, and not itself a cognitive achievement, he also rejects the kind of non-externalist treatment of self-support discussed in (III.2) which seeks to impose higher level-requirements on justification. So it would seem that Wright's view is free from all the components in the externalist and non-externalist treatments of self-support that were problematic for the philosopher attempting to show that there's justification to believe that perception is truth-conducive. However, we must remember that Wright's view does have a disastrous consequence for such an attempt, for it renders the track-record argument relied on by that philosopher a case of transmission-failure. That's why endorsing Wright's view about the role of entitlements is not an option for the philosopher pursuing the old veritistic goal, conceptualised in terms of seeking to *justify* the claim that perception is truth-conducive.

The question we have to ask then is if the fact that Wright's argument involves self-support *combined* with his view about the role of entitlements causes any damage to his attempt to show that we have a strategic entitlement to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. Given that for him a strategic entitlement to trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source is necessary for perception to give us justification to believe specific propositions, the fact that one of the premises in his argument can be justified only empirically entails that the justification of such a premise depends on the *truth* of the conclusion of the argument, i.e. that we are strategically entitled to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. But then his argument for the conclusion that we are

strategically entitled to take on trust that perception truth-conducive shows this *only if* we are so strategically entitled. This is the same kind of position that the old veritistic philosopher found himself in: a track-record argument gives justification to believe that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source only if perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. The probative force of Wright's argument is conditional on what its conclusion asserts. Because any attempt to get past that conditional position will rely once again on a strategic entitlement to trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source, the attempt will merely replicate the conditional position that it tries to overcome. The effort to show that we have a strategic entitlement to trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source lands one in the same kind of conditional position that the effort to show that we have justification to believe that the perception is a truth-conducive belief-source.

IV.2. Limits of Explanation and Levels of Knowledge

IV.2.1. Entitlements and knowledge of knowledge

We have seen that Wright's argument that we have an absolute strategic entitlement for the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source is not entirely apriori, at least one of its premises is knowable only empirically. In virtue of needing some empirical justification Wright's adaptation of the idea of a vindication fails to eschew self-support and this places his overall argument for a strategic entitlement alongside the arguments that try to show that there is justification to believe that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. The promised reconceptualisation of the goal of the veritistic project in terms of the idea of a vindication makes no real difference for the prospects of carrying that project along successfully.

But Wright believes that he has shown that we have the entitlement in question, and he uses this result to highlight a concession he thinks we must make to certain forms of scepticism. He writes:

> In general, the effect of conceding that we have mere entitlements for cornerstones is... to qualify our claims to *higher order* cognitive achievement. I am right now in possession of a plethora of perceptual knowledge

concerning occurrences around me. . That is a claim which.... I [am] rationally entitled to make.[243]

This is because he thinks that an entitlement to take on trust that P (a cornerstone) *is* an entitlement to claim that we know propositions in the region of enquiry for which P is a cornerstone.[244] So, if his philosophical argument shows that we are entitled to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source it *ipso facto* shows that we are entitled to claim knowledge of all sorts of things about our perceptible nearby environment. The qualification of higher order cognitive achievements that Wright wants to concede is that we cannot know that we know all those things about our nearby perceptible environment; the most that we can aspire to is to be entitled to claim to know those things about our environment. In his view we don't know that we know that p, but this is consistent with being entitled to claim to know that p. The reason for this is that:

> ...in order to *know* that it is true [i.e. that we have perceptual knowledge], I need (this is a closure step, of course) to be able to know the presuppositions of its truth, some of which —we are taking it- sceptical argument has put beyond evidence. So scepticism demands the surrender of higher order knowledge —the claim to know that we know. But entitlement, in the best case, promises to save the warrantability nevertheless of the first order claim to know. And maybe that is enough to be going on with.[245]

It is not fully explicit here why one should surrender second order knowledge and why this is consistent with retaining an entitlement to claim first order knowledge. The full explanation would seem to be as follows. In Wright's epistemological architecture one's perceptual warrant and knowledge that p depends on one's entitlement to take on trust certain cornerstones, for example that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. Such entitlement has the status of a necessary presupposition of one's perceptual knowledge and warrant. This is the architecture underlying his charge of (DW) and transmission-failure discussed in (II.4.2).[246] Given that architecture the following entailment holds:

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[243] Wright 2004b: 208. His emphasis.
[244] *Ibid.*: 207-208.
[245] *Ibidem.*
[246] He has retained that architecture in his latest work, see Wright 2004b: 172.

(A) If one knows perceptually that p ⇒ one is entitled to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source.

(A) has the form p⇒q. If we assume that knowledge is closed under entailment, that is to say, that the following holds: [Kp & (p ⇒ q)] ⇒ Kq; then it follows from (A) that:

(B) If one knows (that one knows perceptually that p) ⇒ one knows (that one is entitled to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source).

One might think that this is the 'closure step' that Wright refers to in the last quotation. The step is correct in the context of his epistemological architecture. However, a moment's reflection shows that the closure step he is assuming cannot be (B), on pain of incoherence. For in order to obtain from (B) the conclusion that one lacks second order knowledge we need the negation of the consequent of (B) as another premise and then apply *modus tollens*. But the negation of the consequent of (B) is that one does not know that one is entitled to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source and Wright cannot concede such a premise, for his philosophical argument discussed in the previous section is meant to afford precisely the (allegedly apriori) knowledge that we are so entitled. He cannot coherently think that his argument succeeds and concede to the sceptic the negation of the consequent of (B). Given (B) and what Wright thinks his argument establishes, he should not surrender second order knowledge to the sceptic as he does.

The closure step operative in Wright's concession to the sceptic must be different from (B). We can guess what it is by noting that in the last quotation he credits to the sceptic having 'put beyond evidence' the presuppositions of our ordinary perceptual knowledge. The presuppositions in question cannot be the entitlements to take on trust the relevant cornerstones, again because that concession would be inconsistent with what Wright thinks his argument accomplishes (at least on the assumption that he thinks that his argument provides evidence that we are entitled to take on trust the relevant cornerstones). What Wright is alluding to as the presuppositions that the sceptic has shown to be 'beyond evidence' are the propositions that articulate the cornerstones themselves, not the propositions that articulate our alleged entitlement to the cornerstones. For Wright indeed thinks that the sceptic is right in claiming that one cannot obtain evidence for, and therefore

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cannot know, the relevant cornerstones.[247] At this stage we need not go into the details of why he concedes this to the sceptic; what matters here is that he makes that concession and believes that it follows from it, via a closure step, that we lack second order knowledge. The needed closure step is this:

(C) If one knows (that one knows perceptually that p) ⇒ one knows (that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source).

Given (C) and the thesis that one doesn't know that perception is a truth-conducive belief source, it does follow by *modus tollens* that one doesn't know that one knows perceptually that p, which is the limitation on second order cognitive achievements that Wright wants to grant to scepticism. However, (C) is a valid closure step only if the following entailment holds:

(D) If one knows perceptually that p ⇒ perception is a truth-conducive belief-source.

Intuitively, (D) is correct, but it has no place in Wright's epistemological architecture. In this architecture what is a necessary condition for one's perceptual knowledge and justification for p is that one is entitled to take on trust the relevant cornerstone, from which it doesn't follow that the cornerstone (its truth) is also necessary, for Wright's entitlements are not factive.[248] The opposite direction, first accepting (D) and from there working towards (A), is not available to Wright either; for that would involve the structural fallacy discussed in (II.4.1). In any case (D) is incongruous with the epistemological outlook that has (A) as its central tenet. If (D) is intuitively very plausible, that only goes to suggest that maybe that epistemological outlook is mistaken. But this is not the point at issue. The point is that in order to surrender to the sceptic second order knowledge as Wright thinks we should, he needs the closure step (C), but (C) is valid only if (D) is correct. Given that there's no room in Wright's epistemology for (D), the validity of (C) is inexplicable within that epistemological architecture, and therefore so is Wright's final concession to the sceptic.

[247] Wright 2004b: 169, 172.
[248] Wight 2004a: 53.

Wright would face difficulties in surrendering second order knowledge to the sceptic even on the assumption that he somehow manages to accommodate (D) within his epistemology. For even if the closure step (C) is valid we still need as a premise the negation of the consequent of (C) to derive by *modus tollens* the conclusion that we lack second order knowledge, and it is not clear that Wright has sound reasons to concede the negation of the consequent of (C).

One reason why Wright thinks one doesn't know the relevant cornerstones is that he thinks that knowledge requires evidence, or as he also puts it, *evidential warrant* and he thinks that one cannot obtain evidence for a cornerstone. In reaching this conclusion he assumes what he terms the 'proper execution principle' (PEP).[249] This principle says that:

> ...evidence acquired as the result of an empirical procedure cannot rationally be regarded as any stronger than one's independent grounds for supposing that the procedure in question has been executed properly.[250]

Wright thinks that a simple application of (PEP) yields the conclusion that we cannot acquire evidence for a cornerstone; the cornerstone he chooses to exemplify is *that we are not the victims of a coherent and sustained dream*. Applying (PEP) we have that:

> Evidence for the proposition that I am not now dreaming, acquired as a result of executing some appropriate empirical procedure, cannot rationally be regarded as any stronger than my independent warrant for thinking that the relevant procedure was properly executed, and hence for thinking that it was executed *at all* –ergo: that I did not merely dream its execution! So it appears that my acquiring a warrant by empirical means for the proposition that I am not now dreaming requires that I *already have* a warrant for that same proposition. So I cannot ever acquire such a warrant (for the first time).[251]

Because the hypothesis that the empirical procedure, used to obtain evidence for the cornerstone, was executed properly is just the hypothesis that the cornerstone holds, (PEP) entails that the warrant gained through the procedure is not any stronger than the independent warrant for the cornerstone; so if one starts from the position of

[249] See Wright 1991: 99
[250] Wright 2004b: 168.
[251] *Ibid.*: 169.

having zero warrant for the cornerstone one will gain no warrant for it through the execution of the procedure. Wright agrees with this conclusion as long as 'warrant' is qualified by 'evidential', for he thinks that we do have a standing independent warrant for the cornerstone in the form of an entitlement.

Wright faces a difficulty here because his positive view on the role of entitlements seems to falsify (PEP). Indeed, if his view on the role of entitlements is correct then an entitlement to take on trust that one is not the victim of a sustained and coherent dream is necessary for gaining perceptual knowledge and evidential warrant. So, in a particular case where we gain perceptual (evidential) warrant, for p that's so partly because we have an entitlement to take on trust that we are not the victims of a sustained dream. Given that we gained that evidential warrant for p through an empirical procedure, (PEP) implies that that warrant *can't be stronger* than the independent warrant for thinking that procedure was properly executed, which in Wright's view includes a warrant for thinking that we are not dreaming. But this implication of (PEP) for the present case is false, for it is a case where the evidence acquired for p as the result of the empirical procedure *is stronger* than one's independent warrant for supposing that the procedure was executed properly and that one was not dreaming, for by Wright's own lights this warrant is *not evidential at all* but a mere entitlement. Wright's positive view on the role of entitlements seems to counterexamplify (PEP), an application of which is essential for reaching the conclusion that we cannot obtain evidential warrant for the cornerstone, and hence that we cannot know the cornerstone to hold. In any case, (PEP) is too controversial to be assumed as Wright does in granting the sceptic the premise necessary to derive from (C) the conclusion that we lack second order knowledge.

Wright has a different argument for thinking that the sceptic is right that we cannot obtain evidence for cornerstones. He alleges that the evidential routes to cornerstones involve an inference which exhibits (DW) and hence transmission-failure; therefore through those evidential routes one will not gain evidential warrants for the cornerstones. [252] This argument hinges on the charge of (DW) and transmission-failure against the targeted inferences. We saw in chapter (II.4.1) that Wright fails to argue soundly for those charges.

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[252] See Wright 2004b: 172.

The reasons why Wright surrenders second order knowledge to the sceptic do not sit well with his overall epistemology. Not only is there no room in his epistemology for the closure step (C) needed to derive that concession, but the second premise needed for the derivation of the conclusion that we lack second order knowledge is based either on a principle, i.e. (PEP), which seems to be falsified by his own positive theory on the role of entitlements, or on an unsound accusation of (DW) and transmission-failure against some types of inferences. The fact that Wright is in no position to make the concession about second order knowledge to the sceptic does not imply that the claim that we lack second order knowledge is false; it only means that the truth of such claim is not explicable within Wright's epistemology.

However, from the point of view of the problem developed in II.6 for self-support concerning basic belief-sources, the attempt to obtain evidential warrant (justification), and hence knowledge, for a cornerstone produces an instance of (CPP). This means that the philosopher cannot conclude that he's got warrant to think that, say, perception is a truth-conducive belief-source, but only that he's got that warrant *if* perception is a truth-conducive belief source. Such conditional position is compatible with his *actually having* warrant for believing and knowledge that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. Hence being in such conditional position falls short of the sceptical lemma that we *don't know* that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source, which is needed to derive the conclusion that we don't know that we have first order perceptual knowledge. Therefore, acknowledging the existence of (CPP) doesn't result in surrendering second order knowledge to the sceptic. Nevertheless, the conditionality of the epistemic position typified by (CPP) is an obstacle for attaining the positive, reassuring conclusion that we *do know* that we have first order perceptual knowledge. For given that truth-conducivity is necessary for perceptual knowledge, in order to know that one knows perceptually that p, one needs to know that the perceptual method that produced belief in p is truth-conducive. But the evidential routes to the claim that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source land one in (CPP); one can only conclude that one knows that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source if it is, which is *not* the categorical claim that one needs to know in order to know that one knows perceptually that p.

The prospects of achieving the kind of second order epistemological assurance are not bettered by aiming at an entitlement to claim first order knowledge rather than aiming at knowledge of knowledge. For an entitlement to claim first order

perceptual knowledge is just an entitlement to trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source and we argued in the previous section that the argument that purports to show that we have such entitlement lands the theorist in the same kind of conditional position as before: he can only conclude that one is entitled to trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source if perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. This theorist faces the same kind of impasse as his predecessor; the sought epistemological assurance about our first order perceptual knowledge remains unattainable. In terms of the project of explaining fundamental epistemic principles this means that what remains unattainable is the epistemological assurance that they are correct, that we are justified in thinking that they define conditions for the achievement of epistemic goods.

IV.2.2. Knowledge of Knowledge and Philosophical Knowledge

The veritistic project of explaining the correctness of the basic epistemic principle about perception has been thwarted by two failures. First, the failure to show that there's justification to believe that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source; and second, the failure to show that there's a strategic entitlement to take on trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. Reconceptualising the goal of the project in terms of a strategic entitlement to take on trust the relevant cornerstone has made no difference to the situation the philosopher faced with the goal conceptualised in the old terms. The persistence of the failure to attain those pieces of the philosophical knowledge rises the question what we can know about the correctness of a fundamental epistemic principle.

The failures we have reviewed impair the attempts to show that we have a justification to believe or a strategic entitlement to trust that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. We should not ignore that the knowledge that the pursuit of any of those satisfying epistemic positions fails in the ways we have described is itself a piece of philosophical knowledge. It is the knowledge that we cannot gain any of those satisfying epistemic positions with respect to the correctness of a fundamental epistemic principle about perception. Given that the goal of the veritistic explanation is understood as gaining such reassuring epistemic position,

that negative philosophical knowledge constitutes evidence that so understood the goal is not attainable.

I want to discuss a heroic strategy to rescue the veritistic goal so understood which takes the philosophical evidence *so far* obtained concerning the unattainability of the goal as a premise to show that the goal is after all attainable. This is not incoherent because the reassuring epistemic position that the heroic strategy purports to show we can attain utilises neither the concept of justification nor the concept of strategic entitlement, but a concept of yet another epistemic right. The strategy takes the evidence that the goal conceptualised in terms of a justification or a strategic entitlement is unattainable as evidence that we *must* have the new kind of epistemic right to the proposition that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source.

The heroic strategy constitutes a generalisation of the reasoning that leads Wright to think that there is a form of entitlement that he calls 'entitlement of cognitive project'. In his view there are three conditions that a proposition has to fulfil in order for one to be entitled to it in this new special sense. First, the proposition has to be a presupposition of a particular cognitive project in the following sense:

> P is a *presupposition* of a particular cognitive project if to doubt P (in advance) would rationally commit one to doubting the significance or competence of the project.

Although it is not explicit here, the competence of the project alluded to is its competence *to generate epistemic justification*. To doubt a presupposition of an epistemic project is to doubt its ability to generate justified beliefs about the world. The other two conditions for entitlement of cognitive project are these:

> (i)   We have no sufficient reason to believe that P is untrue
> (ii)   The attempt to justify P would involve further presuppositions in turn of no more secure a priori standing…. And so on without limit; so that someone pursuing the relevant enquiry who accepted that there is nevertheless an onus to justify P would implicitly undertake a commitment to an infinite regress of justificatory projects, each concerned to vindicate the presuppositions of its predecessor.[253]

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[253] Wright 2004b: 191-192.

Clause (ii) comprises the idea that the heroic strategy described above generalises. This clause registers the fact that the attempt to justify a presupposition of a cognitive project leads one to a hopeless epistemic position, in the case Wright mentions: an infinite regress of justificatory projects. The philosophical argument that shows that the attempt to justify a particular presupposition of a cognitive project leads to an infinite regress of justificatory projects gives us knowledge that such a presupposition satisfies clause (ii) for entitlement of cognitive project. Such knowledge constitutes evidence that we have an entitlement of cognitive project for the relevant presuppositions; if we know that the other conditions for that kind of entitlement are fulfilled then we have the philosophical knowledge that we have an entitlement of cognitive project to the relevant presupposition. In this way the evidence that justification cannot be achieved with respect to P, is used to show that we have an entitlement of cognitive project with respect to P. A negative philosophical conclusion concerning P is turned into a step in an argument to show that we enjoy a reassuring epistemic position with respect to P.

To obtain other instances of this idea we only need to use our previous negative results to fill in variants of a modified clause (ii) for entitlement of cognitive project. The attempt to show that we are justified in believing or that we are strategically entitled to trust P lands one in a merely conditional epistemic position, which is as hopeless as an infinite regress of justificatory projects. The generalisation of clause (ii) is then clear:

> (ii)* The attempt to gain a justified belief or a strategic entitlement with respect to the presuppositions of a cognitive project leads to an epistemically hopeless position.

The proposition that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source satisfies the generalised version of clause (ii). We know that the attempt to show that we have a justification to believe or a strategic entitlement to trust that perception is truth-conducive leads to an unsatisfactory conditional position. We also know that that proposition also satisfies the other two conditions for entitlement of cognitive project: one lacks sufficient reason to think that perception is not truth-conducive and doubting that perception is truth-conducive would rationally commit one to doubting the competence to generate epistemic justification of all cognitive projects that rely on perception. Therefore, we know that we have an entitlement of cognitive project

for the proposition that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. The knowledge that a justification to believe and a strategic entitlement to trust that perception is truth-conducive are not attainable is used to show that we do have a reassuring epistemic position with respect to the proposition that perception is truth-conducive.

The heroic strategy seems to deliver the philosophical knowledge that would fulfil the veritistic goal of showing that there is a reassuring epistemic position with respect to the pivotal proposition that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source and hence with respect to the fundamental principle about perception. In line with our previous assessments of the various attempts to carry forward the veritistic goal we must ask if all the premises needed to prove that we have an entitlement of cognitive project for the proposition that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source are knowable apriori. We must grant that fulfilment of the generalised clause (ii)' is knowable apriori, for the philosophical knowledge that justification and strategic entitlement with respect to the claim that perception is truth-conducive are not attainable is reached via apriori argument. We can also grant that we can know apriori whether P is a presupposition of a given cognitive project, for no empirical tests are needed to determine whether doubting P rationally commits one to doubting the results of the cognitive project. The case of clause (i) is less clear. Can we know apriori that we have no sufficient reason to think that perception is not generally a truth-conducive belief-source? Plausibly, a sufficient reason for thinking that one's perception is not generally truth-conducive could be given by the conjunction of the following:

(1) One judges that one's perception represents d_1, d_2, d_3, etc.
(2) The set of contents [d_1, d_2, d_3, etc.] is so incoherent that the incoherence is best explained by supposing that perception is not generally truth-conducive.

It seem that one can know without relying on perception that the conjunction (1)& (2) is false, i.e. that one *doesn't* have sufficient reason to think that perception is truth-conducive.

If all three clauses for entitlement of cognitive project can be known apriori to be fulfilled the threat of self-support in establishing that we have such entitlement is averted. But there's a different doubt concerning the aptness of the entitlement of cognitive project to genuinely achieve the goal of the veritistic project. We should

ask why the conditions for this kind of entitlement are conditions for an *epistemic* good at all.

Suppose that our best attempts to gain a reassuring epistemic position with respect to the presuppositions of our cognitive projects fail, but doubting such presuppositions is not an option for us, because doubting them would commit us to doubting the competence of such projects to deliver justification for our beliefs. If this is so then we *must* carry on assuming that such presuppositions hold, otherwise it would be incoherent to treat such products as epistemically justified. Why should we accept that the existence of this kind of requirement, together with fulfilment of the other conditions for entitlement of cognitive project, yield an *epistemic* right for the presuppositions of the cognitive projects? The reason to doubt that a positive answer to this question is available is expressed by Wright himself when he acknowledges that:

> To be entitled to accept a proposition in this way [as an entitlement of cognitive project], of course, *has no connection whatever with the likelihood of its truth.* We are entitled to proceed on the basis of certain beliefs merely because there's no extant reason to disbelieve them and because, unless we make some such commitments, we cannot proceed at all.[254]

The claim that if we are not entitled to the presuppositions of our cognitive projects we 'cannot proceed at all' is a different way of saying that if we are not entitled to such presuppositions we cannot continue to coherently attach to our cognitive projects the epistemic significance we attach to them. The truth of the conditional: if we are not entitled to *P* our cognitive projects loose the epistemic significance we normally attach to them, only formulates the *structure* of our commitments; it articulates what we are committed to if we are not entitled to *P*. Of course, we carry on attaching epistemic significance to our cognitive projects and this brings on the commitment to be entitled to *P*. But the fact that our commitments have this structure has no tendency to increase the likelihood of *P*. It might be true that if one attaches epistemic significance to what my guru says one is committed to be entitled to the claim that my guru's testimony is a truth-conducive belief-source. But the structure of these commitments has no tendency to show that it is likely that my guru's testimony is a truth-conducive belief-source. Of course, we *do not* have an

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[254] Wright 2004a: 53. My emphasis.

entitlement of cognitive project for the proposition that my guru's testimony is truth-conducive because we have sufficient reason to believe that my guru's testimony is not truth-conducive, i.e. clause (i) of entitlement of cognitive project is not fulfilled. But the point is that even when that clause is fulfilled, as it is with respect to the proposition that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source, that still doesn't imply that that proposition is likely to be true, for *I have no sufficient reason to believe not-p* doesn't entail *p is likely to be true*. More clearly, fulfilment of clause (ii)' of entitlement of cognitive project doesn't contribute either to the likelihood of the proposition *P* that our practice commits us to be entitled to, for fulfilment of clause (ii)' registers the failure to prove that we have a justification or a strategic entitlement for *P*. Since, given minimal veritism, a justification for *P* increases the likelihood of *P*, fulfilling the condition of failing to prove that there is a justification for *P* obviously cannot make *P* likely to be true.

But if there's no connection whatsoever between fulfilment of the conditions for having an entitlement of cognitive project for *P* and the likelihood of *P*, then that entitlement cannot be an *epistemic* right towards *P*, given a veritistic understanding of epistemic goods. This makes the entitlement of cognitive project inapt to figure in a veritistic explanation of the correctness of an epistemic principle about perception, for such a principle is correct only if perception *is* a truth-conducive belief-source. But if our entitlement of cognitive project for the proposition that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source is neutral with respect to the truth of this very proposition, then it is neutral with respect to the correctness of the relevant epistemic principle about perception. Such entitlement is then unfit for the explanatory task undertaken by the veritistic philosopher.

The heroic attempt to fulfil the veritistic goal fails to deliver a reassuring epistemic position with respect to the pivotal proposition that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source capable of fulfilling the explanatory role it should fulfil with respect to the basic epistemic principle about perception. The knowledge of the failure of the heroic strategy is yet another piece of philosophical knowledge; like the philosophical knowledge we already had concerning the inability to show a justification to believe or a strategic entitlement to trust, it constitutes further evidence that the veritistic goal, conceived as a mission to show that there is a reassuring epistemic position with respect to fundamental epistemic principles, is not attainable. The unattainability of such a goal does not impair our ability to obtain

knowledge about fundamental epistemic principles; it rather constitutes an essential part of the subject matter of that philosophical knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The goal of the reassuring philosophical project we have examined is to show that we are justified or entitled to think that the following epistemic principle is correct:

(EP) If on the basis of its perceptually appearing to one that p one believes that p, one is *prima facie* justified in believing that p.

Given truth-conducive constraints (EP) is correct only if perception is a truth-conducive belief-source. Hence the veritistic philosopher tries to reach what we have called an epistemically reassuring position from where he knows that we are justified or entitled in treating perception as a truth-conducive belief-source. With respect to this aspiration the results of our investigation have been mainly negative. The epistemically assuring position proves to be elusive in interesting ways.

The attempt to show that we are justified in believing that perception is a truth-conducive belief-source (hereafter, (PERCEPTION)), necessarily involves reliance on perception and this leads the veritistic theorist to the vacuous position of having shown that we are justified in believing (PERCEPTION) only if (PERCEPTION). The failures of the attempts to overcome this Conditional Position Problem suggest important conclusions. The attempt to lift truth-conducive constraints leads to constraints on perceptual justification which seem inefficient to explain why our perceptual justification can be defeated by evidence that suggests lack of truth-conducivity. Given that its liability to being defeated by precisely that kind of evidence is one of the essential features of perceptual justification, lifting truth-conducive constraints seems to alter an essential feature of perceptual justification. Such attempt to overcome (CPP) is proposing to negotiate with a non-negotiable feature of perceptual justification. On the other hand, the attempt to construct an apriori route that evades (CPP) either smuggles empirical assumptions and hence constitutes no improvement on the initial position that takes the theorist to (CPP), or in fact replaces truth-conducive constraints with a 'subjectivised' version of them which shifts the explanatory focus from the facts of our perceptual

justification to an equally 'subjectivised' version of those facts. We explored a further attempt to avoid (CPP) which reconceptualises the goal of the veritistic project in terms of a strategic entitlement. Showing that we have such entitlement to take on trust that perception is truth-conducive still is to show that there is a species of reassuring epistemic position with respect to perception. We argued that this attempt also fails to fully eschew reliance on perception and that this creates for the theorist trying to show that we have such entitlement a problem exactly analogous to (CPP).

These results constitute evidence that given a *non-negotiable* component in perceptual justification, we cannot attempt to show that we have a reassuring epistemic position with respect to the truth-conducivity of perception without relying on perception. Conceiving that reassuring position as the possession of justification or of an entitlement makes no difference with respect to this point. But it is precisely that *necessary* reliance on perception that is at the heart of the Conditional Position that thwarts the attempts to show that we have whatever of those reassuring positions. The very nature of our cognitive equipment seems to prevent us from satisfying ourselves in showing that we occupy a positive epistemic position with respect to (PERCEPTION).

But our results concerning the failures to show that we have a reassuring epistemic position with respect to (PERCEPTION) must not be confused with the sceptical view which *denies* that there is such position. The reasons we have offered do not justify an outright denial of the claims that we are justified in believing (PERCEPTION) or that we are entitled to take on trust (PERCEPTION); they only support the conclusion that even if we have such epistemic standings with respect to (PERCEPTION) we cannot satisfy ourselves in showing that we do. In this sense, the philosophical knowledge that would consist in showing that we *do have* such standings remains elusive. The philosophical knowledge that the project purports to achieve is somehow inaccessible. Other philosophical projects seem to have a similar fate. For example, some philosophers have argued that the project of explaining why certain neurophysiological states of the brain yield a definite subjective quality cannot be carried out successfully because the very nature of our concepts for neurophysiological states and of our concepts for experiential states necessarily bar us from constructing the desired explanation. Clearly, this is not to say that neurophysiological states and experiential states are not in fact identical, or otherwise

modally related; it is only to say that if they are we cannot understand how that can be so. This piece of satisfying philosophical knowledge is somehow inaccessible.

The comparison with the mind-body problem also serves to highlight another aspect of the conclusions we can draw from our investigation. The failure to philosophically explain the relation between neurophysiological states and experiential states does not warrant the conclusion that there's no philosophical knowledge to be gained concerning that relation. Quite the opposite, the philosophical argument that explains why the sought explanatory bridge cannot be constructed itself constitutes a valuable piece of philosophical knowledge concerning the problematic relation between our brain and our experience. The unattainability of the bridging explanation is a rich area of philosophical knowledge. Similarly, the failure to show that we have a justification or an entitlement to believe or trust (PERCEPTION) does not warrant the conclusion that there's no philosophical knowledge to be gained about our epistemic position with respect to the truth-conducivity of perception and the epistemic principle founded on it. On the contrary, the lengthy argumentation that we have gone through which suggests that we cannot satisfy ourselves in showing that we have any of those epistemic positions with respect to (PERCEPTION), itself constitutes philosophical knowledge about our epistemic position with respect to (PERCEPTION). The unattainability of the sought demonstration of the goodness of our position is a rich area of philosophical knowledge.

Nevertheless, the question may arise as to whether that kind of knowledge concerning the unattainability of the demonstrations that we have certain reassuring epistemic positions is the only kind of philosophical knowledge we can have with respect to (PERCEPTION) and the epistemic principle founded on it. Certainly not. Our results do not affect projects that usually run parallel to the project we have investigated. One of such projects is precisely that of *specifying the conditions* for different types of epistemic goods captured in various epistemic principles. Indeed, the philosophical work that, for example, Wright does in specifying the conditions for his different notions of entitlement is work in that project; in general the work that the veritist philosopher has to do in order to define the exact conditions that an epistemic principle has to fulfil in order to be adequate is work in this latter project. In the first chapter of this investigation we did some work in that area in explaining and articulating the ideas that underpin the imposition of a truth-conducive constraint

on epistemic principles, the feasibility of that kind of task is not endangered by our results in the other chapters. What we did in Chapter I was to expound the rationale for only a crude truth-conducive constraint for epistemic principles, for that kind of crude version of a veritistic constraint is enough to bring out the obstacles that the reassuring project faces. But obviously there's much more to say about the conditions of adequacy for epistemic principles than merely that they are subject to a crude truth-conducive constraint; this is a rich area of philosophical knowledge. For example, there are ongoing hot debates concerning whether we should think that the perceptual conditions mentioned in the antecedent of an epistemic principle about perception have 'conceptual content', whether this is necessary for them to justify belief. Also, applications of externalism about intentional content to perceptual experiences have suggested that we should explain the truth-conducivity necessary for certain epistemic goods as rooted in the individuation conditions of the perceptual states in question. These are simply two examples of the areas of philosophical knowledge concerning epistemic principles that the results of our investigation leave untouched. Our results do not cast doubt on the feasibility of those theories that attempt to spell out illuminating conditions for the epistemic goods mentioned in epistemic principles. They only pretend to cast some doubt on the feasibility of the project of satisfying ourselves in showing that we have a reassuring epistemic position with respect to the correctness of those very principles; and even in this area the arguments that justify our doubt are themselves valuable pieces of philosophical knowledge concerning epistemic principles.

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