THE FACTIVE TURN IN EPISTEMOLOGY WORKSHOP
# 7-8 May 2015, Vienna University

ABSTRACTS

### REASONS, RATIONALITY AND JUSTIFICATION

Maria Alvarez (KCL)

In this paper I first give an account of reasons for belief according to whichonly something that is a fact can be a good reason for belief. I then outline and respond to some objections to that view that depend on claims about the demands of rationality and the justification of belief.
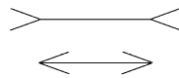
MOTIVATING REASON TO SLOW THE FACTIVE TURN

Jonathan Drake (Texas Austin)

The aim of this paper is to slow the factive turn in epistemology, as it were, by appealing to points about the factivity of practical reasons. It is plausible that our positions about the factivity of reasons in these two realms should agree (call this my "methodological assumption"). The first move is to show how motivating reasons are not factive in the practical realm. Then I try to establish the conditional that: if motivating reasons are not factive, then normative reasons are not factive. If it is possible to act rationally in the light of a falsehood, as I will say, then some good reasons must be falsehoods. After establishing this conditional, I will return to my methodological assumption, and show how we can apply these thoughts to epistemic reasons.
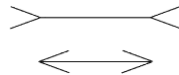
DANCY'S DIFFICULTY AND WHY STRONG FACTUALISM CANNOT RESOLVE IT

Claire Field (KCL)

Dancy attempts to fulfil two separate desiderata of a theory of normative reasons: providing considerations that make an agent's belief correct, and giving an account of an agent's believing that allows her epistemic conduct to be rationally intelligible, in spite of its also being mistaken. I will show how the attempt to meet both of these desiderata generates a difficulty when combined with the following claim: it is only facts that can make a belief the correct one for an agent to hold. I show how a view I call Strong Factualism resolves the difficulty, and argue that it does so only at great intuitive cost. I go on to suggest how alternative views may be able to resolve the difficulty without incurring the intuitive cost.
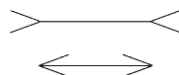
### DEFLATIONARY PLURALISM ABOUT REASONS (EPISTEMIC OR OTHERWISE)

Daniel Fogal (NYU)

Given the increasing prominence of reasons in normative theorizing, it's only natural for there to be increasing interest in what (normative) reasons *are*. In this paper I argue for a deflationary form of pluralism about reasons. It's a form of pluralism insofar as it denies that reasons form a unified ontological category. But it's deflationary insofar as it minimizes the theoretical importance (both normative and metaphysical) of reasons. I begin by investigating the relationship between the use of 'reason'—in its normative sense—as a count noun and as a mass noun, arguing that we should take (mass-y) facts about reason to be normatively prior to (count-y) facts about reasons. I then present new data concerning the contextual variability of our judgments about reasons which shows they are, at best, a partial and highly defeasible guide to what really matters, both normatively and metaphysically.

REFORM VS REVOLUTION: PROSPECTS FOR A KNOWLEDGE FIRST EPISTEMOLOGY OF TESTIMONY

Rachel Fraser (Oxford)

Most epistemologists of testimony - reductionists and anti-reductionists - agree that only on a 'radically counterintuitive picture' might hearers obtain testimonially based knowledge that P when they have very good evidence (or very good apparent evidence) that a testifier is unreliable (Lackey, 2008). Standard epistemological ideologies typically use the notion of defeat to theorise such cases: hearers are required to have no defeater for the claim that a speaker is reliable. This paper shows that a Williamsonian epistemology of testimony cannot use the ideology of evidential probability to replicate the mechanics in play in putative defeat cases. I finish by saying something about whether we ought to regard these revisionist commitments as a mark against knowledge-first epistemology.
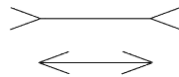
THE NEW EVIL DEMON AND THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

Mikkel Gerken (Edinburgh)

The debates over epistemic norms of action and assertion have recently been connected to the infamous New Evil Demon thought experiments. The purpose of my paper is to reconsider this connection. I begin by contrasting the knowledge norms of action and assertion with my alternatives: The Warrant-Action norm (henceforth: WA) and the Warrant-Assertive Speech Act norm (hencforth: WASA). I address some recent arguments contra WA due to Boyd and Logins. On this basis, I return to the NED scenario and argue that it is paradigm to distinguish between various specifications of the NED problem. I develop a framework of the structure of norms borrowing from Thompson and Burge and argue that given this framework and WA, we may address the various NED cases. If time permits, I'll add some remarks about excuses. I conclude that insofar as there is a factive turn in epistemology, we need a U-turn.

INTERNALISM, FACTIVITY, AND HAVING REASON ENOUGH

Jonathan Jenkins-Ichikawa (British Columbia)

How radical is the idea that reasons are factive? Some philosophers consider it a dramatic departure from orthodoxy, with surprising implications about the bearing of the external world on what credences it's reasonable to have, what beliefs are epistemically appropriate, and what actions are rational. I deny these implications. In the cases where external matters imply differences in factive states, there will inevitably be important weaker factive states in common. For example, someone who knows it is raining has many factive states in common with someone who has a Gettiered belief that it is raining, or one who falsely but justifiably believes that it is raining. The factive reasons denied to subjects in Gettier cases or skeptical scenarios are in an important sense *redundant*; appropriate belief or action supervenes on internal states, even if reasons must be factive (and even if appropriate belief and action supervenes on reasons).

STOP MAKING SENSE? A PUZZLE ABOUT EVIDENCE AND EPISTEMIC RATIONALITY

Clayton Littlejohn (KCL)

In this paper, I discuss a puzzle about epistemic rationality. It seems plausible that it's rational to believe a proposition if you have sufficient evidential support for it. It seems plausible that our first-order and higher-order attitudes ought to match. It seems rather unfortunate that these two claims are in tension with one another. I'll look at three ways of trying to resolve this tension and argue that the best way to do this is to accept the controversial fixed-point thesis (i.e., the thesis that says that mistaken beliefs about what rationality requires of you are mistakes of rationality). I'll offer a novel explanation as to why the fixed-point thesis is correct and offer an argument against evidentialist approaches to epistemic rationality.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND EVIDENTIAL EXTERNALISM

Aidan McGlynn (Edinburgh)

My interest in this talk is in the opposition between evidential internalism, the thesis that one's evidence supervenes on one's non-factive mental states, and its rival, evidential externalism. There are two relatively straightforward, albeit controversial, arguments for externalism, the first citing internalism's crucial role in certain well-known sceptical arguments (Williamson), and the second combining the premises that evidence is factive, that non-inferentially knowing something suffices for it to be part of one's evidence, and that we can non-inferentially know propositions about the external world (Littlejohn, Leite). Arguments for internalism, in contrast, have tended to rely on contentious premises about our access to our own evidence. Here I want to consider Nico Silins's claim in 'Deception and Evidence' (2005) that under natural assumptions externalism entails that a subject in an epistemically good case might be *less* justified in believing some proposition about the external world than her counterpart in the corresponding bad case who has all the same non-factive mental states but is radically deceived, providing a strong consideration in favour of internalism which does not require us to buy into dubious theses about the accessibility of our evidence. I'll offer reasons to be sceptical of Silins's claim, and so I'll suggest that, for better or worse, the strongest arguments for internalism remain those that appeal to some kind of accessibility thesis.

RECOMMENDING

Robin McKenna (Vienna)

In this talk I argue that recommending is a distinctive sort of speech act. Speech acts are often individuated via the norms that govern them, so in the first section I sketch an account of recommending on which it is governed by the norm 'One must: recommend that S φ's only if one has some reason to believe that φ-ing would be in S's best interests'. But, as I show in the second section, this account doesn't fit with the way in which we assess recommendations. If I recommend that you don't take an umbrella because I have some reason to believe that it won't rain, but it turns out that it does rain, you will find fault with my recommendation. In the third section I propose an alternative account on which recommending is governed by the norm 'One must: recommend that S φ's only if one knows that φ-ing would be in S's best interests'. I defend this account from the objection that this norm is too stringent by invoking the distinction between violating a norm and blamelessly violating a norm. Finally, I show that my account of recommending provides a way of understanding disagreement about deontic modals that is neutral between invariantist, contextualist and relativist views about the semantics of deontic modality.

E=TB: THE SMOOTH TURN

Veli Mitova (Vienna)

The evidence for p is a good reason to believe that p. If we take this seriously, and want to do justice to all of the roles the evidence-concept plays in epistemology, we need to think of the evidence as propositional, psychological, and factive. Our only present option along these lines is E=K. This talk defends a more minimalist view – 'truthy psychologism'. According to this view, evidence is also propositional, psychological and factive; but we don't need the stronger claim that only knowledge can fill this role. True beliefs - without any further epistemic bells and whistles - are enough. I defend this view by showing that it gives us everything we want from the evidence.

REASONS-FACTUALISM AND RATIONALITY WITHOUT REASONS

Andreas Müller (Goethe Uni Frankfurt)

Comesaña & McGrath argue against reasons-factualism by using links between reasons and rationality. Their key assumption is that in order to be rational, one must have reasons. But there are many cases in which one can be rational despite having a false belief. Since reasons-factualism cannot account for the reasons-had in these cases, reasons factualism is false. In order to deal with this issue, I want to explore a seemingly radical proposal: one can be rational without having reasons. The central idea is that we conceive of rationality as a virtue, where a virtue is simply a disposition of an agent. Rationality is a mental disposition that can be specified by means of a function that maps rationalizing considerations onto response event types such as believing that p. I will argue that reasons and

rationalizing considerations need not be identical and thereby defend reasons-factualism against Comesaña&McGrath.
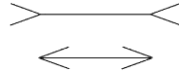
SKEPTICISM, TRANSMISSION AND FACTIVE REASONS

#### Ian Schnee (Western Kentucky)

Transmission failure is standardly presented as a problem for non-factive reasons (e.g., in which a non-factive perceptual state gives one grounds for belief, as when it visually appears to me that the animal is a zebra). Crispin Wright, however, argues that it is a problem for factive reasons as well (I see that the animal is a zebra). I criticize Wrights arguments, but then present a new model of transmission failure for factive reasons that does not suffer from the problems that Wright's model does. I further argue that, although there are resources for replying to this transmission-failure challenge, most of them come at the cost of any theoretical advantage for factive reasons in explaining knowledge or answering skepticism. Thus it is very hard to get factive reasons to do the work one would want them to.
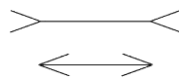
DOES EXPERIENCE PROVIDE REASONS FOR BELIEF?

Michael Schmitz (Vienna)

Some philosophers argue that only the good cases of successful perceptual experience can provide reasons for belief. In my talk I argue that they are right that the good cases have a certain primacy over the bad ones, but propose a fundamentally different way of understanding this primacy: it consists in the fact that if experience presents a situation, I do *not* need a reason to believe it actually obtains, but would rather need a reason even to doubt this, much more to conclude that this is really a bad case. Since to take myself to be in possession of such a reason is to take myself to be in possession of a fact, bad cases are only conceivable as deviations from the good case of successful representation. I further argue against disjunctivism that experiences can only be properly understood as mental states when it is also acknowledged that the bad cases involve intentionally contenful misrepresentations. The key here is to understand the relation between our notions of mind and world. Then we can be naïve realists about both.
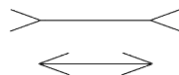
LITTLEJOHN ON THE FACTIVITY OF EVIDENCE

Michael Wilde (Kent)

The factivity thesis says that one's body of evidence consists only of true propositions. Clayton Littlejohn provides a negative argument in favour of the factivity thesis, by maintaining that all proposed counterexamples to the thesis are inconsistent. I suggest that this negative argument is unsuccessful, but I agree that the factivity thesis is true. Instead, it is the knowledge theory of evidence that clinches the factivity thesis.
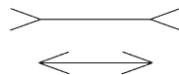
ACTING ON KNOWLEDGE

Timothy Williamson (Oxford)

This paper develops and refines the analogy between knowledge and action (intentional doing) in *Knowledge and its Limits*. The general schema is: knowledge is to belief as action is to intention. The analogy reverses direction of fit (mind to world, world to mind). The knowledge/belief side of the analogy corresponds to the inputs to practical reasoning, the action/intention side to its output. Insofar as desire is an input to practical reasoning, it belongs to the former side (the desire-as-belief thesis is considered sympathetically). When all goes globally well with practical reasoning, one acts on what one knows. Beliefs play the same local role as knowledge, and intentions the same local role as action, in practical reasoning. This is the appropriate setting in which to understand knowledge norms for belief and practical reasoning. Marginalizing knowledge in epistemology is as perverse as marginalizing action in the philosophy of action. Opponents of knowledge-first epistemology are challenged to produce an equally systematic and plausible account of the relation between the cognitive and the practical.