

Plan for 11/3

✓Appearances as inclinations to belief

✓-(beyond what's in 3H): against accounts on which "It appears to me that x is F" reports that there is something (an appearance of x, presumably) that is unmistakably F: this may be attractive in the case of the oar partially submerged in water, but what about the moon illusion? The Ebbinghaus Illusion (second page of 10/29 handout)?

✓-Huemer's account vs. inclinations to belief account, focusing on his main arg. against 31.2

✓-appearances at different stages of cognitive processing: consider M-L, 3H 28.0

✓-"all-in" appearances: 3H, 29.0

The Counter-Example Game and Pluralism about Justification

W's (I): 164.6

"electable": belief and the will: paragraph at 162.3

"innocently produced": the culpably revised at 163.7-164

Plan for 11/5

More on the Nature of Appearances

-the relation of Huemer's account (10/29 handout, first page, item 2) to the felt pushes/inclinations/dispositions toward belief account: I guess the important thing to note here is that that one sentence on Huemer's opening page ("I take statements...") is his complete positive account. What he then goes on to do is tell us what appearances are not: and, in particular, that they are not dispositions toward belief. I think the inclinations account is best seen as accepting Huemer's minimal positive account of how to locate appearances, but then providing an account of what all these reported things are, where Huemer has none.

-Huemer's case of the motivated belief that one will go to heaven after death: CPC 31.8, 3H, note straddling pp. 28-29: not just any disposition to believe can be correctly called an appearance (as is shown by the person just made more open to the idea by their desire), but once the desire does generate a felt push toward belief, I think we can say that "it seems to" them that the thing they want is true

-**Wolterstorff: innocence**: the "innocently produced" in (I) at the middle of p. 164, and the discussion starting at 163.7, leading up to (I) (so this is all on the pages of W that were added to the 10/29 handout)

-**context-sensitivity** and why either of two reports that are on the surface contradictory to one another can both be true. (Remember the mystery poster in the classroom.)

-context-sensitivity and accommodation (interpret c-s claims so that they are true/sensible): a case involving "tall"

-context-sensitivity and what we should (and what we should not) expect from theories on which key terms are claimed to be context-sensitive: example involving epistemic possibilities:

My "flexible proposal" ("Epistemic Possibilities," pp. 593-594): S's assertion "It is possible that P_{ind} " is true if and only if (1) no member of the **relevant** community knows that P is false, and (2) there is no **relevant** way by which members of the relevant community can come to know that P is false

Some inflexible accounts (all have only a variation on clause (1), above, and no clause (2), and have an inflexible account of who the relevant people are):

Speaker only: S's assertion "It is possible that P_{ind} " is true if and only if S does not know that P is false

Parties to the conversation: S's assertion "It is possible that P_{ind} " is true if and only if neither S nor anyone S is talking with knows that P is false

Parties to the inquiry: S's assertion "It is possible that P_{ind} " is true if and only if neither S nor anyone engaged with S in inquiry knows that P is false

Cancer Test Cases: consider a series of cases, all of which involve John, who has some symptoms indicative of cancer, and a "filtering" test which John's doctor decides to run and which has two possible results: If the results are "negative," then cancer is conclusively ruled out; if the results are "positive," then John might, but also might not, have cancer: further tests will have to be run. We will suppose that, before the test is run, the doctor tells John and his family that there is a 30% chance that John has cancer and a 45% chance that the test will be positive.

In Cancer Test Case 1A (CTC-1A), John's doctor has received the results of the test, which are negative, but has not told anyone else what the results are. The hospital's policy is that the results of this test are given to the patient and his/her family only in person. When a doctor gets the results, he calls the patient and makes an appointment for the patient to come in for results. John's wife, Jane, has received the call, so she knows that the doctor knows the results of the test, but she does not know what the results are. John's estranged brother, Bill, who lives far away, but who has heard a rumor that John has cancer, calls Jane and says, "I've heard John has cancer. Is it true?" Here, it seems, Jane might well say to Bill, "**It's possible that John has cancer.**" He has some of the symptoms. But it's by no means certain that he's got it. They've run a test on him which may rule cancer out, but they won't tell us the results of the test until tomorrow." However, at the very same time, John's doctor might well say to another doctor, "**It's impossible that John has cancer,** so we should start planning tests for other diseases." Both Jane and the doctor, it seems to me, are speaking the truth. . . . (p.582)

CTC-1B: Some readers probably thought that in our example Jane could have appropriately said to Bill, "**I don't know whether it's possible that John has cancer;** only the doctors know. I'll find

that out tomorrow when the results of the test are revealed." I agree that Jane could have said this. It may be unnatural for Jane to say this in response to what we supposed Bill said to her: "I've heard John has cancer. Is it true?" But now suppose Bill instead says, "I've heard John may have cancer. Is that possible?" Now it seems that Jane might very naturally and appropriately profess ignorance as to whether it's possible with the above profession. Suppose that she does, and call the resulting example Cancer Test Case JB (CTC-IB). (pp. 584-5)

Expectations (pp. 594-595): This rendering of the truth conditions for epistemic modal statements may be thought so elastic as to be useless-it is certainly not of the kind one hopes for when one sets out to discover an "analysis" of something. I respond that the notion being treated is a flexible notion. This flexibility makes for wimpy truth conditions, but it also accounts for much of the usefulness of the locution "It is possible that P." If we wanted to express what can be expressed by this useful locution with more precise, inflexible terms, we would have to come up with a huge battery of new epistemic terms (or content ourselves with long explanations of what is not known by such-and-such people and could not come to be known in such-and-such ways).

But some might have another worry regarding the flexibility I have postulated. It may be objected that my cases do not support my hypothesis: That the hypothesis can be made to yield the right results provides no evidence for its truth when it is so flexible as to yield almost any desired result. Just tinker enough with the relevant community and what's to count as a relevant way of coming to know, and the analysis can always be made to yield the intuitively correct result.

But the cases seem to make the hypothesis plausible not because the hypothesis yields the right results in the cases, but because the hypothesis provides an intuitively correct explanation for why certain statements involving epistemic possibility are true, false, appropriately said, not appropriately said, etc. The issues to which the hypothesis points us seem to be precisely the issues on which questions of epistemic possibility turn. **Why would Jane say that she doesn't know whether it's possible that John has cancer? Because, in CTC-IB, for all she knows, the doctor knows that John doesn't have cancer;** or, in CTC-2B, because for all she knows a relevant investigation could reveal that John doesn't have cancer. **Why would Jane say that it is possible that John has cancer? Because nobody (in CTC-2A) and no one in the family (in CTC-IA) knows that John does not have cancer. Why (in CTC-IA) does John's doctor say that it's impossible that John has cancer? Because he does know that John doesn't have cancer.**

Furthermore, the issues for which the hypothesis allows a good deal of flexibility seem to be precisely the things one must know (What is the relevant community? What is to count as a relevant way of coming to know?) in order to understand clearly what's being said when a speaker says, "It's possible that P." In short, my quest has not been for a hypothesis that spits out the intuitively correct results regarding uses of "It's possible that P." Rather, I have sought, and I think that I have found, a hypothesis that- gives intuitively correct explanations for why "It is possible that P" is used as it is.

Plan for 11/10

-context-sensitivity section of above: cases involving “It’s possible / not possible / impossible that John has cancer”

-picking up on plan for 11/3, above: compare emerging methodology with “the counter-example game” (see the Gettier, 3rd page of 10/29 handout)

-apply to appearance claims (sentences involving “appears”, “seems”, “looks”), pluralism about epistemic justification (see the Srinivasan, 2nd page of 10/29 handout)

Plan for 11/12

-“can”

-“ought implies can”: Wolterstorff handles “ought implies can” worries by limiting his criterion for rational belief so as to apply only to “eluctable” beliefs (p. 162.5)

-another route: Dan Greco (in pages from his “The Impossibility of Skepticism” newly added to the 10/29 handout) radically weakens the “can” to “metaphysical possibility” (for subjects to be in the states in question, p. 350.7). But more importantly (since what’s ultimately at issue isn’t whether this is to weak to be a good use of “can”), suggests we understand the notion of rationality in question as one measured against an ideal (p. 351.2).

-He is not playing the “blame game” (not his phrase), that requires voluntary control over one’s beliefs (see esp. 350.0)

-Why move from thinking of rationality in a way that requires control to one that doesn’t? Dan’s argument at the top of p. 350 is very persuasive – esp. when we’re talking “rationality” / “rational”

-Wolterstorff’s (I) (p. 164) and (IV) (p. 168):

(I) A person *S* is rational in their eluctable and innocently produced belief *Bp* if and only if *S* believes *p*, and it is not the case that *S* has adequate reason to cease from believing *p*.

(IV) A person *S* is rational in their eluctable and innocently produced belief *Bp* if and only if *S* does believe that *p*, and either:

- (i) *S* neither has nor ought to have adequate reason to cease from believing *p*, and is not rationally obliged to believe that they do have adequate reason to cease; or
- (ii) *S* does have adequate reason to cease from believing *p* but does not realize that they do, and is rationally justified in that.

-W has a very interesting discussion of circularity concerns at the opening of section IX (the part of it on p. 169): Says he is not introducing a concept to readers who don’t already have it, but clarifying and illuminating one they already have. (Another related possibility: one can be locating a concept readers have but don’t clearly distinguish from nearby ones that get expressed in similar ways.)

Plan for 11/17

-A brief look at (categorization of) Huemer's two main arguments in CPC

-sect. 2 (pp. 32-39): against narrower views which accept that only some appearances should be accepted as sources of justification. (This can be likened to Reid's charges of "arbitrary partiality" (as we phrased it) against the "semi-skeptics" he battled.)

-sect. 3 (p. 39-54) Huemer's argument that his opponents who would deny his PC are in a self-defeating position. (It was largely at this argument that I thought (3H, n. 31, pp. 25-26) Huemer was showing that he tended toward a more thorough-going PC than his official thesis would indicate.) Note that this is a long section, and if you write on it, you will want to cover Huemer's main argument here (that culminates at the bottom of p. 41), and not cover every way that he considers of trying to avoid his conclusion—though you likely will want to pick one or maybe two ways he considers for you to discuss.

-49.4: note this bit of turning skepticism on itself

- Comments I made at the "Board Certified Epistemologists" fb page, in response to a post asking for literature on epistemic "ought implies can." Dan was among the "like"s on the first comment (so even before I was fair to him), so didn't have objections, apparently

Keith DeRose

I just looked at the issue of whether we can be irrational/unjustified in beliefs that are beyond our voluntary control to stop believing in an old paper by (my former teacher and colleague) Nick Wolterstorff, and a new (well, newish) paper by my current colleague Daniel Greco, with (to state things bluntly) Nick arguing "no" and Dan arguing "yes." To my ear, "no" has its best chance with "unjustified" and "yes" has its best chance with "irrational." (Not saying how good those best chances are, just making the comparative point.) And the funny thing is, in these papers, neither of which is focused specifically on this issue, but do argue for their position on it as an important part of what they're doing, each author switches over to the term that comparatively favors their answer when they treat this issue: Nick, who is mostly addressing when beliefs are and are not rational (the culmination of the paper are proposed conditions for rationally held beliefs) is suddenly talking about what we are and are not "justified" in believing when he does "ought implies can" stuff, and Dan, who is primarily focused on "justified," is in the "ought implies can" section, for instance, appealing to how "irrational" is the belief of his weird character who can't help but hold his weird belief.

....

OK, I've just rechecked the relevant bit, and I have to be fair to Dan Greco here.....

So, I should note that on the top of p. 350, he is explicitly writing about all three ways of putting the point: in terms of what "justified," what's "rational" and also what one "ought" to do:

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even if some beliefs are subject to voluntary control,⁴¹ it is hard to deny that some aren't. Nevertheless, those that aren't may still be irrational, unjustified, or such that we ought not to hold them.

....

but after his character is introduced, and we get to the key judgment on which the argument is based, "unjustified" does drop out, and the point is put in terms of what's "irrational" (as well as of what "in the relevant sense" [the sense relevant to rationality, one thinks?] he "ought not" to believe):

"That he is psychologically incapable of giving up this belief does not mean that he's not irrational

for holding it; in the relevant sense of "ought," it is still the case that he ought to give it up.

-Wolterstorff on "ought implies can" stuff: this really is limited to pp. 161.9-162.6, though fn. 12 at pp. 183-184 is also relevant, and very interesting. Note esp. in the 2nd paragraph of the note (the paragraph that straddles the two pages) how W won't make nice with his opponent (Alvin Goldman) and hold that they're having a merely verbal dispute, each right about a different concept of justification. No, Goldman is just wrong: there is no purely evaluative notion of justification (note that this is how W is putting things here) on which Goldman is right.

-The "Evidentialist Challenge"/"Evidentialist Objection" to belief in God's existence: probably best to use Wolterstorff's statement in the paragraph (beginning with the words "But first") at p. 136.3-136.6 of his essay

-It is characteristic of the "Reformed epistemologists" to attack the basis of the challenge (as W says in the next paragraph that he will do), rather than to try to meet the challenge

-the evidentialist challenge and "Classical Foundationalism": Wolterstorff & Plantinga both think the evidentialist objection to theism is typically rooted in Classical foundationalism

-Plantinga on foundationalism (47-55), proper basicity, and "Classical Foundationalism" (esp. 58.8-59.1)

-Plantinga's attack on Classical Foundationalism: 59.2-61.4

-note that the title to section D (59.2) should be: The Collapse of *Classical* Foundationalism

-first argument: CF is too picky (esp. 60.3-60.6): an interesting "reversing of the argument" against the CFist

-second argument (60.6-61.4): the CFist is "self-referentially incoherent" (last words on p. 60)

Plan for 11/19

Upcoming dates:

Dec. 1, Tue.: paper proposals due

Dec. 4, Fri: final exam questions distributed. **Hopefully, some out Wed D2**

Dec. 10, Th.: papers due

Dec. 18, Fri.: final exams due

-Plantinga: modus tollens, not modus ponens; from below, not from above (77.6)

-background passages from Wolterstorff, Plantinga – and Moore on the modus tollens / G.E. Moore shift/ reversing the argument maneuver

Reid thought

Hume's great genius to be that he had seen the sceptical consequences of the Way of Ideas. Reid's genius, in turn, was to go through Hume's argument in the direction of *modus tollens* rather than *modus ponens*. Reid found it preposterous to suppose that there was something amiss in the ordinary person's belief in the existence of cats, plums, and tables. He concluded that instead there is something wrong in the premisses which yield the conclusion that there is something amiss in such beliefs. -Wolterstorff, "Hume and Reid," *The Monist* 70 (1987): 398-417; p. 399

As has been remarked, however, one man's modus ponens is another's modus tollens. -Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Marquette UP, 1980), p. 134

MP

If P, then Q

P

So, Q

MT

If P, then Q

Not-Q

So, not-P

Target Argument

Pr1

Pr2

Pr3

Pr4

So, CSC. I don't know that this is a pen

Specific Reversed argument

Pr1

Pr2

Pr3

ID. I do know that this is a pen

So, not-Pr4

✓-send MDR paper

✓-make available Applg Ch. 2

In "Four Forms of Scepticism" (Moore 1959b), Moore considers a skeptical argument of Bertrand Russell's, quite different from AI, to the conclusion that he does not know "that this is a pencil or that you are conscious."¹ After identifying and numbering four assumptions on which Russell's argument rests (the content of which we here ignore, so as to better focus on methodological matters), Moore writes: And what I can't help asking myself is this: Is it, in fact, as certain that all these four assumptions are true, as that I do know that this is a pencil and that you are conscious? I cannot help answering: It seems to me more certain that I do know that this is a pencil and that you are conscious, than that any single one of these four assumptions is true, let alone all four. That is to say, though, as I have said, I agree with Russell that (1), (2) and (3) are true; yet of no one even of these three do I feel as certain as that I do know for certain that this is a pencil. Nay more: I do not think it is rational to be as certain of any one of these four propositions, as of the proposition that I do know that this is a pencil. (Moore 1959b: 226) --Applg, p. 40

- Plantinga's "too picky" argument of 59-60 as an example of the maneuver
- Plantinga's self-ref argument against CF (at 60.6-61.4)
- an impasse?: "And hence criteria for proper basicity arrived at in this particularistic way may not be polemically useful..." (77.8). Different communities, each with their own examples. How can they get argumentative traction against each other?
- 78.5: "The Great Pumpkin Objection" and the need for a "relevant difference"
- 78.8 and following: trying to move past the threatened impasse: theistic belief and theistic experience

Plan for 12/1

Particularism vs. methodism (generalism)

S knows that p iff S has justified true belief that p

S knows that p iff S has justified true belief not based on a falsehood that p

A note from Troy Cross, "Skeptical Success" (just to give an idea of how things got; please don't try to understand this!):

² I said the post-Gettier theories lie buried under a heap of clever, clever counterexamples. That is not quite right. Some of the theories collapsed under the weight of their own caveats and qualifiers, formed in response to the same clever, clever counterexamples. William Lycan's exemplar here is Marshall Swain, whose impenetrable developments of the defeasibility and causal accounts may or may not be free of counter-example, for all anyone knows (Lycan, 1959: 149). A small and incomplete sampling follows:

S has nonbasic knowledge that p iff (i) p is true; (ii) S believes that p; (iii) S's justification renders p evident for S; & (iv*) [w]here 'e' designates the portion of S's total evidence E that is immediately relevant to the justification of p, either (A) there is a nondefective causal chain from P to BSe; or (B) there is some event or state of affairs Q such that (i) there is a nondefective causal chain from Q to BSe; and (ii) there is a nondefective causal chain from Q to P; or (C) there is some event or state of affairs H such that (i) there is a nondefective causal chain from H to BSe; and (ii) H is a nondefective pseudo-overdeterminant of P. [Where a causal chain X ? Y is 'defective' with respect to S's justification for p based on evidence e iff: Either (I) (a) there is some event or state of affairs U in X ? Y such that S would be justified in believing that U did not occur and (b) it is essential to S's justifiably believing that p on the basis of the evidence e that S would be justified in believing that U did not occur; or (II) there is some significant alternative C* to X ? Y with respect to S justifiably believing that p on the basis of e. [Where C* is a 'significant alternative' to X ? Y with respect to S justifiably believing that p on the basis of e if (a) it is objectively likely that C* should have occurred rather than X ? Y; and (b) if C* had occurred instead of X ? Y, then there would have been an event or state of affairs U in C* such that S would not be justified in believing that p if S were justified in believing that U occurred...] (Swain, 1972: 292; 1978: 110-11, 115-16).

A thought about "plausible" as applied to general theories

Repeating from plan for last meeting:

-an impasse?: "And hence criteria for proper basicity arrived at in this particularistic way may not be polemically useful..." (77.8). Different communities, each with their own examples. How can they get argumentative traction against each other?

-78.5: “The Great Pumpkin Objection” and the need for a “relevant difference”

If interested, see my “Voodoo Epistemology” at:

<https://campuspress.yale.edu/keithderose/voodoo-epistemology/>

-78.8 and following: trying to move past the threatened impasse: theistic belief and theistic experience

-81.3: the really properly basic beliefs about God: examples (8)-(12). Comparison with perceptual cases at 81b-82a. The idea is that the properly basic beliefs are those rooted in experience

-same idea as Alston’s “M-beliefs,” introduced at 104-105

-Alston’s goal: 111.8: “I wish to consider the possibility that ~~I wish to consider the possibility that~~ one’s experience can provide justification sufficient for rational acceptance”

-more specifically, Alston’s conclusion and basic type of argument for it, at least on my reading: “Alston advances parity considerations to argue that it is ‘just as rational to take Christian experience to provide prima facie justification for M-beliefs as it is to take sense experience to provide prima facie justification for perceptual beliefs’ (1983, p. 120)” – DWR, 168.2

Plan for 12/3

-for Alston, experiential “epistemic practices” generally work by their practitioners “objectifying” their experiences in certain ways: they non-inferentially take their experiences to be experiences of certain objects, rather than as initially construing their experiences in a way open as to their causes and objects, from which they might infer conclusions about what the causes of these experiences likely are

-Parity arguments: generally: based on these similarities, we should arrive at the same verdict for these two cases....

Much of the work will be in shooting down proposed relevant differences between the cases, either by denying that the differences exist (and hopefully making a good case for that denial) or by disputing that the differences are relevant to what verdict should be rendered or that they aren’t significant enough to overturn reaching similar verdicts. Alston’s main mode of handling proposed differences is a mix of these strategies: he typically argues while there may be some genuine difference of the kind proposed, it is not so great as one might think, and what difference there is isn’t very significant to the evaluation of the practices in question

-that Alston is giving a parity argument is most evident in the first paragraph of section VI (on p. 120). To look at just a bit more that paragraph than we did last time (at the very end of the plan for the previous meeting):

If, then, CP is J_{nw} , it will be in just the same epistemic position as PP and other commonly accepted, basic epistemic practices; and it will be just as rational to

take Christian experience to provide prima facie justification for M-beliefs as it is to take sense experience to provide prima facie justification for perceptual beliefs.

-a quick look at the terminology above

-Question: what are similarities that Alston is basing his parity argument on?

-Is CP a "basic" practice? 117.4: PP is basic; at 119.6, I get the sense that CP is supposed to be basic as well. This effects how we should read the passage above: Alston is contrasting two sorts of basic practices: those that are commonly accepted vs. those that are not

-In that key paragraph on p. 120, Alston is already at work trying to shoot down supposed differences between CP and PP (and other universal or commonly accepted basic practices), but the careful laying out of the supposed differences he is going to carefully argue against is the numbered list at the bottom of p. 121.

-My attack is focused on (Alston's handling of) Alston's difference #2.

-and the heart of the attack is in the paragraph that straddles pp. 169 and 170

-“positive coherence” DWR 169.6; see DWR 157.4, maybe its use at a few spots on p. 161

-expectations: Is CP's relative lack of positive coherence evidence against its reliability? I suppose not. Rather, it's a block to its being accorded IUPG status in the first place