

24.500 spring 05
topics in philosophy of mind
session 5

- Bar-On's book
- teatime

self-knowledge

plan

- slow-switching
- Shoemaker
- warrant transmission

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endive

chicory

chicory

endive

see Ludlow, the prevalence of slow switching

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slow switching

- appears in two slightly confusing locations in the paper (once against inner observation, and once against Burge)
- if S knows p at t_1 , and hasn't forgotten anything at t_2 , then S knows p at t_2
- why does slow switching S not know today that he had a chicory thought last year?
- he did not *forget*
- therefore he never knew
 - the left-over puzzle was why this was supposed to work only against s-k (and not against knowledge of chicory)

Warfield's version of Boghossian's argument

1. if S knows p by introspection, S must be able to introspectively discriminate p from all relevant alternatives
2. S cannot discriminate water (chicory) thoughts from twater (endive) thoughts
3. if switching is actual, twater (endive) thoughts are relevant alternatives

hence (invalidly):

- C S doesn't know his water (chicory) thoughts by introspection
- OK, but what happened to Boghossian's "he has not forgotten, therefore he never knew"? (see Ludlow, Social externalism...)

on knowing one's own mind

- cartesianism:
 1. infallibility
 2. “special access” (“self-acquaintance”) is of the essence of mind
- shoemaker denies (1), argues for (2)
 - special access seems to be a combination of peculiar access and (weak) privileged access

- anti-cartesian perceptual analogies
 - mental states independent of being detected
 - independent causal mechanism

- focus on knowledge of one's beliefs, desires, intentions
 - role in dealings with others
 - role in deliberation
- self-acquaintance not essential to mentality in one sense: dogs have mental states, but no self-acquaintance
 - also not essential to mentality in a stronger sense: even a rational person with concepts of mental states might not have self-acquaintance (perhaps she's not interested in her own mental life)

- self-acquaintance essential to mentality in this sense: no self-blindness
 - S is self-blind iff S has the conception of the various mental states and can entertain the thought that she has this or that belief, etc., but is unable to become aware of the truth of this thought except in a third person way
 - in other words...
 - not quite: the official definition leaves out any privileged access

argument 1 (§IV)

- A. in the case of belief-revision, it is *as if* the system contained a desire to be a rational and coherent belief-desire system, and (true) beliefs about what beliefs and desires it contains
- B. ...if everything* is *as if* a creature has knowledge* of its beliefs and desires, then it does have knowledge of them
- C. a rational belief-reviser has self-knowledge**

*so, not *quite* valid

**"I realize that some will be skeptical..."

- A. in the case of belief-revision, it is *as if* the system contained a desire to be a rational and coherent belief-desire system, and (true) beliefs about what beliefs and desires it contains
- but what about animals?
 - won't there be other behavior that will indicate that the system doesn't have self-knowledge?
 - past beliefs and desires
 - beliefs and desires that are the products of revision
 - how about the desire to be irrational plus false beliefs about one's beliefs and desires?

argument 2 (§V)

- A. self-blind speaker George will recognize the paradoxical character of 'P but I don't believe that P'
- B. since he is rational, this recognition will lead him to avoid Moore-paradoxical sentences
- C. further, George will recognize that he should give the same answer to 'do you believe that P?' and 'P?'
- D. there is nothing in his behavior, verbal or otherwise, that would give away the fact that he lacks self-acquaintance
- E. if George really is self-blind, then perhaps we are too!
- F. it seems better to take this as a reductio ad absurdum of the view that self-blindness is a possibility

- another way of stating the conclusion of the argument:

if

- rational intelligent George has the conception of the various mental states and can entertain the thought that he has this or that belief, wants to find out about his mental life, etc.,

then [modulo a later qualification]

- after a period of experimentation, George will have self-knowledge that is similar in extent to ours, and that he can attain in the sorts of circumstances in which we can attain self-knowledge

- B since he is rational, this recognition will lead him to avoid Moore-paradoxical sentences
- why, since he can't follow rules like 'if you have such-and-such intentions that make appropriate an assertive utterance of 'p', don't assert 'I don't believe that p''?
 - he can (avoid M-p sentences), since he has the assertive use of language
 - why, though?

- what I need to support my case is a reason for thinking that someone with first-order beliefs plus [normal conceptual capacity and rationality] would thereby have the use of language

- George will be able to understand language
- he could see that certain ends he has would be furthered by saying certain things, so he will say those things
 - Grice-1 intention: audience should believe p (via this intention)
 - Grice-2 intention: audience should believe the speaker believes p
- the argument so far shows that George will have (something close to) the practice of assertion, with Grice-1 intentions

- OK, but what about a case where there would be a point in speaking with Grice-2 intentions? (when the audience already believes that p)
 - George would have a motive for saying 'p':
 - it's true that p, so:
 - I should act as if I believed that p
 - in this instance so acting would mean saying 'p', because plainly this would have good consequences for me

how can this be right? cf. 'p, so Smith should act as if he believed that p'

- what about ‘tell me some things you believe’? wouldn’t that leave George speechless?
- no—he could treat it as equivalent to the request ‘tell me some things that are true’
- so far, step D is supposedly looking good; now, a new pair of objections

- D there is nothing in his behavior, verbal or otherwise, that would give away the fact that he lacks self-acquaintance
1. George will be puzzled, because ‘p and I don’t believe that p’ might be warranted by the evidence
 - this case is not really conceivable [is this right?]
 2. George will not seem to have self-acquaintance with his past beliefs
 - this objection does require me to qualify my claims [can’t the objection be met? explain “But if...” at the top of p. 44]

1. George will be puzzled, because ‘p and I don’t believe that p’ might be warranted by the evidence
 - “the total third-person evidence concerning what someone believes about the weather should include what evidence he has about the weather—and if it includes the fact that his total evidence about the weather points unambiguously toward the conclusion that it is raining, then it cannot point unambiguously toward the conclusion that he doesn’t believe that it is raining”

- “the total third-person evidence concerning what someone believes about the weather should include what evidence he has about the weather”
- my total evidence: the cat is wet, the weather forecast is for rain, I am going out without my umbrella, carrying important papers that will spoil if it’s raining...[so, I don’t believe it’s raining]
 - this is evidence that I have, it does not include the fact that this is my evidence (for that includes facts about my beliefs—that I believe that the cat is wet, etc.)
- “and if it includes the fact that his total evidence about the weather points unambiguously toward the conclusion that it is raining...”
 - but it doesn’t
 - TO BE CONTINUED...

warrant transmission

C

p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots

the consequence problem (Davies)

- 1 I am thinking that water is wet
- 2 if I am thinking that water is wet, then water exists

hence:

- C water exists

“it is because I envisage a kind of worst-case scenario [in which the premises are knowable non-empirically, without rising from the armchair] that I focus on the question of whether there is a principled way to block the transmission of the ‘non-empirical’ warrant from premisses to conclusion” (324)

closure

if

s knows p, q, \dots , and s knows that p, q, \dots entail r

then

s is in a position to know r

see Dretske,
Epistemic operators

- 1 the animal in the pen is a zebra
- 2 if the animal in the pen is a zebra, it is not a cleverly disguised mule

hence:

- C the animal in the pen is not a cleverly disguised mule
- o sensitivity (Nozick):
if p were false, s wouldn't have believed p

- 1 that wall is red
 - 2 if that wall is red, it is not white cleverly illuminated to look red
- hence:
- C that wall is not white cleverly illuminated to look red

transmission

if
s knows p, q, ..., in way w
and
s knows (a priori) that p, q, ... entail r
then
s is in a position to know r in way w

“thereby”, “on the above basis” is usually inserted — but the weaker version of transmission will do for McKinsey’s paradox

transmission

transmission obviously fails, putting 'non-inferentially' for 'in way w'

but what about 'from the armchair'?:

if

s knows p, q, ..., from the armchair

and

s knows (a priori) that p, q, ... entail r

then

s is in a position to know r from the armchair

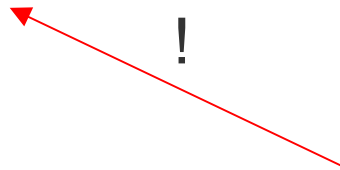
1 I am thinking that water is wet



2 if I am thinking that water is wet, then water exists

hence:

C water exists



!

- if closure fails in some McKinsey-case, then transmission fails
- it is implausible that closure fails (especially in McKinsey-cases)
- (and denying closure doesn't remove the puzzle— one can still arrive at true safe beliefs about one's environment from the armchair, and this is puzzling itself)
- but: transmission could fail without closure failing
- if so, then one knows (is in a position to know) the conclusion, but not from the armchair

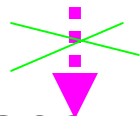
'thereby' transmission failure

1. either it's snowing or Bob is in his office

2. Bob is not in his office

hence:

C it's snowing



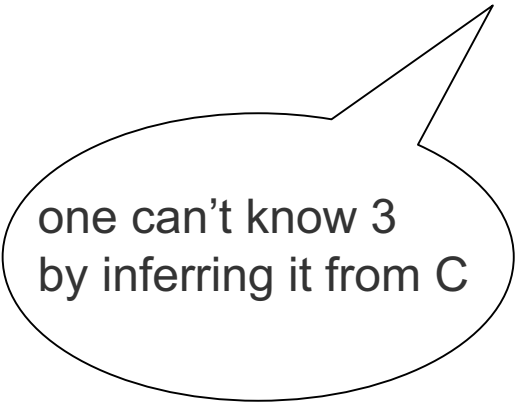
in the circumstances (one knows (1) by looking out of the window), one knows (1) and (2) [empirically] but does not thereby know (C) [empirically]

- 1 the animal in the pen is a zebra
- 2 if the animal in the pen is a zebra, it is not a cleverly painted mule

hence:

- C the animal in the pen is not a cleverly painted mule
- o does this exhibit 'thereby' transmission failure?

- o yes, if the structure of justification is:
 - 1 that looks like a zebra
- hence
- 2 either that is a zebra, or it is a cleverly painted mule (or...)
- but
- 3 that is not a cleverly painted mule (or...)
- hence
- C that is a zebra



one can't know 3
by inferring it from C

- o problems (Brown): extending this to McKinsey either involves denying that 4 is knowable from the armchair, or accepting that C is knowable from the armchair; (Davis):3 doesn't rest on evidence

1 I seem to be thinking about water

hence

2 either I am thinking about water, or I'm having a water-thought illusion

but

3 I am not having a water-thought illusion

hence

4 I am thinking about water

hence

C water exists

one's evidence for 3 includes C (that water exists)

a general problem

- 1 I am thinking that water is wet
- 2 if I am thinking that water is wet, then water exists

hence:

C water exists

- “We have already seen that Sally has empirical knowledge that her environment contains water” (Brown, 235); see also Brewer and Sawyer, quoted in Davis, Externalism and armchair knowledge (but see Davis, Externalism...)
- but: Sally could know (1), (2), and yet not be in a position to know (C) empirically (imagine she has grown up in a community that thinks ‘water’ is like ‘phlogiston’; if we like, we can add that against all the evidence, she believe that water exists, is found in the oceans, etc.); if so, the strategy cannot preserve closure
 - this is even more evident in the “architecturalism” case

further reading

- Davies: Externalism and armchair knowledge, Boghossian and Peacocke, *New Essays on the A Priori*; The problem of armchair knowledge, Nuccetelli, *New Essays on Semantic Externalism and Self-Knowledge*; Epistemic entitlement, warrant transmission and easy knowledge, PASS 78 (2004)
- Wright: (Anti-)sceptics simple and subtle: Moore and McDowell, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 65 (2002); Some reflections on the acquisition of warrant by inference, Nuccetelli, *New Essays*; Warrant for nothing (and foundations for free)? PASS 78 (2004)

- next time:
 - Peacocke, Conscious attitudes, attention, and self-knowledge, Our entitlement to self-knowledge: entitlement, self-knowledge and conceptual redeployment
 - Martin, An eye directed outward
 - Burge, Our entitlement to self-knowledge