Dancy - *Contemporary Epistemology*

# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

- Standard epistemological questions:
  1. Which beliefs are justified and which not?
  2. What, if anything, can be known?
  3. What's the difference between knowing and having a true belief?
  4. What's the relation between seeing and knowing?
- Book for 2nd / 3rd Year Undergraduates
- Dancy won't conceal his own opinions, but they aren't idiosyncratic.
- Works in the Anglo-American tradition, but will introduce Hegel & the continentals into the last Chapter ("Is Epistemology Possible?").
- Two approaches to epistemology:
  1. Descartes: start with scepticism.
  2. Grice: ignore the non-existent sceptic and investigate the nature of knowledge and justification directly.
- Dancy will adopt the 1st approach, since this has recently enjoyed a revival of interest.
- Quibbles about the arrangement:
  1. Sceptical arguments apply as much to *belief* as to *knowledge*.
  2. Perception, induction etc. are *sources* of knowledge or forms of *inference*, not *forms* of *knowledge*.
  3. But *objects* of knowledge (external world, other minds, past, future, the necessary) are knowable in various ways, so aren't an ideal categorisation either.
- Dancy rejects foundationalism, on grounds derived from the theory of meaning. This raises issues of philosophical priority.
- Chapters 6 (Empiricist Theories of Meaning) and 7 ("Holism & Indeterminacy") are more difficult, and should be **omitted** on a first reading, along with chapters 14 (A Priori Knowledge) & 15 ("Is Epistemology Possible?"), which depend on them.
- Chapters 10 & 11 on Perception, which Dancy considers the most important and difficult part of Epistemology, constitute the centre of the book.
- Themes are repeated throughout the book, and the index should be consulted to follow them through.

# 1. KNOWLEDGE

## 1.1 Scepticism

### 1.1.1 Some Distinctions

- The best sceptical arguments give the conclusion that knowledge is impossible. No-one *does* know because no-one *can* know.
- The boring sceptic simply repeats the "how do you know that?" question ad infinitem.
- A slightly less boring sceptic might argue:
  1. No one knows that *p* unless he can say how he knows
  2. Any attempted answer by simply reasserting *p* begs the question.
- Dancy points out that both these propositions are dubious. The second[1] unreasonably requires evidence for my being in pain beyond the feeling of pain itself.
- Another boring sceptic has the *attitude* that most people are gullible and that standards for knowledge should be set higher. He only becomes an interesting sceptic if the standards are set so high that knowledge is impossible, but even then only if he offers an *argument*. He must show that normal standards are inappropriate and must appeal to our[2] standards as well as his. He then runs the risk of incoherence, for how can an argument that's justified by normal standards of evidence show that these standards are inappropriate?
- Distinctions between types of sceptical argument (in increasing importance):
  1. **Local** and **global** scepticism. Examples of local scepticism – ethics, religion and the future. Tendency of local to expand to global.
  2. Weak scepticism attacks knowledge, but leaves **related notions** (like *belief*) untouched. Stronger & more interesting sceptical arguments are equally effective against all.
  3. Failure of knowledge linked to failure of **understanding**. Strongest sceptical arguments claim that we can neither know nor understand. A theory of understanding that links what we can understand to what we could recognise to be true reduces all sceptical arguments to the strongest types. A sceptical argument that claims we understand nothing fails (a) because we do understand some things; in particular (b) we are expected to understand the sceptical argument itself.

### 1.1.2 Three Sceptical Arguments

#### 1.1.2.1 Brains in Vats

- Standard thought experiment.
- **Principle of Closure** (of knowledge):

[1] The first is the cornerstone of internalism – that to know something you need to know that you know.
[2] I'm not sure what Dancy means here. Is it that, as an argument is called for, it must use public domain standards?

$PC^k$: [K*ap* & K*a*(*p*→ *q*)] → K*aq*.

- If we accept and interpret *p* as "I'm sitting here reading a book" and *q* as "I'm not a brain in a vat", then given ¬K*aq*, then ¬K*ap* by modus tollens. That is, I don't know I'm here reading a book if I don't know I'm not a brain in a vat [which I can't know if the thought experiment is set up correctly], given that if I *did* know that I'm here reading a book I *would* know that I'm not a brain in a vat.
- Descartes has p = "I am sitting by the fire" and q = "I'm not dreaming".
- Application of the "3 distinctions":
  1. All arguments of this form presuppose that K*a*(*p*→ *q*), so are not globally sceptical.
  2. There are analogous arguments for justified belief, that are even more convincing, using the closure principle:
     $PC^j$: [JB*ap* & JB*a*(*p*→ *q*)] → JB*aq*.
  3. This form of argument doesn't undermine understanding.

### 1.1.2.2 The Argument from Error

- You've made mistakes in the past, so how know not making one now.
- This argument depends on a **Principle of Universalisability**, familiar from ethical theory. In the absence of relevant and recognisable difference of situation, we cannot have difference of judgement.
- **Example**: yesterday I claimed to know that it would rain, on usual grounds. I was wrong. At the time, the fact that it was not going to rain was evidence-transcendent, as all claims about the future must be. So, if today I cannot justifiably make the same evidence-transcendent claim.
- Odd argument (rejected by Dancy) that a third party might see a difference and might be justified in saying that I didn't know yesterday, but do today.
- Hence, if I've ever been wrong, neither I (nor anyone else of me) can say I know unless there are relevantly different circumstances.
- Even imagining cases in which I would have been wrong (ie. claimed K(*p*) but ¬*p*) will have the same effect as real errors. BIV is such an imaginary case.
- Application of the "3 distinctions":
  1. Dancy will argue in 4.2 that there are no error-free zones, so the Argument from Error is global.
  2. Not immediately obvious that the argument generalises to Justified Belief, since we can't argue straightforwardly that a false belief can't be justified (whereas a false proposition can't be known). What we need for scepticism is the claim that you cannot claim that a belief is justified unless you can tell the difference between cases where such beliefs are true, and those where they are false. Dancy thinks the kind of argument that we don't know we're a brain in a vat might do.
  3. No impact on understanding, unless we adopt a position that to understand a proposition is to distinguish circumstances in which one would be justified in believing it from those in which one would not.

### 1.1.2.3 The Justification of Arguments from Experience

- This is the problem of induction – do we know anything about what we have not, and are not, experiencing? Do I know my diary's in my desk drawer? Knowledge depends on memory and on beliefs about how the world works[3]. This depends on general belief that things I've not observed are similar to things I have.
- Hume argues that I have no such reason, since it's neither analytic nor necessarily true, and any argument from experience begs the question.
- This sceptical argument doesn't rest on the fact that I might be wrong (as Argument 1) or that I have been wrong (Argument 2). Instead it relies on the obvious weakness of trying to use an argument from experience to justify all arguments from experience.
- Application of the "3 distinctions":
  1. Not global, as only concerns the unobserved.
  2. Attacks justified beliefs just as much as knowledge.
  3. Hume allows that we understand propositions about unobserved objects, though he argues that they are mostly false.

## 1.1.3 A Short Way with the Sceptic

- We might suppose it impossible to provide a global argument of the strongest type (that attacks understanding – none of the above 3 does). Only by understanding the sceptic's argument could we come to such a conclusion (that we understand nothing), and even if we didn't understand the argument, we would understand the conclusion. So, the conclusion must be false.
- We can adopt this "short" approach with sceptical arguments against:-
  1. Knowledge (unconvincing): the sceptic claims to know his conclusion that knowledge is impossible.
  2. Justified Belief (more effective): what's the point of arguing that justified belief is impossible? If you were right you'd be unjustified in believing your conclusion.
- Such defenses against the sceptic ignore the arguments & focus on the conclusion. They either:
  1. Dispute the sceptic's right to assert the conclusion, or
  2. Suggest the conclusion can't be true, so we're excused the trouble of attending to the arguments.
- An example of (2) is that against global failure of understanding, but if successful it might also work against global failure of knowledge. Since we understand what the sceptic is saying, we must have the sort of knowledge required for that understanding.
- Dancy thinks the sceptic need be worried by neither defense. The sceptic has (what he sees as) a valid argument with true premises. If the argument concludes that the sceptic can't know his premises to be true, then we have either:
  1. A **reductio** (if I know anything – such as his supposedly self-evident premises – then I know nothing) or

[3] Eg. Diaries don't just disappear?

2. A **paradox** within the concept of knowledge (if a valid argument with true premises leads to a false or impossible conclusion).

- Hence, we miss the point by simply focusing on the conclusion of the sceptic's argument.

### 1.1.4 Another Reply

- A response to the BIV argument is that, since it makes no difference to your experience whether or not you're a BIV, the truth of the situation doesn't matter.
- This makes out the sceptic's apparent strength (the evidence-transcendence of his two hypotheses) to be his weakness.
- There are weaker and stronger forms of this argument against the sceptic:
  1. **Weaker**: though there is a radical difference between the two hypotheses, neither makes any difference to you, so you're justified in ignoring the difference. This is analogous to whether or not we have free will – life goes on just the same.
  2. **Stronger**: this denies that there is such a thing as evidence transcendent truth, and so there's no contrast for the sceptic's argument o work on.
- Dancy thinks (1) is wrong-headed, but focuses on (2).
- The difference between the two arguments is that between **realism** (there are evidence-transcendent truths) and **anti-realism** (there aren't).
- Anti-realism (name and recent development due to Dummett – *Truth and Other Enigmas*, Chapter 10) isn't intended as a response to the sceptic, but there are affinities between the anti-realist and the sceptic. Both think we have no more than a tentative grasp on the world. The anti-realist denies the existence of any "real" world beyond our grasp, which makes the epistemological task easier since there are no evidence-transcendent properties. For a property to be present just means that we have the best possible evidence for it.
- The anti-realist believes that understanding of sentences derives from situations warranting their use, where they count as true. Hence, if there's no such thing as justified belief, there's no such thing as understanding. For, to understand a sentence is to be able to select situations that justify us in believing the sentence true.
- It would seem that the anti-realist's position is weak, given that any sceptical argument against justified belief is thereby for the anti-realist of the strongest form, denying us understanding of our own language.
- However, all the sceptical arguments that reach this conclusion make a move that's invalid from the anti-realist perspective; namely, they invoke the realist claim that the world might differ radically from what it appears. Hence, there is no scope for global scepticism about either understanding or justified belief.
- The problem with anti-realism is that it's on a par with scepticism as far as implausibility is concerned. We can see this when we consider the questions the anti-realist asks us to give up on:
  1. **Other minds**: there's a real question whether there are sensations which are not ours, but this is evidence-transcendent (we can only observe behaviour, and it is

possible that the experience of other beings is either non-existent or different from ours).

2. **The past**: we presume that the past was once as determinate as the present is now, but there are many propositions about the past which are now evidence transcendent. Yet, we think there is a transcendent fact of the matter at stake, one that just happens to be beyond our recognition. This is a realist attitude to the past.

- There may be some areas where anti-realism is easy to construct, but the price of this route out of scepticism may be too high where realism seems compelling.

### 1.1.5 A Better Response

- So, we need to address the sceptic's argument. One line of attack is the hope that a satisfactory account of what knowledge is will expose errors in the sceptic's reasoning (see Chapter 3).
- Another try is to abandon knowledge, and be satisfied with justified belief. Unfortunately, this won't work because all the interesting sceptical arguments are as effective against justified belief as against knowledge.

## 1.2 Knowledge

### 1.2.1 The Traditional Account

- **Tripartite** definition / account: Knowledge as **Justified True Belief**; ie:
  1. *p*
  2. B*ap*
  3. JB*ap*
- (1) is stipulative, (2) seems minimal and (3) is needed to avoid lucky guesses counting as knowledge. Consequently, a belief is not considered justified merely because it is true.
- One problem with (2) is that it doesn't seem strong enough, in that there's no mention of **certainty**. We seem to require certainty for knowledge *claims*, so why not for knowledge *itself*?
- Dancy seems to see a dilemma:
  1. If our account of knowledge doesn't include reference to certainty, we need to make room for certainty somewhere.
  2. If it requires certainty for knowledge claims, it needs to explain why.
- Why not change B*ap* to C*ap*? The usual reason is the example of the hectoring schoolmaster intimidating a schoolboy into not claiming certainty for the dates he's learnt – yet doesn't he still know them? He has the right answer, and not by luck.
- Dancy is concerned that we'll lose the belief condition by following this example. For, insofar as the diffident schoolboy is less than certain, so far is his belief weakened.

### 1.2.2 Gettier Counter-examples

- The example Dancy gives is of someone watching McEnroe thrashing Connors in the Wimbledon final on TV, and deducing that McEnroe won Wimbledon that year. But, unbeknownst to him, the programme is of last year's final. Yet, McEnroe did win Wimbledon that year (supposed to be a repeat thrashing of Connors). So, our hero passes the tripartite test, yet we wouldn't say that he knew that McEnroe won Wimbledon that year.
- Gettier isn't quarrelling with any of the three clauses, just pointing out that they need supplementing.
- The essence of a Gettier example is that someone has a justified but false belief from which he deduces something he justifiably believes which by luck happens to be true.
- There are three responses:
  1. Explode the counter-examples.
  2. Supplement the tripartite analysis to exclude the counter-examples.
  3. Alter the tripartite analysis to exclude the counter-examples.
- Dancy focuses on (1) for the remainder of this Section.
- Gettier himself gives two assumptions required for his examples to work:
  1. It must be possible for a false belief still to be justified.

2. A justified belief must justify any belief it (is justifiably believed to) implies.

- (2) is just $PC^j$. If $PC^j$ could be shown to be false then not only would the Gettier examples fail, but so would part of the BIV sceptical argument. However, we can construct Gettier examples that don't rely on $PC^j$, so this avenue isn't very effective.
- We can't just reject the Gettier examples as contrived and artificial, though much of the literature treats them as a private philosophical game.
- However, Wittgenstein has shown that a concept can be perfectly healthy without being definable. There need be nothing common to all instances of a property other than that they are instances.
- Dancy is sympathetic to the view that nothing hangs on our failure to find necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, but is sustained in the search by the thought that a suitable account of what knowledge is may help in discussions of justification.
- He thinks this could happen in 2 ways:
  1. We could give an account of knowledge that undermines the sceptical argument such that possibility remains open that some of our beliefs are justified (he thinks Nozick's Conditional Theory [see Chapter 3] has pretensions in this direction).
  2. Define justification in terms of knowledge. Jen Hornsby's idea is that we might suppose a belief to be justified iff (in certain conditions to be spelled out) it would be knowledge.

1.2.3 Responses to Gettier

- Dancy thinks these are less fruitful than the approaches just outlined. They each try to supplement the tripartite approach.

#### 1.2.3.1 The Presence of Relevant Falsehood

- In the examples, B*ap* was false, so we could supplement the tripartite analysis with a fourth principle:
  4. Nothing can be known that is inferred from (a group containing) a false belief.
- There are two problems:
  1. We can provide Gettier examples in which, though there is falsehood, there is no inference.
  2. The suggestion (in common to many responses to Gettier) is too strong. We all have numerous false beliefs that play some role in our inferences, so this proposal will leave us knowing nothing at all.
- The example for (1) is due to Chisholm. I take myself to see that there is a sheep in the field, so I believe there is a sheep in the field without any inference, and indeed there is one. But, what I see is a large furry dog, so I can't be said to know there's a sheep in the field.
- There's a response to this example, to the effect that I am inferring that I see a sheep in the field – from my knowledge of my own sensory states. Dancy thinks this response raises large issues, but argues in Chapter 5 that if there is any non-inferential

knowledge, some of it involves things other than our sensory states (so why not sheep?).

- To fix these defects, we must remove the reference to inference and tighten the (negative) relation between false beliefs and true justified ones. A possible answer is to insist on **absence of relevant falsehood** – but this seems to name rather than solve the difficult, for which beliefs are to count as relevant?
- An answer would be that a false belief *p* is relevant if, had I believed ¬*p*, my belief that *q* would have ceased to be justified. This allows me to hold many irrelevant false beliefs.
- However, there is a counter-example. Dancy gives:
  1. Mary will give me a lift this evening
  2. Her battery is not flat
  3. A friend with jump-leads lives nearby
- (1) is justified if one of (2) and (3) is true, yet (3) looks irrelevant if (2) is true. Justified belief seems to depend on which other apparently gratuitous beliefs I have. So, we need more work put into deciding which beliefs are relevant.

#### 1.2.3.2 Defeasibility

- Another approach - the **defeasibility** suggestion – is to add a 4th clause to the effect that there must be no other truths such that, had I believed them, would have destroyed my justification for believing *q*. The addition of further truths cannot defeat the justification.
- This doesn't mean that false *beliefs* will never be justified, only that in this case we don't have *knowledge*, for which we require indefeasible justification.
- A potential problem, though in fact a strength, is that it appears to make our first stipulation (*p*, ie. K*ap* → *p*) redundant. No false belief can count as knowledge (ie. be indefeasibly justified), for if I'd believed ¬*p*, then I wouldn't have been justified in believing *p*.
- Dancy appeals to coherence to rescue the situation – the requirement for *p* (that knowledge requires truth) has been explained rather than simply stipulated.
- This approach is an extension of "no relevant falsehood" to include beliefs not actually entertained, but to no effect, as is shown by an example:
  1. I have good reason to believe that my children are playing at home.
  2. They've been invited to a neighbour's.
  3. My wife has refused the invitation.
  4. I don't know either (2) or (3)
  5. Do I know they are at home?
- This example shows that the defeasibility condition needs to be altered for:
  1. If one's intuition is that I do know they are at home, then one must reject the current formulation of the defeasibility condition.
  2. If we deem it that I do not know they are at home, because had I heard (2) my justification would have been defeated, then we need an explanation of why (3) – unknown to me – would not redress the balance.

- The problem, as for "no relevant falsehood", is that the piecemeal addition of true beliefs can overturn the justification, while there remain further undiscovered truths that can overturn the overturning!
- There are two further problems:
  1. Isn't there likely to be (at least often enough) a single truth which, if it alone were added would defeat my justification, thus drastically reducing my range of knowledge?
  2. We need to counter the way piecemeal addition of truths toggles knowledge on and off.
- We might address (2) by stipulating the 4th condition as that justification must remain when we add all truths at once. This would probably allow me to claim to know my children are in the garden, because the two new truths cancel out. However, Dancy has two objections:-
  1. We're in the realms of fiction.
  2. We'll never believe anything, as we're asked to believe that our justification will remain when all truths are in, which is more than is asked of us in an ordinary claim to know.

#### 1.2.3.3 Reliability

- The suggestion is that justified true belief can be knowledge if it derives from a **reliable method**.
- This is related to the **causal** approach below, since it is tempting to provide a causal account of just what constitutes a reliable method.
- However, this approach is in danger of either:
  1. Making knowledge impossible, or
  2. Exposing us to one of the sceptical arguments.
- For (1), it's difficult to distinguish between problems with the method per se and with its use. Also, given human frailty, it seems unlikely that there is any perfectly reliable method of acquiring beliefs.
- If we retreat to "general" reliability, we end up with (2) – namely the argument from error – and we're worse off than when we started. While this may be ultimately how things are, we don't want to give up hope prematurely.
- A final retreat is to reliability "this time", as this diverts the sceptic, but does it add anything?
  1. If reliability is defined in terms of the production of *truth*, we add nothing to the first of the tripartite principles ($Kap \rightarrow p$).
  2. If reliability is defined in terms of *justification*, we add nothing to the third of the tripartite principles ($Kap \rightarrow JBap$).
  3. It may be that the causal theory constitutes justification in the particular case.

### 1.2.3.4 Conclusive Reasons

- The failure of all Gettier cases may be diagnosed as reasons being less than conclusive. If we insist on conclusive reasons for justified true belief, any case where the believer is right by accident fails to meet the criteria.
- We need to know what is required for a reason to be conclusive.
  1. A suggestion is that beliefs A – M constitute conclusive reasons for belief N if A – M could not be true if N is false. This excludes the counter-examples but also excludes all empirical knowledge.
  2. A weaker suggestion (due to Dretske) is that beliefs A – M constitute conclusive reasons for belief N iff A – M *would* (rather than *could*) not be true if N is false. Dancy thinks this is promising (and related to Truth Tracking), though it's too weak to provide a genuine sense of "conclusive". In particular, it's good that it contains no reference to *reasons* – because often beliefs are justified without reasons (eg. "I am in pain now" isn't based on reasons at all).

### 1.2.3.5 The Causal Theory

- The problem with Gettier examples is that the justified belief is true by luck. However, we can't just stipulate that there be no luck involved. (Good) luck's involved when our reliable belief-gathering method works.
- Goldman's promising suggestion is that what makes beliefs true in the Gettier examples isn't what caused them, and proposes a 4th condition that:
  K*ap* → *p* causes B*ap*.
- Initial problems are:
  1. Facts (or propositions) don't cause anything, only events or possible agents do.
  2. We have no knowledge of the future unless there is backward causation.
  3. We can have no knowledge of universal truths (or knowledge by inference). My belief that all men are mortal isn't caused by the fact that all men are mortal, but by the fact that lots of individual men have died. And these weren't caused to die because of the fact that all men die.
- Possible answers are:
  1. This may be just wrong[4].
  2. Future fact and the belief in it might have a common cause.
  3. More difficult. Even if facts are causes, we won't suppose universal facts can cause universal beliefs.
- Dancy thinks that the promising aspects of causal theory are supplied by the theory he supports, which is a generalisation of it.

[4] Look up Papineau's lectures on the relata of causation.

### 1.2.4 Concluding Remarks

- The causal theory, and maybe some versions of the reliability proposal, may be seen as direct defenses of the tripartite theory. That is, they seek to explode the Gettier examples by saying that the supposedly justified true beliefs weren't justified after all. I'm not justified in believing there's a sheep in the field because my belief wasn't caused by the sheep but by the fluffy dog. The causal theory of knowledge would be a consequence of the causal theory of justification.
- We can argue against the causal theory of justification by denying that all justified beliefs that *p* are caused by relevant facts. For instance, if we don't believe in moral facts, we might still hope that some moral beliefs are justified. Also, aren't there justified mathematical beliefs despite it being doubtful that there are causally effective mathematical facts.
- The main objection to the causal account is that we need a common account of justified true and false beliefs, since we can have justified beliefs about the future when we don't know whether the belief is true or false. However, the causal account can't justify false beliefs, since there's no fact that *p* to cause a false belief that *p*.
- If we add a causal theory of knowledge to Jen Hornsby's idea (see the end of 1.2.2) that a belief is justified iff if true it would be knowledge, we get a causal theory of justification that can cope with false justified beliefs.

## 1.3 The Conditional Theory of Knowledge

### 1.3.1 The Theory

- This theory is due to Nozick, who starts from the Gettier examples, and diagnoses the problem as being *partly* that we would have believed the conclusion, even had it been false, and *partly* that in slightly changed circumstances in which it is true, we wouldn't have believed it.
- So, to correct these defects, the formulation is:
  1. *p*.
  2. *a* believes that *p*,
  3. If *p* were not true, *a* would not believe that *p*,
  4. If , in changed circumstances, *p* were still true, *a* would still believe that *p*.
- The example is of my belief that there's a police-car outside (when there is) being caused by my son's stereo. If the car wasn't outside, I'd still have believed it was, and if the stereo wasn't playing, I wouldn't have believed the car was outside, even when it was. Hence, both (3) and (4) are violated and my belief that there's a police-car outside isn't justified.
- In logical notation:
  1. *p*.
  2. B*ap*.
  3. $\neg p \Box\!\!\rightarrow \neg$B*ap*.
  4. $p \Box\!\!\rightarrow$ B*ap*.
- The idea behind this is that, for belief to be knowledge, it must be sensitive to the truth of the belief – the belief must **track** the truth.

### 1.3.2 Some Comments

#### 1.3.2.1 Relation to the Other Theories

- Truth-tracking requires that *p* and B*ap* are related. This is similar to, and a generalisation of, the causal theory, where the relation is specifically causal.
- Ie. if *p* is a cause of B*ap*, it would seem that conditions (3) and (4) are both satisfied[5], but not vice versa.
- The conditional theory hopes to escape the problems of the causal theory by being less demanding. It adopts many of the better points of the theories rejected in the previous chapter and is (says Dancy) close to Dretske's "conclusive reasons" approach.

#### 1.3.2.2 Relation to Justified Belief

[5] Need to review Papineau's lectures on the counterfactual theory of causation.

- Do we have:
  JB*ap* ≡ (*p* □→ B*ap* & ¬*p* □→ ¬B*ap*)?
- That is, does a justified belief track the truth? **No**, for a false belief can still be justified, and JB*ap* is consistent with (B*ap* & ¬*p*). But (B*ap* & ¬*p*) is inconsistent with (*p* □→ B*ap* & ¬*p* □→ ¬B*ap*), for:
  1. (B*ap* & ¬*p*) → B*ap*, and
  2. B*ap* & ¬*p*) → ¬*p*
  3. (*p* □→ B*ap* & ¬*p* □→ ¬B*ap*) → (¬*p* □→ ¬B*ap*)
  4. (¬*p* & (¬*p* □→ ¬B*ap*)) → ¬B*ap* [from (2) and (3)]
  5. Therefore (B*ap* & ¬B*ap*) [from (1) & (4)], contradiction.
- Hence, a false belief doesn't track the truth, and the conditional analysis of justification fails.
- We might repair the situation by taking our account of justification from that of knowledge, ie: *a* is justified in believing *p* iff in certain circumstances *a* would know that *p*. "In certain circumstances" is the crucial phrase, and if read in the simplest was as "if p were true", we'd have JB*ap* ≡ (*p* □→ K*ap*)[6].

#### 1.3.2.3 Luck

- The theory explains why we feel that what's wrong with the Gettier examples is that there's too much luck involved.
- The extent to which *a*'s belief is luckily true is the extent to which even if it had been false, *a* would still have believed it, and if in changed circumstances it had still been true, *a* would not have believed it.

#### 1.3.2.4 Certainty

- Someone claiming to know that *p* claims that if *p* were true he would believe it and if it wasn't true, he wouldn't. But, no-one who wasn't confident would make such a claim.
- This explains why the diffident schoolboy does know, but cannot claim to know. The schoolboy thinks it equiprobable that he's right or wrong, so can't claim that if *p* were false he wouldn't believe it.

### 1.3.3 The Principle of Closure & the First Sceptical Argument

- According to the conditional theory of knowledge, one can deny that one knows that one is not a BIV, and yet affirm both that one knows that one is reading a book and that if one is reading a book one is not a BIV. For:
  1. If one were a BIV one would still think one was not a BIV (hence condition (3) fails). [(3) requires ¬*p* □→ ¬B*ap*; p = not-BIV, so we need BIV □→ not believe not BIV, ie. believe BIV, which is false].

[6] This seems wildly implausible, as it implies *a* knows all true propositions.

2. All four conditions are satisfied by reading a book.
3. Dancy just says this is true "in similar manner". Well, $p$ = (RB → ¬BIV). $p$ is true, and I believe it, so conditions (1) and (2) are satisfied. $p$ (a conditional) can only be false if (RB & BIV), and I don't believe that, so (3) is satisfied. I can't think how $p$ can be relevantly different yet still true, but suppose I would still believe it [maybe "eating a sandwich → ¬BIV"?], so (4) is satisfied.

- This is a direct breach of the closure principle $PC^k$: [K$ap$ & K$a$($p$→ $q$)] → K$aq$. Nozick is able to show that $PC^k$ fails generally, and explain why. This explanation depends on a theory of subjunctive conditionals.
- Dancy rehearses **possible worlds**. He notes that it is not possible to order worlds by degree of closeness to the actual world. This is for two reasons:
  1. The notion of closeness is too imprecise.
  2. For any possible world, we can expect to find another that resembles the actual world to the same degree.
- Hence, we should think of groups of equidistant possible worlds.
- Nozick's account of the subjunctive conditional $p$ □→ $q$ is as follows:
  $p$ □→ $q$ is true in the actual world iff $p$ → $q$ is true throughout a range of groups of possible worlds close to the actual world.
- Dancy gives an example of Mrs. Thatcher delaying the election, and we're asked would she have won. We're to imagine possible worlds in which she did delay the election. These worlds differ from our world perforce because the date of the election has consequences, but we hold as much else as constant as we can, and ask whether she would have won. If we think it most probable that she would, the conditional "if Mrs. Thatcher had delayed the election, she would have lost" would be false, else true.
- We're asking whether ($p$ & $q$) is more probable than ($p$ & ¬$q$) in the nearest possible worlds. If it is, then $p$ □→ $q$. There will be remoter worlds where ($p$ & ¬$q$), but this doesn't matter, as we're asking what's probable, not what's possible.
- This distinction is illustrated by Lewis's example of tailless kangaroo's: it's *probable* that they would topple over, but it's *possible* they'd be given crutches and stay upright!
- So, what has Nozick given us? Dancy thinks two things:
  1. Confirmed our beliefs that (in the BIV situation) K$ap$, K$a$($p$ → $q$) and ¬K$aq$ (when we consider the situations in terms of closest possible worlds; it is, of course, possible that ¬ K$ap$, but this world [where $p$ is false, ie. I'm not sitting reading a book when I believe that I am] is vastly more remote than the one in which I am sitting reading a book [presumably I'm hallucinating or dreaming]).
  2. Given a direct disproof of the principle of closure. This can be done by example (as in the BIV case) but can also be done more generally, which Dancy shows as below.

#### 1.3.3.1 Disproof of the Principle of Closure ($PC^k$)

- The first thing to note is the distinction between $PC^k$, which on this account is false, and modus ponens, with which there are no problems. Ie. between:
  1. $PC^k$: [K*ap* & K*a*(*p*→ *q*)] → K*aq*, and
  2. MP: [K*ap* & (K*ap*→ K*aq*)] → K*aq*.
- On any account, the items whose truth or falsity is relevant to $PC^k$ are three:
  1. *p*
  2. (*p*→ *q*)
  3. *q*
- When we think of these in terms of closest possible worlds, which we use to see whether *a*'s beliefs track the truth), there is no reason why they the world in which *q* is true (or false) should not be much more remote than those in which *p* and (*p* → *q*) are true (or false).
- Hence, the more distant the worlds represented by *q* or ¬*q* are from the actual world, the more likely it is that we can construct an example in which the left and right sides of the $PC^k$ conditional come apart, as is shown where ¬*q* = "you are a BIV".
- Dancy closes with a refutation of Descartes' **dreaming argument**. In this case, we can have K*ap*, K*a*(*p*→ *q*) and ¬K*aq*, [ie. I know *p* (I'm sitting reading), I know that if I'm sitting reading I'm not in bed dreaming, but I don't know *q* (I'm not in bed dreaming)] for the following reasons:
  1. K*ap*: In the closest worlds in which I am sitting reading, I believe I am. In the closest worlds in which I'm not sitting reading (eg. lying down or watching TV) I don't think I'm sitting reading. So, my belief that *p* tracks the truth and so is knowledge.
  2. K*a*(*p*→ *q*): This doesn't receive attention from a truth-tracking perspective. Is this analytic?
  3. ¬K*aq*: In the closest worlds in which *q* is true (I'm not in bed dreaming), I do believe that *q* is true, but in the closest worlds in which *q* is false (I'm in bed dreaming), I don't believe I'm dreaming, so don't believe *q* is false. So, my belief that *q* doesn't tracks the truth and so isn't knowledge.

### 1.3.4 Has Nozick Refuted the Sceptic?

- Nozick thinks that all sceptical arguments rely on $PC^k$, and that, therefore, he has refuted the sceptic. This is implausible in any case, but clearly the Argument from Error can't be disposed of in this way.
- The reason is that this is the reason we don't know we're BIVs. We've been deceived as to our real situation before (eg. when dreaming) so we could be being deceived now. This generates the sceptical problem that Nozick resolves by denying $PC^k$.
- We might think that Nozick's account also tells us we don't know we're BIVs. This is true, but on its own, this is a disadvantage (it's just another sceptical conclusion). What Nozick needs is to disprove $PC^k$ so that the sceptic can no longer use it and the argument from error to show that I don't know straightforward things like I'm sitting here reading a book. We can live with not knowing we're not BIVs, but not with not knowing we have hands.

- Dancy thinks there is something right about the argument from error, in that it adds consistency. If I don't know I'm a BIV, or that the universe didn't pop into existence fully formed 5 minutes ago, then how can I claim to *The Times* will be published tomorrow, or even that I'm sitting here reading? This sounds like a general argument against the conditional theory of knowledge.
- Even if $PC^k$ were valid, there's no reason to think the argument from error relies on it, and so can be disposed of if $PC^k$ is invalid. And, as we've seen, if the argument from error did rely on $PC^k$, then Nozick's proof of the failure of $PC^k$ would be invalid.
- We can't reject the argument from error on the grounds that it argues fallaciously from the fact that you might be wrong to the conclusion that you don't know. Instead, it uses the principle of universalisability.

### 1.3.5 Internalism and Externalism

- Dancy asks whether Nozick has to accept that he's defused the BIV argument, but not the argument from error? Nozick can respond that his account of knowledge is **externalist**, while the argument from error is **internalist**. The argument from error merely shows internalism to be a defective (if traditional) approach to epistemology that must lead to scepticism.
- Dancy gives an example of an externalist conception of knowledge, the causal theory:
  1. *p*
  2. B*ap*
  3. JB*ap*
  4. B*ap* is caused by *p*
- The reason it is external is that a might be unaware of (4) when asked whether he knows *p*. However, the externalist claims that K*ap* provided (4) is true.
- The internalist requires further:
  5. B*a*4
- The externalist can reply that this leads to infinite regress, and therefore scepticism, for we then need:
  6. B*a*5 is justified
  7. B*a*5 is caused by 5.
- We are then in the same place with (7) as we were with (4). Hence the regress.
- Dancy notes that the regress doesn't depend on the adoption of the causal theory, for we can generate a regress from an internalist reading of the tripartite conception, ie:
  1. *p*
  2. B*ap*
  3. JB*ap*
  4. B*a*3
  5. JB*a*4
  6. B*a*5
  7. Etc.
- The internalist's response is to point out how strong our internalist intuitions are. Take the causal example. This claims that (4) – B*ap* is caused by *p* – is essential for

knowledge, but that *a* need not know anything about it's truth. The internalist asks whether this doesn't show that for all *a* knows, he doesn't know that *p*. How could he, when for all he knows, he doesn't[7].

- Dancy thinks that neither the externalist nor the internalist is successful in this exchange:
  1. The internalist's response to the infinite regress argument is that it merely points out the difficulties of scepticism, which need to be faced up to.
  2. The externalist's response to the internalist's intuition argument is that this is simply a restatement of the internalist position..
- Dancy doubts there can be any conclusive argument in favour either of internalism or of externalism. The positions are so far apart that any argument seems to beg the question.
- Nozick's position is avowedly externalist – especially conditions (3) and (4)[8], and there's no requirement for anything internalist like:

  $Ba(\neg p \Box\!\!\rightarrow \neg Bap)$.
- Dancy doesn't think Nozick, as an externalist, can simply ignore the internalist argument from error, for two reasons:
  1. He relies on the argument to reject $PC^k$ and BIV scepticism.
  2. In relying on the argument from error, he shows his theory not to be as externalist as it seems at first, and so can't defend himself from attacks merely on the ground that they are internalist.
- There's no answer so far to the sceptical argument from error, though externalism and anti-realism look promising. Those who find these responses unpalatable need to look further. Dancy gives his approach in the final chapter (3.15.5).

[7] I don't understand this argument.
[8] These are the truth-tracking conditions. Why are they externalist?

# 2. JUSTIFICATION

## 2.4 Foundationalism

### 2.4.1 Classical Foundationalism

- Classical foundationalism is the most influential epistemological theory and the one against which others react. Discussion of what it is for a belief to be justified starts here. It defines the aims of epistemology.
- Two sorts of beliefs:
  1. **Foundations**, which need no support.
  2. **Superstructure**, which rests on the foundations.
- This distinction is structural, but classical foundationalism takes the foundations to our **sensory experience**.
- This is the central tenet of empiricism, that knowledge derives from experience. Beliefs not about sensory states must derive from those that are.
- The reason given for beliefs about sensory states being foundational is that they are said to be **infallible**.
- Hence classical foundationalism is a **research programme** that aims to show how all our knowledge can be justified on the basis of infallible beliefs about our own sensory states. Unless we can do this, we must collapse into scepticism.
- Dancy will investigate classical foundationalism in detail and reject almost all of the theory. So, what motivates it? And, why this approach to empiricism rather than another?

#### 2.4.1.1 Probability and Certainty

- C.I. Lewis held that "unless something is certain, nothing is probable". He held this on the basis of conditional probabilities, which are always assessed on the basis of evidence: P(h|e).
- In determining P(h|e) we treat e as certain, but e itself depends on further evidence e', and so on. Unless this process stops somewhere, with $P(e^n) = 1$, we end up with a regress[9].
- Dancy notes a (valid) move from *certainty* to *infallibility*.
- There's a technical device to represent the probabilities of the foundational beliefs as being relative to a tautology (ie. P(h|qv¬q)).

#### 2.4.1.2 The Regress Argument

- All are agreed that *some* beliefs are justified by their relation to others, and that standardly the relation is taken to be **inferential**.

[9] This is *Agrippa's Trilemma*, which Dancy doesn't mention. We either end up with dogmatism (Foundationalism), infinite regress or arguing in a circle (Coherentism).

- The regress argument is that *some* beliefs must be justified non-inferentially. It's the supposition that only justified beliefs can justify others that generates the regress.
- The only alternative to regress is that the chain of inference loops back on itself, but the justification of the loop itself will still be conditional.
- The core of any form of foundationalism is the claim that there are two forms of justification: inferential and non-inferential.
- We need to note that not all regress arguments are vicious.
- Some are **virtuous**; eg.
  1. That there's always another point between any two points in space or time.
  2. We can also accept temporal regress (every point in time has a prior point) and causal regress (every event has a cause, and every cause is an event).
  3. We can even accept the regress generated by accepting that in believing *p* we believe *q* = "*p* is probable".
- Dancy thinks the regress of justification is **vicious**, however, in that it'll show that nothing is ever justified. This isn't a temporal regress of acts of justification, but the claim that no belief is other than conditionally justified. Regress can only be escaped by the foundationalist view that some beliefs are justified non-inferentially.
- We have to wait until 2.9.1 for Dancy's main (non-foundationalist) response to the regress argument. He now considers an ambiguity; there are two meanings to "We have only shown that A is justified if B and C are":
  1. We've shown A's justification to be conditional on that of B and C.
  2. If B and C are in fact justified, we have shown that A is.
- (2) says that our demonstration is conditional while (1) says that what we've demonstrated is conditional.
- The regress argument relies on (1). On (2) we get not a regress of justification but a demonstration of justification which isn't always successful.
- The regress argument differs from C I Lewis's arguments about probability and certainty. The two arguments possess structural similarity, but Lewis's regress can only be stopped by infallible beliefs, whereas the regress argument requires beliefs that are non-inferentially justified to terminate the regress.

### 2.4.1.3 Infallibility and Justification

- However, the two arguments merge because an infallible belief would be non-inferentially justified. So, if there are any infallible beliefs, the regress is terminated.
- We will learn in 2.4.3 that the reverse of the above is false; not all non-inferentially justified beliefs are infallible. This opens the door to non-classical foundationalism, where we can find ways other than infallible beliefs to provide non-inferential justification.
- We have to explain how a belief can be non-inferentially justified. Classical foundationalism's answer is that such foundational beliefs are infallible. However, Dancy now argues that this cannot be right.

### 2.4.2 Problems for Classical Foundationalism

- Infallible basic beliefs guarantee their truth, but why do we want this given that inductive principles of inference are fallible in any case. If our inferential procedure is contaminated, why insist the input is pure?
- More importantly, Dancy agrees with the **fallibilist** claim that there are no infallible beliefs.
- So, are our beliefs about our own sensory states infallible?
  1. Foundationalists (eg. Ayer) admit that we may **misdescribe** our experiences, but this is treated as a merely verbal problem. While I may be mistaken about the meaning of words, this doesn't mean I'm mistaken about the contents of my sensory states. I know how things look, but just pick the wrong words and my beliefs, however described, remain true.
  2. Verbal errors can be **corrected**. Eg., if I get a colour-word wrong, I can be corrected by being shown a colour-chart. To then make the correct claim, I must already be aware of the nature of my experience, and merely correct its description.
  3. Although some **comparison** between experiences is necessary for me know which words to use to describe by present experience, and this is fallible because memory is fallible, this fallibility relates only to the *expression* of the belief.
  4. In comparing two things we must have **non-comparative** knowledge of them, for we compare them to see in what sense they are like one another, not what they are like in isolation.
- In response, the fallibilist will ask what's the **content** of such infallible beliefs? I can be wrong in my description, so any assertion must be a non-verbal belief that something (say) *looks that way*. It's like a private gesture: a private act with a private object. Dancy can't understand this as our drawing our own attention to something.
- What is a **merely verbal** error? There can be several sorts, such as Spoonerisms. However, an error in drawing attention to my present sensory states isn't one of them, but is also substantial (eg. if I describe my present experience as "pink" when I mean "orange", I'm wrong about what pink is[10]).
- The less the content, the less the risk of error, and **contentless** beliefs may well be infallible. However, can such infallible beliefs perform the function the infallibilist needs, which is to form the base of chains of inference? Basic beliefs need sufficient content to act as **premises**. Otherwise, we'll get no worthwhile knowledge about the future, past or even present. Our basic beliefs need to have sufficient content to support the superstructure in which we're interested, but it's unlikely that so contentfull beliefs will be infallible.
- Dancy now confirms this analysis by considering arguments due to Chisholm (a then contemporary foundationalist). Chisholm distinguishes two uses of "appears white":
  1. **Comparative**: "appears the way white things normally appear".

[10] There's something wrong here? I'm not wrong about what pink is if my saying "pink" when I meant to say "orange" was a mere slip of the tongue.

2. **Non-comparative**. "white things normally appear white".

- If "appears white" in (2) were to be given meaning (1), then (2) would be a tautology, but it isn't, so there must be another meaning. Chisholm claims that non-comparative appearance statements express what is "directly evident".
- A **directly evident** proposition is one either identical with, or entailed by, a true contingent proposition that is all but certain. Beliefs in directly evident propositions are not the same as infallible beliefs, but share the characteristic of being true.
- Chisholm's consideration of objections to his theory parallels what's been already given, but the last objection he considers is as follows:
  1. The infallibilist is using "appears white" in the way it is normally used.
  2. So, in using the expression, he refers to these other occasions of use as well as to the present experience.
  3. What's said about other occasions isn't directly evident.
  4. So, the expression itself doesn't express what's directly evident.
- Dancy agrees with Chisholm in diagnosing an error in moving from (1) to (2). However, Dancy would create a stronger argument by replacing (2) with
  2'. Saying "this appears white" cannot be true unless certain proposition about experiences other than your present one are true. .
- What interests Dancy, however, is Chisholm's reason for rejecting the move from (1) to (2), which follows the traditional route of distinguishing *verbal* from *substantial* error (Chisholm distinguishes a Frenchman's confusion of the words "potatoes" and "apples" from anyone's confusion of potatoes with apples). This shows that Chisholm has nothing new to say.

### 2.4.3 Foundationalism Without Infallibility

- There are two foundationalist theses in response to the regress argument:
  $F^1$: There are two forms of justification; *inferential* and *non-inferential*.
  $F^2$: Basic beliefs are never even partly justified by appeal to non-basis beliefs.
- While we normally accept people's descriptions of their sensory states at face value, we occasionally reason with people about them, as in saying to someone that the traffic lights can't look amber because it's the top light that's on, and this is always red. It looks as though a non-basic belief can therefore influence the justification of a basic belief, whether negatively or positively. This would imply that, while a basic belief is mostly justified by its subject matter, it cannot be fully justified without being partially confirmed by, or at least not disconfirmed by, non-basic evidence.
- This has to be denied by anyone accepting $F^2$. Anyone accepting the force of the regress argument (Dancy refers to the foundationalist using the regress argument) can't accept that basic beliefs are even partially justified by non-basic beliefs without reintroducing the circle of conditional justification that leads to the sceptical conclusion that nothing is ever justified.
- So, a foundationalist who accepts $F^1$ but not $F^2$ must hold $F^1$ for reasons other than the regress argument. Dancy will consider such a new foundationalist theory in 2.6 (Empiricist Theories of Meaning).

- What might non-inferentially justified beliefs be like? Dancy gives 3 possibilities:
  1. Beliefs justified by something other than beliefs.
  2. Self-justifying beliefs.
  3. Beliefs requiring no justification.
- We might reject (3) on the grounds that such a belief is no use in the foundationalist programme, which takes it that only justified beliefs can justify others. Dancy considers this "harsh". Instead, we can treat (3) as a special case of (2) – of a belief "standing on its own feet".
- (1) to (3) are "formal" properties that would stop the regress, but we need more substantial "epistemic" properties. Infallibility was one such, of type (2). Are there others?
- C I Lewis considered basic beliefs to be "certain" or "incorrigible", while Descartes thought of them as "indubitable". The obvious definitions are that beliefs are:
  **Incorrigible**: iff no one could ever be in a position to correct them
  **Indubitable**: iff no one could ever have a reason to doubt them.
- Dancy doesn't find these moves helpful as a way of finding a weaker, but still attractive, form of foundationalism to the one insisting on infallibility of basic beliefs:
  1. If a basic belief is not infallible, it could be false. An *incorrigibly* false basic belief just makes the situation worse.
  2. How could a fallible belief be indubitable? Since we've now admitted that a basic belief can be false, we might have good reason to **doubt** their truth if propositions inferred from them turn out to be false, or at least dubitable. Interesting beliefs about public objects are certainly dubitable, so why not the basic beliefs from which they are inferred?
- So, neither incorrigibility nor indubitability are adequate alternatives to infallibility. Dancy considers three more successful alternatives:
  1. There could be basic beliefs of type (1) – those justified by something other than beliefs – if there were beliefs that are justified by appeal to the facts, the justification being **caused** by the facts. The **fact** that there is a pig before me causes my belief that there is. This is similar to the claims in 1.2.4 about the causal theory of knowledge, but without the problems of universal beliefs (which are unlikely to be basic).
  2. **Defeasible** or **Prima Facie** justification: some beliefs are given as data, and are fully justified unless something arises to **defeat** their justification (as in 1.2.3). It's weaker than infallibility, but still accepts $F^1$ and $F^2$.
  3. Beliefs given as data are never for that reason fully justified. While **partially** justified, this justification is insufficient without further support from non-basic beliefs. This accepts $F^1$ but denies $F^2$.
- These alternatives leave foundationalism unharmed by the abandonment of infallibilism. Dancy now considers more damaging problems.

## 2.5 Foundationalism and Other Minds

### 2.5.1 Basic Beliefs and One's Own Sensory States

- There's a strong philosophical tradition, shared by Descartes and Locke, that we build up our knowledge on a foundation of knowledge of our own sensory states.
- Epistemology is seen as concerned with the individual, with no stress on the growth of knowledge across the generations. Instead, each individual is seen as building up his knowledge from nothing, and the philosophical question is how we build up knowledge sufficient for participation in a modern society from the passing show of sensory experience.
- Dancy will reject this approach, or at least show that it leads to scepticism, a general tendency within foundationalism.

### 2.5.2 The Problem of Other Minds

- Can we even know that there are any minds that have sensory states that aren't our own?
- Calling this "the problem of other minds" points out the foundationalist approach, where knowledge of ourselves is secure, while that of outsiders is problematic. The similar problem, that of the external world, may likewise be a fabrication of this way of looking at things, which Dancy thinks ought to be abandoned.
- The argument from error shows that we have often been wrong about others' mental states, so why is the present case any different? However, this sceptical argument is too weak, since it assumes that there are other minds, and that we're merely mistaken about their states. Wider scepticism would arise if it could be shown that we'd once thought a mind was present, but had been wrong: such possibilities now arise with machine intelligence.
- However, the usual arguments arise from possible, rather than actual, cases. Might it not be possible that the bodies with which we interact have no internal mental states, since a world in which behaviour was the same, but with no mental life, would be indistinguishable from our own.

### 2.5.3 The Argument from Analogy

- The argument from analogy claims that, while it is *possible* that persons other than ourselves are only mindless automata, there is more evidence that they are not than that they are.
- Dancy quotes Mill. He can observe a sequence of three things in *himself*:
  1. Modifications in his body.
  2. Feelings
  3. Outward demeanor

However, in *others*, he can only observe (1) and (3). But, he notes in *all* the regularity of all three, and the indispensability of (2) in *himself*. Hence, he can deduce the same (or at least some other) intermediate link in others.

- We might complain that this is weak as an inductive argument, being from only one instance. However, Dancy thinks this is beside the point, since the position this is arguing for (that other apparent persons have feelings like ours that are like ours but necessarily unobservable) can have no evidence against it. So, if Mill's argument shows a little evidence in favour, there will be more evidence in favour than against.
- However, difficulties for the argument arise from two assumptions:
  1. **Separability**: the sceptic suggests that the unobservable mental is only contingently related to the observable behavioral. For all we know, there could be one without the other, and this could be how things are. Mill concedes the contingency, but denies the actual separation, which is why the argument from analogy is needed. If there was a conceptual link between some mental state and behaviour, so that we couldn't conceive of the latter without the former, we'd have no need of the argument from analogy.
  2. **Understanding**: it assumes that I can understand what it is for others to have mental states, by analogy with my own experience.
- The problem with the argument from analogy is that these two assumptions are inconsistent. As Wittgenstein has pointed out, if we accept (1), we'll never be able to show that (2) is true, and so be prey to the strongest local scepticism. Hence, if we – by accepting (1) – need the argument from analogy, it won't go through because of the failure of (2). However, if we can show (2) to be true, then we've no need of the argument from analogy.

### 2.5.4 Can you Understand Propositions about Minds other than Your Own?

- The argument from analogy assumes it is easy (or at least possible) to conceive of a pain that is not hurting you. The idea is that you consider a pain of yours, and then consider:
  (a) That there is something like this, but which doesn't hurt you, and
  (b) That there is something like you, but not you, for this thing to hurt.
- But can you conceive of something that is hurting, but not hurting you? It is necessarily part of the concept of something that hurts that it hurts you. And, if you can't manage (a), you won't be able to mange (b) either.
- This sceptical argument shows that you can't just announce that you can conceive of another's pain, on the grounds that you can suppose that what he has is the same as what you have, since this just begs the question.
- You can't conceive of another's knee hurting in the way yours does, because this is just to conceive of it as hurting you.
- This drives us from foundationalism to the most interesting form of **solipsism** (where you are the only subject of experience).
- The reason we can't, on the basis of the argument from analogy, account for assumption (2) – Understanding – given assumption (1) – Separability – is that,

starting from oneself alone, and with a conception of mental states independent of behaviour, we can't move from ourselves to the concept of other subjects. The concept of a mental state so considered is too restrictive.

- Hence, we must reject assumption (1) and therefore make the argument from analogy redundant.
- One alternative way of conceiving of mental states is **behaviorism**, which connects behaviour to mental states by equating them. Being in pain *just is* the behavioral state of wincing and holding my knee; or, in a weaker form, the disposition to do so even though I repress the desire.
- Unfortunately, behaviorism ignores what is characteristically mental – the **feeling**, which is certainly part of what (say) pain is. We're after a compromise that neither identifies mental states with behaviour, nor separates them so far as to admit the sceptic and solipsist.
- The above criticism of the argument from analogy is due to Wittgenstein, who claimed that we need a non-contingent relationship between mental states and behaviour.
- Wittgenstein's solution is a **criterion**:
  1. A is a *criterion* for B iff the truth or occurrence of A is necessarily good (but defeasible) evidence for the truth of B, and
  2. In the absence of contrary indications, it is *sufficient* evidence.
  3. Hence, in favourable cases, the truth or occurrence of A perfectly justifies the belief or assertion of B, and
  4. It is part of being competent with the concept B, or knowing the meaning of "B", to know this [ie. what can act as a criterion?].
- Hence, anyone who understands the concept of pain knows that certain forms of behaviour are criteria for pain-ascription, and it is consequently not possible for there to be beings who behave like us but who lack mental states such as pain.
- In cases of pretence, other evidence defeats the criteria (at least where pretense is obvious as in a play), and we're not justified in believing what we would in other circumstances. Crucially, pretense and acting are activities with criteria of their own. If I see someone with a leg blown off, there's no possibility he's acting when he exhibits pain-behaviour.
- Wittgenstein's *criterion* is idiosyncratic and exegetically disputed. It will do, but is probably not necessary. All we need is *some* non-contingent link between mental states and behaviour.

### 2.5.5 The Private Language Argument: Rule Following

- Wittgenstein, in the family of **Private Language Arguments**, claims that solipsism is incoherent. The solipsist claims to have a private language which no-one could learn, because the experiences used to give meaning to its terms are private to the speaker. According to Wittgenstein, the solipsist can't even have the limited knowledge of his own experiences.
- This section deals with Kripke's account of the private language argument.

- We are to imagine the solipsist acquiring his language – say the concept of pain – by experiencing pain, deciding to apply the word "pain" to subsequent experiences like that one, and remembering the first occasion so that he can re-apply the word correctly in the future.
- The private language argument has it that the solipsist can't get going in this manner. For a word to have meaning is for there to be rules for its use. It must be possible for the solipsist to misapply the rule (to use the word "pain" inappropriately). But it isn't possible for the solipsist to create an objective rule simply by concentrating on the original sensation.
- This is a consequence, says Kripke of more general considerations about rules and objectivity. Dancy leaves solipsism and sensation to consider the mathematical rule for adding 2, leading to an infinite sequence: 0, 2, 4, …. What is it about what we learnt when we learnt the rule that makes 20,002, 20,004, 20,006 … objectively correct and 20,004, 20,008, 20,0012 …objectively incorrect? What makes the favoured (correct) result right and the other wrong?
- There is always a formula that generates a "deviant" continuation from the same initial sequence, so we can't appeal to how the sequence starts. Nor is it convincing to say that in conceiving the rule we conceived all the instances. Even if we did think of these cases, it's not in virtue of this that they count as correct.
- Saying that our initial conception was to add 2 each time also fails, because:
  1. It doesn't tell us what "adding 2" means, and
  2. Nor does it define "every" … someone might, as in the deviant case, use "every" to mean "every other".
- A final option is that our original conception of the rule created a disposition to carry on one way rather than another. But even if this was the disposition then, what fact of the matter is there that the disposition *then* was that we should *now* proceed one way rather than another. Dancy claims that the content of my original disposition is driven by my present disposition, rather than vice versa.
- Kripke's conclusion – the **Community Interpretation** – is that we need to look beyond the individual to a community of rule-followers. The grounds of objectivity are in the present behaviour of our linguistic or mathematical community. The community agrees on the "correct" continuation, while the "deviant" continuation would be the only one in step, since "being correct" just is being in step with the others.
- We can generalise to other cases. Because the solipsist has no community, he has no rule to apply to a new experience to tell him whether it's a case of "pain". He can say whatever comes into his head, and his words lose meaning and become empty. All languages lack meaning in the absence of a community, and so are necessarily public.

### 2.5.6 Another Interpretation

- Kripke takes §202 of *Philosophical Investigations* (at the end of rule-following) to be connected to later sections on the private language argument. Thinking one is obeying a rule isn't the same as obeying it, and it's therefore not possible to obey a rule privately.

- However, Hacker etc. take a different interpretation. They take it that following a rule isn't a matter of internal checking but of public behaviour. However, we're not to think of this as being regulated by the community, but simply as a way of behaving. So, how does this answer the solipsist since:
  1. **Objection 1**: This practice could be operated alone, and
  2. **Objection 2**: What answer can Wittgenstein give on this interpretation to Kripke's questions about objectivity?

#### 2.5.6.1 Objection 1 (Solo-operation?)

- While we could operate the practice on a desert island, the issue is with the institution of the practice. Both Hacker & Kripke agree that the solipsist cannot get the practice grounded (the concept created) in the original sensation. While Kripke's version relied too heavily on the supposed link between rule following and the private language argument, Wittgenstein has other arguments for this point:
  1. **Ostensive definition** (as when the solipsist mentally points to his pain) can't operate against a blank sheet, but needs to build on other concepts. We need to know what it is in the object pointed to that's relevant. Ostensive definition relies on the prior existence of conceptual knowledge, rather than being its source. Hence, there can't be the pure, private ostensive definition the solipsist relies on.
  2. **No independent check**. Suppose we do need a rule such as "pain is a sensation like *this*" (referring to an initial sensation) to check whether subsequent sensations are pains. But, what check can we carry out? Wittgenstein thinks that all we can do is look at the current sensation again to see if we are really tempted to call it pain. This is no independent check, but is like checking the news by looking up another copy of the same newspaper. We cannot independently check our temptation to think of our present sensation as similar to the original one. This isn't because we can't re-examine the original sensation, but because any re-examination just is a repetition of what we did when we thought that the present sensation was similar to the original. The point isn't that the check is fallible (we might hope to prop up our memories with others), but that it's a repetition of what it's supposed to be checking[11]. The issue is also not whether use of memory is a re-examination of the original sensation or simply how the original now appears to us to have been. Either way, all memory contributes is the feeling of sameness – of following the rule – we already have, so there's no independent check that we are following the rule.
  3. If a language is to be used for communication, objects can't get their meaning from objects private to one language user. The example is of "beetles" in closed boxes. If the term "beetle" gets its meaning from what's hidden, no-one will understand the term, while if the meaning is independent of the contents (eg. "beetle" = "whatever's in this box"), the private contents drops out as irrelevant. While this argument has no immediate effect on the solipsist, who's not interested in

[11] But, don't we check a sum by repeating the calculation?

communication, it may be adapted. The solipsist may be unable to communicate with himself via a diary, because what gives the term meaning can't be what was in *originally* in the box (which is now inaccessible) but what he *now thinks* was in the box.

- So, the private language argument doesn't need Kripke's association with rule-following. Instead of saying that in the absence of a community there can be no rules, we say that the solipsist cannot set up his rules by using a private experience as a sample. The number of private language users is irrelevant, and if (contrary to what's been demonstrated) a private language *could* be set up, it could operate without a community to regulate it. Robinson Crusoe can talk to himself and keep a diary, but only because his language isn't set up by ostentation of private sensations as samples, as is the solipsist's.

#### 2.5.6.2 Objection 2 (Objectivity?)

- Hacker denies that Wittgenstein cared about Kripke's question of objectivity, saying that his intention was to *reject* the assumptions of scepticism, not to *answer* them. We don't need grounds for the objectivity of our rule-following practices, and *nothing* supports them. Questions only make sense within a practice, by appeal to the rule, not from outside. The instances are the practice, and the practice is the rule. The rule is internally related to its instances, and any attempt by the sceptic to separate these two things is a failure to understand what it is to follow a rule.
- Wittgenstein thinks that rules are simply ways of behaving, and that we'll fall into an infinite regress if we think there's something internal that tells the rule-follower how to interpret the rule. Objectivity is *part of* the practice (eg. the part that involves checking, reassessing etc.), not something that *grounds* the practice or makes these activities justifiable.

### 2.5.7 Common Conclusions

- Dancy now stresses the similarities between the two interpretations of Wittgenstein:
  1. Both agree there's noting special about the concept "pain", or that Wittgenstein's approach is only true of sensations. Both interpretations see it as misguided to say that, since there's no such thing as a sensation of blue (say), therefore the private linguist can name things how they seem to him before embarking on the harder task of the way things actually are. Looking back through the arguments, however, we see that no special characteristics of pain were invoked, and that Wittgenstein wanted to show that it is impossible for there to be beings like us that have no sensations or that have different experiences to ours. Wittgenstein also wanted to reject the idea that though my behaviour with respect to colours might be the same as anyone else's, yet my private experience might differ, and I'd never know. This is incoherent, because it relies on too great a gap between our behaviour and mental life.

2. They agree that the solipsist's approach of concentrating on experience and pronouncing a word cannot work as a means of establishing a rule for use on it on subsequent occasions. The rule creates a nature for the sensation, rather than vice versa, by helping us to see ways in which it might resemble others. Prior to this, the sensation is just a useless *this*, and cannot be described to ourselves. It has no content until the rule is established. This is pleasingly analogous to our conclusions about classical foundationalism – that infallible beliefs have vanishingly small content, amounting to no more than an incomprehensible gesture.

- Wittgenstein's criticism of solipsism is also aimed as at classical foundationalism:
  1. He sees (in 2.5.4) the classical foundationalist as a weak-kneed sceptic who ought to go further and become a solipsist who doubts whether he understands the proposition that other minds exist. Hence, criticism of solipsism counts as criticism of foundationalism.
  2. Alternatively, classical foundationalism suffers from the same defects as the solipsist's attempt to set up a language to describe his own experiences. Neither can make the first move from his own experience, because they don't know the meaning of experiential words by direct acquaintance with the things they stand for.

### 2.5.8 Prospects for Foundationalism

- The foundationalist assumption that there is both inferential and non-inferential justification is untouched by the private language argument. Foundationalism is still possible provided it avoids the traditional view of epistemology as starting from one's own perspective, assuming that all basic beliefs concern the believer's present sensory states.
- Wittgenstein is himself a foundationalist, thinking that some propositions (eg. "I have two hands") play a special role in our belief set ("a peculiar logical role in the system of our empirical propositions").
- However, he's not an ordinary foundationalist, because of the nature of his basic beliefs (such as "two hands", "the earth has existed during the last century", and suchlike). We can ask what justifies such beliefs, but if we do so, we no longer treat them as basic. Their special status doesn't need justification – we just treat them as needing no justification, but as justifying others.
- Dancy will reject all forms of foundationalism in 2.7.

## 2.6 Empiricist Theories of Meaning

### 2.6.1 The Relevance of Theories of Meaning to Epistemology

- We've already seen the interrelationship between epistemology and theories of meaning. For instance:
  1. The effect different theories of **understanding** (another name for a theory of **meaning**) have on certain sceptical arguments (1.1).
  2. The anti-realist response to the sceptic relies on the claim that we can't understand propositions whose meaning purports to express evidence-transcendent facts.
  3. The strongest sceptical arguments attack **understanding** as well as **knowledge** (see 1.1.2 and 2.5.4).
  4. A theory of meaning was used to discredit an epistemological programme (classical foundationalism – see 2.5, and discussion below).
- How did this come about? Wittgenstein's criticism of solipsism (and foundationalism) This depends on views about:
  1. What competence with a concept is, and …
  2. What it is to know the meaning of a word and the rules for its application from one instance to the next.
- Wittgenstein argued that the solipsist can't develop the rules as required, and so can't construct a language, which rules out the foundationalist epistemological programme. The classical foundationalist programme thus fails because of an error in the theory of meaning.
- Is there a theory of meaning that would force us to a form of foundationalism other than the discredited classical one? If there is, it would help in two ways:
  1. We might persuade ourselves that some forms of foundationalism escape Wittgenstein's strictures.
  2. We might discern something right (or wrong) about that theory of meaning that might clarify our attitude to foundationalism in general, hence enabling us to avoid evaluating all the varieties individually.
- Dancy will argue that whatever attractions foundationalism has don't derive from its underlying theory of meaning, and that the best theory of meaning supports coherentism and is inimical to foundationalism.

### 2.6.2 Logical Empiricism and the Evidence of One's Senses

- We saw in 2.4.3 that foundationalism can be defined by its response to the regress argument:
  **F**[1]: There are two forms of justification, inferential and non-inferential.
- Foundationalism is also connected to empiricism via the view that verification and justification should ultimately rely upon the evidence of one's senses.
- The evidence of our senses is not just what we appeal to in justification and verification, but also our starting point in learning a language.

- In both cases, we can ask what else could we start from. The evidence of one's senses is held by empiricists to be basic in both epistemology and the theory of meaning. In the case of the latter, all meaningful language depends on the evidence of one's senses.
- Led on by the above, positivists such as Ayer & Schlick proposed a theory of meaning called the **verification principle of empirical significance**:
  - **VP**: a statement has empirical significance iff its truth would make a difference to the evidence of our senses.
  - **VP$^1$**: A statement has empirical meaning iff it is verifiable.
  - **UP**: *a* knows the meaning of *p* iff *a* knows how to verify *p*.
  - **UP$^1$**: *a* knows the meaning of *p* iff *a* knows what difference the truth of *p* would make to the evidence of *a*'s senses.
  - **MP**: The meaning of S is the difference that the truth of S would make to the evidence of one's senses.
  - **MP$^1$**: The meaning of S is its method of verification.
- In the above, **VP$^1$** follows from **VP** because a statement is verifiable iff its truth would make a difference to the evidence of our senses. U stands for Understanding, M for Meaning. S is any particular statement. **MP$^1$** is said to be unhelpful.
- VP is the core of **logical empiricism**, otherwise known as **logical positivism**.
- In asking what we mean by "verify" we can distinguish:
  1. **Strong verification**: conclusive verification, for which we have the best possible evidence, with no possibility that the statement is false.
  2. **Weak Verification**: less conclusive, but (dis-) confirmable by appeal to strongly verifiable statements.
- Taking "verifiable" in **VP$^1$** to mean <u>strongly</u> verifiable would classify so many of our statements as insignificant as to be self-defeating. Empiricists do, however, think there are <u>some</u> strongly verifiable statements – namely, those that simply report the evidence of one's senses.
- The above shows the strong connection between foundationalism and logical empiricism. The foundationalist claim that there are two forms of justification (inferential and non-inferential) parallels the logical empiricist claim that all significant statements are either strongly or weakly verifiable.
- Which statements are **observation statements** (Ayer) – those that report the evidence of one's senses – and which go beyond this? Logical empiricists differ here, just as do foundationalists about basic beliefs.
  1. **Ayer** takes the classical line that observation statements are those that describe our present sensory states, which Dancy takes himself to have refuted in 2.4-5.
  2. **Quine** takes the evidence of one's senses to concern what's external to the observer – the presence of certain public stimuli – rather than what's internal. An observation statement is therefore one that's strongly verifiable by appeal to certain stimuli.
- There's no dispute about the weak/strong distinction. Quine's version of logical empiricism supports a version of foundationalism invulnerable to the arguments of 2.5 because his observation statements don't concern one's own sensory states.

## 2.6.3 Three Verificationist Theories

- How are observation statements related to the others, consistent with the verification principle? Our answer will be an account of what makes non-observation statements significant, and what gives them different meanings. Dancy considers a spectrum of three answers.

### 2.6.3.1 Phenomenalism

- The phenomenalist account of the meaning of non-observation statements originally held that they were equivalent to long conjunctions of potential observation statements. This was attractive both in metaphysics and epistemology.
- For phenomenalists such as Ayer, who held that observation statements report the nature of the observer's sensory states, we get the "delightful" (phenomenalist) result that instead of there being two radically different sorts of thing there is only one. Instead of material objects and sensory states, we just have sensory states, since all putative material objects are reducible to complexes of actual or possible sensory states.
- The epistemological advantage of this position is that knowledge of the "external" world of physical objects is possible. Such objects don't lie beyond our grasp, as the sceptic suggests. Every member of the set of statements about what would be observed should be conclusively verified, leaving no possibility that the material object statement should be false. This is a form of anti-realism (see 1.1.4).
- We now turn to **non-observation statements**. What we need to do is precisely specify and conclusively verify the observation statements that make it up, so that it would have its own determinate meaning and be determinately true or false. However, there are two problems:
  1. Not all the conditional statements about what would be observed can be verified, because there will be cases where verifying one will lose us the chance of verifying others. If only some of the constitutive statements can be verified, the non-observation statement will be no more than weakly verifiable.
  2. It's false that a conditional statement is strongly verified merely by showing both antecedent and consequent to be true. Hence, a non-observation statement made up of "if …, then" observation statements is unlikely to be strongly verifiable, though it might be strongly falsifiable.
- The consequence is that the advantages against the sceptic are weaker than claimed, though there remains the advantage that we're not claiming to know experientially the nature of a world lying beyond experience. Phenomenalism narrows the gap between the world we experience and our experience of it.
- The phenomenalism that claims that observation statements report the observer's own sensory states is only one form of reductionism. Instead, we might hold that observation statements report the nature of the immediately surrounding world. We would then define all other statements in terms of these, treating them as conditional on the location of the observer.

- The problem with phenomenalism is that no philosopher has succeeded in showing how to work out the details. As an example, it seems implausible to suppose that a statement about a red rose in the dark should have any particular set of consequences for possible observation. The list of conditional observation statements is not only infinite in length but vague in content. Consequently, phenomenalism loses its advantage, because non-observation statements have an indeterminate meaning, and the range of circumstances in which they are determinately true or false may reduce to nothing. This collapses the original reductive theory, since non-observation statements can no longer be claimed to be exactly equivalent in meaning to any set of observation statements, however complex or conditional.

#### 2.6.3.2 Carnap's Relaxation

- Carnap attempted the above reductive programme, and his failure led him to conclude that the best to be hoped for was to specify as far as possible which observation statements were implied by which non-observation statements. This won't reduce one to the other, but Carnap still claimed the reduction of the concept of a material object to concepts concerning one's own sensory states.
- However, this will always leave some aspects of a statement's meaning unspecified, so increasing the sense in which the meaning of a non-observation statement remains indeterminate. We're left with a good sense to the idea that a weakly verifiable statement can only be (dis-) confirmed, and not conclusively verified, but claiming it to be determinately true would leave us claiming it to be so in virtue of facts we can't verify. A verificationist who's a consistent anti-realist (and who therefore rejects the possibility of such facts) must admit that such a statement can't be shown to be determinately true, only determinately false (when one of its consequences is observed to be false).

#### 2.6.3.3 Quine

- Quine adopts the more radical approach of claiming that we can't even specify the observation sentences which are the consequences of non-observation sentences. His position has three foundations:
  1. **Theory is under-determined by data**. No matter how much evidence we have, more than one theory will satisfy it equally well. Different theories have the same observational consequences.
  2. **Duhem's Thesis**. Non-observational sentences face the tribunal of experience **in groups**, not singly. Non-observation sentences occur as part of a **more general theory**, not individually, so cannot be conclusively verified or falsified on the basis of observation since there's always a choice as to where to change the theory in response to recalcitrant observation. Experience can confirm theories, and thereby the non-observation sentences that make them up, but not the individual non-observation sentences directly. If the theory is amended, non-observation sentences might not be confirmed at all.

3. The **empiricist theory of meaning**:
   **MP**: The meaning of S is the difference that the truth of S would make to the evidence of one's senses.

- Dancy points out the difference between (2) – which says that non-observation sentences cannot be verified or falsified on their own – and (2) – which says that the things which can be verified (theories) cannot be conclusively verified, though they can be conclusively falsified.
- Quine uses his three theses to justify the claim that individual non-observation sentences have no separate meaning of their own. **MP** specifies the meaning of S, but Duhem's Thesis claims that no non-observation sentence has its own observational consequences. If it had, and one of these failed, then we'd know exactly where to revise the theory – but we always have a choice where to revise. Hence, by MP, no non-observation sentence has a meaning of it's own, because there's no one difference its truth on its own would make to observation.
- Hence, the meaning of a non-observation sentence isn't something it carries around with it. Meaning belongs to theories rather than sentences. Finally, since partial theories can be played off against one another just as can individual sentences, "the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science".
- Unlike Carnap, Quine holds that a non-observation sentence does not have its own observational consequences. Consequently, there's nothing a non-observation sentence on its own **means**, its meaning being dependent on the theory that surrounds it; there's no determinate object we can call its meaning. This is the thesis of the **indeterminacy of sentential meaning**.
- Quine's thesis is **holistic** with respect to non-observation sentences. This is opposed to **atomistic**, the claim that sentences have meanings portable from theory to theory. Meaning is born by the whole theory, not the parts, since only the whole theory has its own observational consequences and nothing but the whole theory is falsified by recalcitrant experience.
- Quine draws a picture of a theory as a sphere, with observation sentences at the periphery. As we move inwards, the sentences become more theoretical with the laws of physical science near the centre and the laws of logic at the centre. A disturbance at the periphery naturally causes us to revise some observation sentences, but we also need to revise something in the interior since our theory has proved false. Our first attempt is minor changes near the periphery, because this leaves untouched the general structure of the theory. The nearer the centre we get, the more immune to revision are the sentences.
- However, **no** sentence is immune – it could be that, given awkward observations, the simplest change to the theory is at the centre. The standard example is the rejection of the Law of Excluded Middle in response to Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.
- This conclusion kills off the notion of sentential meaning. This has consequences for the analytic / synthetic distinction. It used to be held that:
  1. Most true sentences are **synthetic** – true by a combination of their **meaning** and **how the world is**.

2. Some sentences are **analytic** – true in virtue of their **meaning** alone. Such sentences are unrevisable, with no chance of their truth-value changing unless their meaning changes.

- Quine's position means that there are no analytic sentences. A sentence's meaning is not determinate enough for us to assign an unrevisable truth-value to it.
- While MP and the other two of Quine's theses collapse the notion of sentential meaning, this is no argument against MP, which all empiricists must accept. The situation is saved by the **holistic** claim that the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science.

## 2.7 Holism and Indeterminacy

### 2.7.1 The Indeterminacy of Translation

- According to Quine, the meaning of a single sentence is indeterminate. Consequently, it would seem that the notion of two sentences having the same meaning is indeterminate. Therefore, translation is indeterminate.
- This means more than that the correctness of translation is underdetermined by all possible data. This would be consistent with one translation being right, though we might never know which.
- Quine doesn't draw this conclusion. The only thing in virtue of which a particular translation could be right would be meaning of the original sentence, but this isn't determinate enough to adjudicate.
- However, this doesn't make out translation to be impossible. We might hold that the meaning of a given sentence is so rich that it can never be adequately captured in another language, with all translations being at best approximations. Quine's point is that there's nothing for translations to approximate to. So, instead of giving up on translation we have the optimistic conclusion that indistinguishably good translations are all as good as we can hope for, and represent what correct translation is. Rather than no correct translation, there's always more than one.
- An objection to this conclusion is that there do seem to be determinately right French/English translations. Quine agrees, but claims this is only so because there's an agreed general scheme for French-English translation. Within the scheme, we have determinacy, but the choice of the scheme is indeterminate, with more than one good candidate.
- Quine's paradigm case is **radical translation** – where a field linguist creates a translation manual (a sentence dictionary) for an unknown language without the help of bilingual speakers. The linguist's evidence is sentences uttered and agreed to by "natives", together with the circumstances. He seeks to map sentences to circumstances, the question being "in what observable circumstances will the natives assent to "*p*"". Translation is indeterminate because no amount of evidence guarantees a uniquely correct translation, though we may get one that's correct enough.
- The argument has been that since meaning is indeterminate for non-observation sentences, translation must be too. Dancy is troubled by this, and in 2.7.4 will show that we can establish the indeterminacy of translation directly. The indeterminacy of meaning would then follow from the indeterminacy of translation, rather than vice versa.
- We now turn to observation sentences, which Quine doesn't consider to be indeterminate.

## 2.7.2 Quine as a Foundationalist

- We've already considered the parallels between verificationism and foundationalism.
  1. Foundationalism has an **asymmetry** in that justification is all one-way, from basic to non-basic beliefs.
  2. Verificationism is likewise asymmetrical in the theory of meaning (with non-observation sentences depending on observation sentences)
- Quine's theory is similarly asymmetrical, despite his generally holistic approach to questions of meaning and justification at the non-observational level. However, he insists on the characteristically **foundationalist** distinction between observational and non-observational, revolving around the **observation sentence**.
- The observation sentence is doubly fundamental:
  1. **Knowledge** of what is true: "observation sentences are the repository of evidence for scientific hypotheses".
  2. **Meaning**: observation sentences are those we learn to understand first, whether as children or field linguists, and afford the only entry to a language.
- Quine's epistemology is a consequence of his theory of meaning and translation. The field linguist engaged in radical translation will try to determine the circumstances in which the natives will assent or dissent to S. With most sentences, this will be indeterminate because natives will not all respond in the same way; their response will depend on their beliefs as well as the present situation. On its own, this says no more than that, for most sentences, two people may agree on their meaning but disagree on their truth.
- However, for **observation sentences**, everyone who understands them will agree on their truth-value whatever the circumstances. In this special circumstance, meaning is specified completely in terms of assent/dissent conditions, meaning and translation are determinate, and meaning is atomistic rather than holistic with observation sentences each having a meaning of its own.
- It's important that we have a **reason** why some sentences are of this special sort. Otherwise, we might reasonably doubt whether there were any. For Quine, observation sentences don't report **private** events like the occurrence of a sensation, but of certain **publicly** available sensory stimuli which can occur to more than one person. Two sentences with the same assent/dissent conditions are stimulus-synonymous.
- Are there any observation sentences? Quine gives debatable examples such as "red", "rabbit" and "the tide is out" (admitting that only "red" strictly qualifies).
- However, Quine isn't persuaded so much by his examples, for he "knows" there must be some, but by his conviction that observation sentences are the first we're in a position to learn.
- We've all learnt a language from scratch, but how do we do it if holism is true and the meaning of each sentence depends on that of others? We need a place to start – self-contained sentences to be used as firm data by which to test hypotheses about the meaning of other sentences. We must therefor be atomists somewhere in the theory of meaning in order to accommodate the language-learner.

- It's this contrast – between holism at the non-observational level and atomism at the observation level – that shows Quine to be a foundationalist. Two asymmetries:
  1. **Semantic**: observation sentences, where meaning is firm and translation possible, afford the only entry to a language.
  2. **Epistemic**: observation sentences can be individually verified and our acceptance of them justified one by one. They form the evidence on which the non-observational (the rest of science) rests.
- For Quine, there are **data** and there is **theory**. Theory is justified as verificationist semantics insists – by appeal to the difference the truth of the theory would make to possible experience, and by strong verification of whether experience does indeed go the way theory says it should.

### 2.7.3 Atomism and Holism

- Quine argues that one can't be an empiricist without being a foundationalist, because empiricism leads to verificationism, which embodies foundationalist asymmetries.
- Dancy thinks this is incorrect. He will argue against it in two ways:
  1. Quine's verificationism isn't the only empirical theory of meaning.
  2. A theory that abandoned atomism at the observational level in favour of a general holism would be generally preferable for empiricists as for others.
- Quine's position rests on three principles from 2.6.2:
  **VP**: a statement has empirical significance iff its truth would make a difference to the evidence of our senses.
  **UP**: *a* knows the meaning of *p* iff *a* knows how to verify *p*.
  **MP**: The meaning of S is the difference that the truth of S would make to the evidence of one's senses.
- While UP and MP follow "naturally" from VP, this isn't the whole truth. VP is about what it is for a statement to be significant rather than meaningless, whereas MP is about what it is for a sentence to have one meaning rather than another. We might hope that theories about significance would help with theories about determinacy of meaning, but we can't legislate for this. It is compatible with VP for two sentences to have the same observational consequences but differ in meaning. Since this is ruled out by MP, it must go "logically" beyond VP even though it may follow "naturally" from it.
- The troublesome move is from VP to UP, since VP leaves it open whether some sentences have more to their meaning than their observational consequences. If there are such sentences, UP will be false since there would be sentences whose observational consequences we know, but whose other contribution (whatever that might be) we are in ignorance of. Without UP we can't derive MP. Dancy proposes a weaker version of $UP^1$:
  **$UP^2$**: *a* knows the meaning of *p* → *a* knows what difference the truth of *p* would make to the evidence of *a*'s senses.
- The only difference between **$UP^1$** and **$UP^2$** is that "iff" has been replaced by "→", which means we can't maintain an MP-style identity.

- Consequently, Quine is wrong to say one can't be a semantic empiricist without accepting his MP-centred verificationism. MP derives from his semantic holism, but he claims that we can't account for language-learning as an empirical activity unless we allow some sentences to have determinate meaning and hence be strongly verifiable.
- Dancy's attack on Quine is two-pronged:
  1. **The rejection of MP**: this has already been achieved. Quine is wrong to link empiricism with MP since if VP is sufficient for empiricism, MP isn't necessary.
  2. A **demonstration** that we don't need to be atomists to account for the possibility of language-learning.
- Dancy supplies (2) as follows.
  1. Why not accept that the initial data from which we learn language stand to be revised, reassessed and even abandoned in the light of subsequent events.
  2. All that's required for us to make a start is for some sentences to be more nearly confined to what's immediately available to us. We don't need some sentences whose meaning is completely given in terms of their assent conditions.
  3. Therefore, all that's required is difference of degree, not of type.
  4. The fact that we can't start from the laws of physics and logic doesn't mean that the sentences we can start from must differ in type from these. All that's required is that their degree of observationality must be much greater.
  5. If they contain a non-observational element, then observation won't reveal the whole meaning.
  6. This only shows that we can't learn the whole meaning at the start, not that we can't start at all. Our initial moves will need reassessment later.
  7. Hence, we don't need to accept semantic asymmetry in order to account for language acquisition.
- Consequently, epistemological asymmetry, which depends on semantic asymmetry, is unsupported. We can adopt a more complete holism, which includes observation sentences, without abandoning empiricism. Dancy now shows this is the correct line.

### 2.7.4 The Merits of a More Complete Holism

- Dancy is looking for reasons to go further in the direction of indeterminacy that Quine was willing to go. Quine's reasons for indeterminacy at the non-observational level seem to extend to the observational now that we've shown the defects in his argument excepting the observational. Quine might be happy to agree that the move form the centre to the periphery of his sphere is continuous, with no sudden switch from indeterminacy to determinacy.
- This would be an ironic compromise, since Quine does insist in his philosophy of science that there's no distinction between theory and observation. He abandoned this in his semantics only because of his convictions about language learning. If we drop the requirement that language learning requires determinacy, we can ascribe some indeterminacy to the observational.
- However, Dancy sees three difficulties with this compromise:

1. One of the three planks that Quine's argument for indeterminacy rests on is MP; but, we now have no reason to accept this since VP is sufficient for empiricism. Hence, we can't avail ourselves of Quine's route to indeterminacy.
2. By insisting that the unit of empirical significance is the whole of science, Quine supposes our entire theory not to suffer from indeterminacy. This would imply determinacy of translation at this level, but Dancy thinks Quine would not agree with this.
3. The argument from indeterminacy of meaning to indeterminacy of translation is wobbly. Why should a sentence's not having a meaning all of its own result in more than one correct translation of it? Why can't we find two sentences of indeterminate meaning that are exact matches?

- Hence, Dancy thinks a more convincing approach would be to establish the indeterminacy of translation directly, and use this to support other arguments about indeterminacy of meaning, leading to a more total holism. Dancy gives three arguments; the first two due to Quine himself, the third Quinean in spirit.

#### 2.7.4.1 Argument 1: the "argument from above"

- This argument attempts to establish indeterminacy of translation directly from the under-determination of theory by data. We need to distinguish:
  1. **Under-determination**: two rival theories encompass the data equally well, but this still allows that one of them is true and the other false, even though we can't tell which.
  2. **Indeterminacy**: holds additionally that there is no fact of the matter as to which of two equally successful theories is correct.
- Quine holds that translation is indeterminate as well as undetermined, but that our total physical theory is only under-determined (since he wants to give sense to our feeling that something like our physical science is "the truth", whereas we have no similar commitment to translation).
- The argument is that indeterminacy of translation follows from under-determination of physical theory:
  1. The native whose language we're translating has a physical theory that's under-determined by his evidence.
  2. Our translation of his theory, being itself a theory about his theory, is also under-determined.
  3. So, Quine concludes that "the old indeterminacy between physical theories recurs in second intension".
- Dancy thinks this unconvincing, for why should a double-dose of under-determination result in indeterminacy if a single dose doesn't? Quine should have written "under-determination" in his conclusion, so this first argument fails.

### 2.7.4.2 Argument 2: the criteria used in translations

- A better argument. When we consider the criteria used in translation we see they conflict. We use a translation manual to interact with people and to understand them and their practices. We find the criteria are differently weighted according to the purpose of the translator. There are two (though Dancy later adds another couple of possible examples):
  1. **Principle of charity**: We want our translations to attribute to the natives true beliefs. The widespread attribution of error is a disadvantage.
  2. **Principle of humanity**: We want to attribute to the natives beliefs that we can make sense of them having.
  3. **Simplicity**: the translations should be easily learnable.
  4. **Control**: the translations should help us to control the natives.
- Sometimes there will be a choice between attributing a true belief we can't see how they could have acquired, and a false one we can. Our choice will depend on how we weight the first two principles, which in turn rests on our own purposes and on how radically different in belief we're disposed to suppose the natives to be. If we're willing to countenance radical divergence, as some anthropologists have been willing (nay, eager) to do, then our translation manual will reflect this stance. There will, however, be an equally good manual that doesn't, or at least not to the same degree.
- We've demonstrated that with competing criteria we must expect different manuals to meet them equally well. Each such manual meets the criteria for good translation, and hence provides the meaning of the native sentence – but each has a different preferred sentence to do this with, showing how indeterminate translation is.
- There are two sorts of principle governing any intellectual enquiry:
  1. **Principles of evidence**: lay down conditions (eg. explanatory success, in science) to be fulfilled for the theory to be <u>true</u>.
  2. **Regulative principles**: which concern the practical use of a theory. In science, simplicity makes the theory easier to manipulate and falsify, but is not true in virtue of these handy features (though some would move simplicity up to evidential status).
- The principles of charity and humanity are **not** principles of evidence, but are **regulative** principles, deriving their force from the practical purposes of translation (eg. attributing wholesale false beliefs to the natives will make our interaction with them more difficult). No one supposes (claims Dancy) that our translation will be the more correct the more true beliefs we attribute to the natives.
- The argument for the indeterminacy of translation urges the following. Once the principles of translation have been satisfied (though differently weighted, hence equally well satisfied in different manuals), we should take it that **meaning** is just what these competing translations preserve. The regulative principles give **content** to the notion of meaning, and there is <u>no further</u> principle of translation (ie. "preserve the meaning"). Any such further principle differing in content from the regulative principles would be a principle of **evidence**, but it doesn't differ from them in content, merely summarising their effect.

- This argument for the indeterminacy of translation leaves no scope for a distinction between the observational and non-observational levels other than one of **degree**. It allows us to move from indeterminacy of translation to indeterminacy of meaning, and offers a more complete holism in the theory of meaning.

#### 2.7.4.3 Argument 3: the relation between belief and meaning

- There are two tasks in radical translation:
  1. Establish **meaning**.
  2. Establish **belief**.
- If we knew either, we'd know the other, but we have to determine both at once. How to get started?
- Dancy paints an iterative method based on assumption in some limited domain, testing out hypotheses, revision, etc. The suggestion is that the indeterminacy of translation stems from this interplay between meaning and belief.
- An **example**: a man claims to keep two rhinoceri in his refrigerator and squeezes one for his breakfast drink. Does he mean by "rhinoceros" what we mean by "orange" or does he have strange beliefs about rhinoceri.
- Dancy thinks there are several things wrong with this question. The purpose of the example is:
  1. To show that there are alternative ways of balancing attributions of belief and meaning, and …
  2. To question the feeling that there must be a matter of fact at stake.
- Dancy asks what difference it could make to the man which hypothesis is the truth? If there is no difference, the question of which is the right answer is indeterminate. The answers differ because they key differently into a more general account of the person concerned, rather than there being a fact of the matter at stake.
- The interplay between belief and meaning has the consequence that successively translation, belief and meaning are indeterminate.

#### 2.7.4.4 Conclusion

- The last argument leaves no distinction between observational and non-observational. A difference about the presence of redness might be due to differences in meaning or belief. Hence, we have two arguments to the effect that holism should become complete.
- Holistic semantics should lack foundationalist asymmetries. Since Quine's epistemological asymmetry stems from his semantic asymmetry, semantic holism undermines both. Hence, we should prefer a non-foundationalist semantics if we can find one. Holistic semantics should lead to holistic epistemology. In 2.8, Dancy will consider the coherence theory of justification as the basis of such an epistemology.

## 2.7.5 Verificationism, Anti-Realism and Foundationalism

- Classical phenomenalism is an extreme form of empiricism and is anti-realist. It hopes to rebut the argument from error by demonstrating that all true statements are verifiable in principle, preferably strongly.
- Other forms of empiricism, such as Quine's which holds that theory is underdetermined by data but not indeterminate, are realist.
- Foundationalism can be an expression of any of these forms of empiricism, since as theories of meaning they display the typical foundationalist asymmetry.
- However, if the foundationalist departs from verificationism ad incline towards a holistic theory of meaning, there arises a contrast between his semantic holism and his epistemological atomism.
- This gap means that the foundationalist must rely entirely on the two "internal" regress arguments of 2.4.1.
- Dancy will argue in the 2.8-9 that these arguments can be defused or rendered inapplicable within a more holistic epistemology. He will conclude that, in the absence of compelling reasons to admit foundationalist asymmetries we'd be better off with a theory without them.

## 2.8 Coherence Theories

### 2.8.1 What is Coherence?

- We have rejected the view that there is an asymmetrical relation between evidence and theory, whereby the former confirms or undermines the latter, but not vice versa. Foundationalism takes this mistaken route by insisting that inference is all one way, and that there are some fixed points in the structure – the basic beliefs. Inference itself is asymmetrical, since it may be possible to infer A → B but not B → A.
- Coherence is intended to be symmetrical and more holistic. Key ingredients:
  1. **Consistency**: agreed on as necessary by all coherentists.
  2. **Completeness**: added by Bradley. "Comprehensive".
  3. **Entailment**: a coherent set of beliefs needs to stick together in a special way. Blanshard required that every proposition should be entailed by the others jointly, and even singly, though Ewing suggested the weaker requirement that it would be sufficient for each member of a coherent set to be entailed by all the rest.
- Dancy asks whether this makes sense. There are two requirements:
  1. $x \rightarrow \{\Omega - x\}$.
  2. $\{\Omega - x\} \rightarrow x$.

  The second seems to suggest that we can drop the propositions from the set one by one until we end with one proposition that entails the rest. We will see shortly that the concept of "entailment" used by coherentists is non-standard.
- An **objection** to the use of mutual entailment as the central element in a coherent set. Mutual entailment in Blanshard's sense, is symmetrical, but entailment as normally understood isn't a matter of degree. This is important to coherentists, because they want it that as one's belief-set grows, it becomes more coherent. This isn't because the set becomes more complete, which isn't a virtue in itself[12]. We can't rely on the idea that the relation of entailment only holds between members of a complete set, since we want to expand our set to make it more coherent. Since we aren't likely to achieve a complete coherent set, the definition of coherence in terms of entailment means that no-one's beliefs will be coherent.
- Hence, for a coherence theory of justification we need an account of how justification can grow. Lehrer and Sellars define a coherent set as one that is:
  1. **Consistent**.
  2. **Complete**.
  3. **Mutually explanatory**: as the set expands, we hope that each member is better explained by the rest.
- (3) accounts for both symmetry and growth in justification.
- Dancy makes two points in response:
  1. We can **drop** the requirement for **completeness**, since the requirement to search for higher degrees of mutual explanation already accounts for it. This is just as well, because this notion of completeness is unclear. We might suppose that a

[12] Why not?

complete set contains every proposition or its contradictory, but for this we need a clear understanding of "every proposition". Nor have we a clear idea of a "perfect explanation" – a point we can only approach without limit.

2. Coherence is a property of **sets** of beliefs, not of beliefs themselves. A set is coherent to the extent that its members are mutually explanatory and consistent.

- Dancy thinks that this account is a disguised restatement of Blanshard's entailment account, rather than an improvement. This is because Blanshard's understanding of *entailment* isn't the traditional "atomistic" one where $p \rightarrow q$ just depends on the meanings of *p* and *q*, irrespective of the system as a whole. This understanding of entailment leads to the redundancy of *q* and the collapse of the set, as noted above. However, Blanchard doesn't understand entailment to mean this. Instead, entailment only occurs within a system, which determines the meanings of *p* and *q*, and hence the strength of the link between *p* and *q*, which grows stronger with the system.
- Explanation and entailment are related. To *explain* q is to say why *q* should be true, given *p* – thus revealing *entailment*. Both explanation and entailment need to be viewed holistically rather than atomistically.
- Hence, the two theories collapse into one another.

### 2.8.2 The Coherence Theory of Truth

- **Definition**: a proposition is true iff it is a member of a coherent set.
- Classical coherentists, being doubtful that a fully coherent set is possible, hold that truth is a matter of degree. Truth, unlike coherence, is defined for members of sets.
- The coherentist offers both a *definitional* and a *criterial* account of truth, which fit together. A criterion for truth might be that we are justified in believing that p is true to the extent that doing so increases the coherence of our belief-set.
- Many philosophers have thought that any definitional account makes the theory **manifestly false**. This is because there's no guarantee that there's a unique most coherent set, and it's obvious that there can be at most one complete set of truths. Hence, truth can't be defined in terms of coherence alone.
- This reminds us of Quine's thesis of the **under-determination of theory by evidence**. If a number of theories are equally effective in handling the evidence, we can't claim that they are all true. Similarly, if different coherent sets give complete but different descriptions of the world, we can't say that all the parts of these different descriptions are true.
- Consequently – the **plurality objection** – only one of the competing sets can contain nothing but truths, and the coherence theory of truth is wrong.
- Blanshard claims that the plurality objection only attacks a form of coherentism that no-one holds, since it fails to account for the empiricist character of coherentism. There is only one coherent set, distinguished from its rivals by being empirically grounded.
- The coherentist aim is to start from the data of experience and construct a set of beliefs around them that will order the data in the most coherent way. We may need to reject *some* of the data to achieve our aim, but not *all* as our aim is itself to make

sense of the data. This grounding in empirical data ensures there will be only one set that forms the most systematic ordering.

- This appeal to empirical grounding excludes fanciful suggestions for coherent sets (eg. a perfect expansion of the Sherlock Holmes stories, however coherent). However, Dancy thinks there will still be more than one coherent set remaining even after excluding the duds, since nothing in the ordering of the data of experience ensures that there's one most systematic ordering. This is particularly plain when we consider that some of the data has to be rejected. This is just what the underdetermination of theory by evidence amounts to.
- The best defense against the plurality objection is **attack**. Does any other account of truth fare any better? No. The traditional opponent of the coherence theory – the **correspondence theory of truth** – can't guarantee a unique set of truths either. For the correspondence theories, the mark of truth is fitting the facts, but what's to stop two sets of propositions fitting the facts equally well?
- We are left with a choice:
  1. Admit that the plurality objection is effective and abandon the demand that "the truth" must be unique.
  2. Admit that. While the truth must be unique, it's not part of a theory of truth to show this.
- However, mustn't the coherentist say that competing equally coherent theories are all true, whereas the correspondence theorist can say that one is true and the others false? The correspondence theorist can appeal to an independent arbiter – **the world**.
- The reply is in two parts:
  1. Any coherent theory is incompatible with any other, because coherence is lost if both theories are embraced simultaneously. From the perspective of one theory, every other is false since it can't be absorbed.
  2. It's only from the perspective of the world – external to any theory – that the correspondence theorist has the advantage. But, only a person who owns no theory can occupy such a position. Since it's not possible to do this, the correspondence theorist is no better off than the coherentist.

### 2.8.3 The Coherence Theory of Justification

- **Definition**: if *a*'s belief set is more coherent with the belief that *p* as a member than without it, or with some alternative belief, then *a* is justified in believing that *p*.
- The **relation** between *justification* and *truth*: **neither implies the other**.
  1. A belief-set with reasonable coherence will make all of its members justified, but not necessarily true. The reason is that the set may not be capable of expansion, and the addition of further beliefs will reduce the coherence of the growing whole. Consequently, since this set is no longer coherent, its elements can't all be *true*. But, they are still (for *a*) *justified*.
  2. Similarly, a belief may be *true* (in that it forms part of a coherent set), but not be *justified* for *a* (since the coherent set isn't his set).

- As justification grows, it need not approach truth, though as a belief-set grows and becomes increasingly coherent, we have increasing reason to think its members true. However, they need not be, and it's probable that expansion will require revision somewhere.
- Coherentists do claim, however, that truth and justification are of a piece. Coherence of a belief-set justifies its members, and coherence in a set of propositions, whether believed or not, goes to make its members true.
- While the coherentist has it that truth and justification are different things, their smooth interrelation is an advantage.
- If we accept the coherence theory of justification but reject the coherence theory of truth, we're left with a mystery. Our theory of justification ought to explain why justified beliefs are worth having, and a good reason would be that they are more likely to be true! We've a good chance of demonstrating a connection between justification and truth if we have a common theory, with coherence as a common criterion.
- Alternatively, we could consider justification as internal coherence and truth as a correspondence between propositions and facts or states of affairs, but then it would be difficult to see how the one relation leads on to the other.
- **Propositions** are the **relata** of mutual explanation in a coherent set, whether in the coherence theory of truth or of justification. *a* is justified in believing *p* if the proposition *p* forms a promisingly coherent set along with the other propositions *a* believes. Then, the truth of *p* is explained by the truth of these other beliefs. Our theories of truth and justification fit in this respect.
- Coherentists claim direct reasons to avoid the asymmetries of foundationalism. In their absence, there is only one form of justification, and no fixed points from which other beliefs are assessed. There's no restriction on what can be called on in support of what.
- In the case of problems, there's no antecedent guidance as to where revision should be made – whether observational or theoretical beliefs should be preferred. We can't tell in advance what the right revision that improves coherence will be.
- Coherentists claim this holism fits our practice. We do override "impossible" observations by theory. A virtue is made of necessity – in thew absence of fixed points, our belief-set is always provisional. This is a form of **fallibilism**, which coherentism welcomes as an essential part of the epistemological project in the search for increasing coherence, and doesn't treat as a defect.
- Another advantage of coherentism is its ability to justify the principles of inference, in the face of sceptical arguments about (say) induction. Classically, these are (in addition to induction):
  1. **Memory**: if I remember it, I probably did it.
  2. **Testimony**: if others tell me of an event, it probably occurred.
  3. **Perception**: if it seems that a certain object is before me, it probably is.
- Such principles can't be justified by foundationalist methods (as basic beliefs or deductions therefrom). For the coherentist, principles of inference are justified like any other beliefs, by their tendency to increase coherence.

- Coherentism diverts attention away from the individual's struggle to construct his own epistemology to the notion of knowledge as a social phenomenon that's increased by sharing. Coherentists can easily justify Principle 2 (Testimony). They start from the usual egocentric position, but don't restrict the initial data to facts about one's sensory states. The testimony of others can be used almost immediately to increase the coherence of one's beliefs. A principle of epistemological modesty leads one to accept that one is more likely to learn from others than to contribute to the sum of knowledge. It approximates to, but falls short of, supposing that knowledge is entirely a social phenomenon, despite taking a traditional starting point.
- Coherentists think that, just as they can provide a justification of induction, so they can defuse, if not rebut, the sceptic.
- Finally, a holistic theory of justification fits a holistic theory of meaning (see 2.7). Coherentism is *the* holistic theory.

### 2.8.4 The Role of Empirical Data

- The standard reply to the plurality objection to the coherence theory of truth is empirical grounding – that we start from the data of experience and order them in the most systematic way by surrounding them with a coherent set of beliefs.
- However, this gives a difficulty for coherentism as a theory of justification, introducing two sorts of justification. It ought to be **monist**, but ends up **pluralist**, because data are external to the set of beliefs. Data are input – what experience is giving us – and are characterised by source, rather than a relation to other beliefs.
- So, justification of beliefs involves more than internal relations between beliefs because it refers to experience, something beyond the beliefs themselves. Only foundationalism can give experience the special status it needs. Coherentism and empiricism are inconsistent.
- In response, we can ask why the coherentist should worry about this argument, since his position has been misdescribed. He doesn't accept the distinction between belief and experience. If we accept that we can't distinguish between the cognitive and sensory elements in sensory experience (as says Kant), we can have a form of coherentism that escapes this argument. Once we take experience to be cognitive, there's no risk of beliefs totally divorced from experience being justified, since coherentism requires all beliefs to be interconnected.
- This defense is incomplete, because we can still insist on a distinction between sensory and other beliefs, so expressing the empiricist claim that sensory beliefs asymmetrically support others. So, justification of beliefs takes two forms – the justification of the non-sensory by the sensory and the justification of the sensory by experience – hence returning us to a limited form of foundationalism.
- This isn't an easy problem to escape, because there are at least three reasons why even the coherentist ought to give special weight to sensory beliefs:
  1. We're considering the justification of belief-sets, and all the belief-sets we know of are empirically based.

2. For a set to count as a *belief*-set, it must be a response to an impinging environment. "Beliefs" that are wholly divorced from experience wouldn't be beliefs at all.
3. It's possible that an asymmetrical reliance on experience would lead to belief-sets of greater coherence. This would give a coherentist reason for allowing asymmetry in on the act.

- To see whether the coherentist can cope with this necessary asymmetry, we can distinguish between two sorts of security of belief:
  1. **Antecedent Security**: brought with a belief antecedently to coherentist considerations. Higher for sensory beliefs. Varies all the way up to infallibility.
  2. **Subsequent Security**: acquired as a result of contribution to the coherence of the set. All justified beliefs have subsequent security according to the coherentist.
- **Pure coherentism** denies this distinction. **Weak coherentism** allows them, and thereby might meet the demands of empiricism. However, weak coherentism looks like foundationalism, non-classical forms of which allow prima facie reliability, and suchlike. Can we be both coherentist and empiricist? Discussion of **Quine** in 2.7.2-3 showed that the empiricist demand that beliefs be grounded in experience should be compatible with complete **holism**.

### 2.8.5 Coherentism and Empiricism

- Bradley expressed himself as an ardent empiricist, and subscribed to a two-fold asymmetry:
  1. **Genetic**: out knowledge could not begin unless it originated in the sense-world.
  2. **Continuing**: split between continually returning to old data of perception and making sense of new data.
- Dancy compares this with Quine's **verificationist account of meaning**. His arguments were either **genetic** (the sort of meaning basic to the learning of language) or **continuing** (the sort of meaning basic to translation). See 2.7.2.
- Bradley denies the asymmetry. He admits to genetic asymmetry – experience provides the data – but denies that this gives such beliefs any advantage when it comes to acceptance, which is as for any other proposition – whether the coherence of the system is increased or not.
- Dancy asks whether Bradley's position of accepting one asymmetry but denying another is consistent. There's still the non-genetic asymmetry that data are, in the main, to be accepted. Even were the coherence of a system to increase were we to reject most of the data, this rejection would count against it.
- The easy way out is to say that this objection only has a hold on pure coherentism, not on weak coherentism, where some beliefs have greater antecedent security than do others. Dancy thinks this misses the point. The issue is whether the admission of antecedent security introduces a two-tier system of justification that collapses coherentism into foundationalism. If so, we have as effective an argument against weak as against pure coherentism.

- The antecedent security of sensory beliefs means that we are to accept them as true if nothing counts against them. But what, Dancy asks, is different in this case from our normal case where *all* beliefs remain unless we have reason to reject them. Hence, all beliefs enjoy antecedent security, and there is no asymmetry provided this security is always of the same sort.
- The problem is that different beliefs have different *degrees* of antecedent security, empiricists holding that sensory beliefs have more than do others. If this excess is prior to and independent of all considerations of coherence, this gives coherentists a problem of an unaccountable asymmetry.
- The immediate question is whether a coherentist *can* be an empiricist, not whether he *ought* to be one (Dancy reserves this question for 3.11). An empiricist demands more evidence than do others before he's willing to reject a sensory belief. However, if this belief is *extrinsic* to the sensory beliefs themselves, so that it can be added to the belief-set as a *further* belief, then it's a belief that coherentists can share. In that case, the removal of a sensory belief will cause more of a disturbance than will that of an ordinary belief, and so will require more to justify its removal. Thus, the coherentist's sensory beliefs will enjoy a greater degree of security – but it'll be *subsequent* rather than *antecedent* security because it's enjoyed in the same way as that of any other belief, in terms of increased internal coherence of the belief-set.
- Hence, pure coherentism is stronger than weak coherentism, with its willingness to admit different degrees of antecedent security.
- So, Dancy concludes that coherentism is consistent with empiricism. He thinks that the coherentist has a promising way of arguing that this move ought to be made. It's an empirical question whether a more coherent system will arise from the adoption of empiricist attitudes to sensory beliefs. This is the way a coherentist *ought* to justify empiricism.

## 2.9 Coherence, Justification and Knowledge

### 2.9.1 The Regress Argument

#### 2.9.1.1 A First Regress Argument

- What's the coherentist's response to the regress argument? This argument is supposed to show that there are two forms of justification – inferential and non-inferential, at pain of infinite regress or circularity. However, the form of justification envisaged is *linear* rather than *holistic*. Dancy doubts whether this regress argument can be repaired to use the holistic form of justification that would be effective against coherentism.
- We're to imagine a belief-set $\{B_1 \ldots B_n\}$, and that holistic justification can be called inferential. The justification can be inductive, viewed as inference to the best explanation. So, if there's no second form of justification, must all justification be conditional. Dancy sees two ways this might arise:
  1. The first attempt is to say that $B_1$ is only justified if (say) $B_2$ is. However, this doesn't arise in the coherentist picture, because even if $B_2$ isn't justified, and

there's an alternative $B_2$' which would make a better contribution to the coherence of $\{B_1 \ldots B_n\}$ that $B_2$, $B_1$ can still be justified if there's no alternative that will make the set more coherent. So, the justification of $B_1$ is not conditional on the *justification* (though it is, non-viciously, on the *existence*) of other members of the belief-set.

2. The second attempt is to say that the place of $B_1$ in the belief-set as a whole (enhancing its coherence) can only justify $B_1$ if the set as a whole is justified. This makes the justification of $B_1$ conditional, but in this case on the set of which it's a member. There are two versions of the same reply:
    a) This kind of conditionality doesn't matter, because the set is actually justified, since it is hopefully coherent. There's no regress because at the first move we find unconditional grounds. Dancy is uncomfortable about this approach because it implies two forms of justification – those of parts and those of wholes.
    b) A better response is that there's no such thing as the justification of an entire set. Justification applies to members and coherence to sets.

- (2b) isn't purely verbal. At any point, we find ourselves with a large set of beliefs containing tensions and contradictions. To increase coherence, we need to adjust individual beliefs, but each time we do so there a knock-on effects. Individual beliefs are justified if no alternative does better, but nowhere do we consider the whole belief-set as up for replacement. The best we can do is increase its internal coherence. Thus, no sense can be given to the question whether an entire set is justified or not.
- Hence, coherentists escape this regress argument. Each belief is non-conditionally justified if it increases the coherence of the belief-set. The regress argument is therefore not so much an argument for foundationalism as an expression of foundationalism's approach to justification as non-holistic and linear.

### 2.9.1.2 Another Regress Argument

- There is, however, a different regress argument. Can it be sufficient for the justification of a belief that it increase the coherence of the belief-set? Don't I need to believe that it does – and be justified in that belief? Hence regress, shown formally:
- Let *q* be "*a*'s belief that *p* … contributes to the coherence of *a*'s belief-set". Then, if we define JB*ap* as follows, we end up with regress:
    1. *q*
    2. B*aq*
    3. Jb*aq*
- This is because we need to be justified in believing *q*, ie. if r is "*a*'s belief that *q* … contributes to the coherence of *a*'s belief-set", then we get:
    4. *r*
    5. B*ar*
    6. Jb*ar*

- This new regress arises from taking an **internalist** approach to justification (remember 1.3.5). To evaluate the threat to coherentism, we need to be clearer on the distinction between internalism and externalism and on the supposed advantages of externalism.

2.9.2 Internalism and Externalism

- Though the 2nd regress argument creates a problem for the coherentist who wasn't vulnerable to the 1st argument, things are much worse for the foundationalist, because it undermines the non-inferential justification of basic beliefs. The foundationalist needs to be justified in appealing to the epistemic property E (infallibility downwards) that non-inferentially justifies his basic beliefs. A needs to have justified belief that his belief has E, and this belief itself requires justification, ad infinitem.
- This motivates **externalism**, for two reasons:
  1. The externalist has no problem with the **standard regress argument**. Take a standard externalist approach to justification (reliabilism: 1.2.3.3):
     JB*ap* = "*a*'s belief that p … was acquired by a reliable process"
     Inference from justified beliefs is a reliable method, so this definition covers both inferentially and non-inferentially justified beliefs. The externalist has no need to go to the basic level. Asking one's parents will do – it is generally reliable in certain circumstances, so will be a reliable non-inferential method of belief acquisition. While the regress argument has lost it's teeth, we're still left with a distinction between inferential and non-inferential justification.
  2. The externalist is untroubled by the **argument from error**. The requirement of relevant difference between cases only seems to arise for the internalist. Provided there is a relevant difference, my knowledge is assured even though I don't know what the difference is. The argument from error only points out another problem for internalists.
- So, why be an internalist? Because philosophers feel they have to be! So, before adopting externalism, we need to review the varieties of internalism.

2.9.3 Degrees of Internalism

- We're to imagine that our definition of K*ap* or JB*ap* includes at lease one clause *c* that doesn't begin K*a*- or JB*a*-. An example is:
  "*a*'s belief that *p* … was acquired by a reliable method".
- Then, there are four varieties of internalism:.
  1. There should be no such clause *c*.
  2. For every clause c there needs to be a clause beginning K*ac*.
  3. For every clause c there needs to be a clause beginning B*ac*.
  4. For every clause c there needs to be a clause beginning JB*ac*.
- Dancy thinks we should prefer (3) to (4), and either of these to the extreme cases of (1) and (2). Comments below:

### 2.9.3.1 No clause *c*

- Taken literally, this would exclude all current formulations of knowledge, which commence "1. *p*".
- Restricting ourselves to justification as a compromise misses the point[13]. One reason for this is that the individual cannot distinguish in a particular case between his *beliefs* and the *truth*. Hence, at least one of *p* and B*ap* can be dropped. If this is the point of (1), we could restrict it to the analysis of *justification*, since the individual isn't in the privileged position of being able to determine what he *knows*.
- Accepting this, another reason behind (1) derives from a controversy in the theory of mind. There are two views about the nature of a mental state (such as a belief).
  1. **Internalist**: the nature of a belief is determined entirely by its subjective characteristics, and the believer is uniquely privileged in being able to tell the nature of his own beliefs.
  2. **Externalist**: the nature of (certain sorts of) belief is determined by something other than subjective characteristics – eg. by the world. This isn't the **weak** view that the nature of the world causes the nature of the belief, but the **strong** view that the nature of the belief is logically dependent on some feature of the world.
- Dancy gives an example of this dichotomy – a kettle. Is the "about-ness[14]" of the belief something entirely subjective and internal, that could carry on if there were no kettle, or is it logically dependent on there being a kettle?
- For **de re** beliefs - beliefs about particular objects – there's no common factor between successful and unsuccessful beliefs, because there's no purely internal part of the story that's present in the absence of the external object.
- This (disputable) kind of externalism has interesting consequences for the theory of perception (see 3.11.4), but Dancy doesn't think it takes us far in the theory of knowledge and justification. What it does is remove the temptation that everything relevant to justification should be transparently available to the believer. Since his beliefs depend on the world as well as on his subjective states, there's no point in insisting that every clause in the definition of justification begin with K*a*- or JB*a*-. Justification isn't just an activity of the individual.
- This form of externalism is only contentious in the theory of justification, being manifestly true in the theory of knowledge (though Dancy notes that one externalist theory of knowledge dispenses with belief conditions and treats knowledge not a "belief+" but as an entirely separate state of mind.
- Dancy concludes that any difference between internalist and externalist theories of knowledge hasn't yet been captured[15].

[13] This is a difficult section that I don't understand.
[14] Dancy doesn't use the term "intentionality". Review the relevant sections of Crane.
[15] As noted at the beginning of the section – I'm lost!

#### 2.9.3.2 Accompany c with K*ac*

- This derives from Armstrong, prefigured by Plato's *Theaetetus*. It only relates to the theory of knowledge, since one doesn't need to *know* that one's method is reliable to have justified *belief*. However, it's not convincing even in the theory of knowledge, and leads to infinite regress. Dancy thinks it should be forgotten.

#### 2.9.3.3 Accompany c with B*ac*

- This is the least demanding theory, since there's no infinite regress unless combined with (4) and externalism in the philosophy of mind causes no problem (since it only shows there's no point insisting that *all* clauses begin with K*a*- or JB*a*-, which isn't requested here).
- It's equally applicable to knowledge and justification, and gives a good sense to internalism, since it makes the believer internalise the facts which make his belief justified or his true belief knowledge.
- A distinction arises: **internal** justification occurs when all relevant clauses B*a*- are true, whereas **external** justification occurs when all other clauses are also true.
- Dancy considers the question whether this theory is as much externalist as internalist. He rejects this idea for two reasons:
  1. External justification implies internal justification, but not vice versa. So, on-one can be justified in a belief if he's failed to grasp the facts in virtue of which he is justified.
  2. This internalist theory is in opposition to Nozick's externalist theory. In the continuum between internalism and externalism, this is somewhere in the middle.
- There's an **analogy** between *epistemology* and *ethics* underlying this theory. We demand of an agent not only that his action <u>be</u> right, but that he <u>believed</u> it to be so, otherwise the action would have no moral properties. Similarly, the internalist might urge that in epistemology, external justification must at least start from and include internal justification.

#### 2.9.3.4 Accompany c with JB*ac*

- While this theory is more demanding, and leads to regress, we can see its attraction by continuing the analogy with ethics. An agent's action isn't justified if his belief that it is is unjustified (eg. true by accident). Similarly, in epistemology the believer must have good reasons for his belief.
- Dancy thinks this approach mistaken. It's driven by the thought that justification and knowledge mustn't depend on luck – the point of the Gettier examples. Insisting that each B*a*- is accompanied by a JB*a*- is an attempt to exclude knowledge by luck. Insisting that each JB*a*- be matched by a B*a*JB*a*- is our internalist theory (3). But, the combination of the two leads to infinite regress (see 1.3.5). Hence, we must find another solution to the problem of knowledge by luck; and if we do we've no need of

(4). The vicious regress only arises if we add something quite independent of internalism.

- Dancy's provisional conclusion is that we do have a form of internalism that avoids the regress of 2.9.1. While externalism is advantageous against the sceptic, internalism is still viable.

2.9.4 Internalism and Coherentism

- Coherentists appear to be able to choose freely between internalism and externalism. One's belief-set can cohere whether or not one believes in the means whereby they do. So, the coherentist can avail himself of the advantages of externalism if he can persuade himself that internalism is unnecessary.
- Dancy is worried by this approach. It seems that the coherence of a set would always be increased by the belief that the relevant relations of mutual explanatoriness exist. Hence, on the coherentist account, if these relations do exist, one would always be justified in believing they do. However, this only shows that justification is *increased* by moving from externalism to internalism, not that it's never present. Even extreme externalists can agree that there's a gain in internalising the relevant facts, and the coherentist is well-placed to demonstrate this.
- So, given a free choice, which should we choose? Dancy thinks that the distinction between internalism and externalism is muddled by its proponents (Bonjour for internalism, Goldman for externalism). He also thinks they rely too heavily on the analogy with ethics, which is dubious for two reasons:
  1. It's easy to dispute the strength of the analogy.
  2. The relation between subjective and objective rightness in ethics, which forms the analogy with internal and external justification, is controversial and poorly understood.
- While there's no decisive argument on either side, Dancy thinks internalism has the greater intuitive support. Hence, he can't be content with externalism as the response to the sceptical argument from error, and needs a strategy from the internalist perspective.

2.9.5 Coherentism, Realism and Scepticism

- Is coherentism itself the answer? The argument from error (like the BIV argument) comes from a realist perspective, where there are real but evidence-transcendent differences. So, a coherentist could escape the argument from error if it was incompatible with the sort of realism presupposed by that argument.
- We need to survey the varieties on anti-realism, to see whether coherentism is anti-realist. Dancy lists four "degrees":
  1. **Solipsism**: all conceivable propositions concern my own experiences. Extreme solipsists restrict themselves to present experiences, but more relaxed types allow in the past and future.

2. **Idealism**: all conceivable propositions concern my own actual experiences or those of others, with similar temporal choices.
3. **Phenomenalism**: all conceivable propositions concern my own or others' actual experiences or those we might have had in different circumstances, again with similar temporal variations.
4. **Pure anti-realism**: allows that some conceivable propositions concern matters other than the possible or actual experiences of oneself or others. However, these propositions must not be true *unrecognizably* – ie. they must not be evidence-transcendent. The material world may be allowed to exist provided it has no evidence-transcendent properties.

- Pure anti-realism comes in different strength when it comes to "unrecognizably", as does realism – ie. who is it that does the recognizing, and when? The strongest form is "me / now", through intermediate "someone / sometime" to "God".
- What's the connection between anti-realism and coherentism? Classically, coherentism as a theory of justification and knowledge was connected with idealism (Bradley and Blanshard). The idealist claims there's noting over and above belief and experience (or the two forms of belief: sensory and non-sensory. Since, on this account, there's nothing beyond the belief set to distinguish the true for the false ones, truth is a purely internal relation between elements of the same type, rather than an external relation between beliefs and something else. Since this is just what coherentism holds, it seems that an idealist should be a coherentist.
- However, this doesn't imply that a coherentist should be an idealist, since we can conceive of truth in an internal relation in the coherentist way without claiming that propositions so related are concerned solely with experience.
- What about adopting pure anti-realism, since it combines the coherentist theories of truth and justification? If we adopt only the coherence theory of justification, retaining the *correspondence* theory of truth, then truth remains evidence-transcendent since justification remains an internal *relation* and truth, which is an *external* relation between the coherent set and the world, could be absent. However, we've already seen this as an unattractive combination because it gives no reason why justified beliefs should be more likely to be true than unjustified ones.
- The more consistent combination of coherentism as a theory of justification and of truth abolishes evidence-transcendent truth, leading to anti-realism. As justification grows, it tends towards truth, leaving no gap, which is just the anti-realist result needed to refute the argument from error.
- So far so good, but <u>if</u> the realist <u>can</u> consistently adopt coherentism, as some forms appear to be able do, we lose this comforting result. There are two issues:
  1. The attitude we take to the idealised notion of a <u>fully coherent</u> set of propositions.
  2. The exact sense we give to the notion of <u>degrees</u> of truth.
- Realists claim there's no such thing as <u>the</u> set of all true propositions. There's always a larger and more coherent set. But, if truth is defined in terms of the coherence of sets, there can be no truth that is approached. Propositions aren't approximately true, and don't get nearer being true as they form part of larger sets. This is because such a proposal would presuppose a state of "being true" which is gradually approached.

- This allows room for a coherentist to be a realist. Truth, as a mere ideal, lies beyond any possible belief-set. One can never get to the point where the possibility of falsehood no longer exists. This isn't due to the shortness of human life or the fallibility of the human cognitive system. Instead, its due to the relation between the finiteness of any possible belief-set and the infinite size of the ideal fully-coherent set.
- This is an important, if contentious, conclusion because Dancy will argue in 3.11.1 and 3.11.6 that anti-realism is committed to an unsound theory of perception. Since anti-realism is false, coherentism is ruled out unless there is a realist version. Dancy is confident that there is.
- Whatever the truth of the above, Dancy thinks we should be careful that we don't take it as obvious that anti-realism defeats the sceptic (and in particular the argument from error). While it's true that the first two sceptical arguments do refer to unverifiable hypotheses that we are BIVs, the arguments can be presented in a more mundane fashion. Human beings are never in such a good position that there is no possibility of error. Even if there were no gap between the best possible evidence and the truth, there's always a gap between the evidence we have and the truth. No matter how antipathetic we are to unverifiable differences, the sceptical question whether or not we can tell whether this is a situation in which we're in error is still pertinent.
- Dancy concludes that coherentism is not vulnerable to any regress argument, but doesn't on its own provide a response to scepticism.

# 3. FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

## 3.10 Theories of Perception

### 3.10.1 Is There Room for a Philosophy of Perception?

- **What can philosophers add** to psychology / neurophysiology? Very general questions which are sensitive to the specific results in these areas, and on which these practitioners will have views. Philosophers need some knowledge of their results.
- **Vicious circle**? How can a philosopher construct a general account of justified belief if he has to assume in advance that that the beliefs of professional psychologists are justified? We await 3.15 for an answer.

### 3.10.2 Theories of Perception

- There are three main families of theories of perception:
  1. Direct Realism
  2. Indirect Realism
  3. Phenomenalism
- **Perceptual realism** holds that the objects we perceive exist and retain at least some of their properties when unperceived. Note that this is different from metaphysical realism (see 1.1.4 and 2.9.5); Dancy will discuss the interrelationship in 3.11.6.
- **Direct perception** occurs where there is no intermediary, **indirect perception** where there is. Examples of indirect perception: reflections and actors on TV, the intermediary objects being the reflection and the image.
- Note that there are sorts of awareness that aren't perceptions. Eg. Awareness of pain, or proprioception[16].
- While both direct and indirect realists agree that objects exist and retain some of their properties unperceived, **indirect realists** claim that we're *only ever* indirectly aware of them, being directly aware of an intermediary object (eg. an idea, sense-datum, percept or appearance). Direct realists assert that we are sometimes directly aware.
- **Phenomenalism** is a form of anti-realism. Phenomenalists deny the existence of a physical world that lies behind experience, and from which it can come apart. There is no reality apart from experience, and the only objects of awareness are direct objects.
- Hence, phenomenalism:
  1. Agrees with direct realism about the directness of perception and the absence of intermediaries.
  2. Agrees with indirect realism that the direct objects of perception are not physical objects.
- This introduction of terms is vague and will be enhanced in due course.
- Two notions get confused with, or invalidly inferred from, the definition of **directness**:
  1. **Infallibility**: if an object is directly presented to me, how can I be wrong about its existence or nature? Well, in the defined sense of "direct", I can be. We're referred

[16] This sounds controversial! See my essay answer.

to the argument in 2.4.2 about our knowledge of our own sensory states being fallible. Whether successful or not, the argument doesn't conclude that our awareness is only indirect. If we take direct awareness to exclude the possibility of error, then there is no direct awareness, leading to a victory by default for the indirect realist.

2. Isn't it obvious that an object of which we're directly aware must exist with the properties we think it has? No. This is a question about time – how can an object now be directly present to us if it is now non-existent? There is an ambiguity about "present" on which this argument trades:
    a) "Present" as contrasted with "absent" (temporally or geographically).
    b) "Present" as what is presented – that of which we're directly aware.

   If this distinction is understood, there's no argument to force us from one sense to the other. A distant star can have ceased to exist by the moment I'm directly aware of it.

- The above suggestion may seem counter-intuitive, and more so when it's seen that a consequence is that in memory we may have direct awareness of the past. We can't argue that memory must be *indirect* awareness simply on the grounds that its object is past.

### 3.10.3 Direct Realism

- All direct realists agree that we are directly aware of the physical world, but they disagree about the degree of realism, ie. which of the properties remain unperceived. There are two main positions:
    1. **Naïve direct realism**: has it that all an object's properties remain unperceived; ie. (as we will see) secondary as well as primary.
    2. **Scientific direct realism**: science is said to have shown that physical objects don't retain all properties unperceived, because some properties are dependent on a perceiver for their existence. Examples: colour, taste, sound, smell, heat and roughness. *Directness* is maintained, but *realism* is restricted.
- This distinction is a close relative of Locke's primary / secondary quality distinction (*Essay* 2:8). **Primary**: shape, size and molecular texture. **Secondary**: as above – **sensory** properties. There is a sense in which a secondary quality does remain unperceived, in that its primary qualities, which are retained, remain such as to present the secondary quality to a suitably placed perceiver. The "primary quality ground" for secondary qualities is retained. But, colour-as-we-see-it (etc.) is not an independent property of the object, even when perceived, but is more a property of our way of being aware of the physical world than a property of that world itself.
- Locke's arguments:
    1. Experimental evidence.
    2. Naïve alternative is inconceivable.
    3. Ockham's razor.
- The last argument claims that we shouldn't admit the existence of any property if we can avoid it. The appeal to science is that contemporary physics shows we don't need

to suppose that secondary qualities are independent properties of physical objects. Two "explanatory reduction" arguments:

1. **Macroscopic versus microscopic**: We do need to appeal to the *primary* qualities of microscopic objects to explain the *primary* qualities of macroscopic objects (eg. the shape & size of macroscopic objects are explained by those of their component parts). But, we don't need to appeal to the *secondary* qualities of microscopic objects to explain the *secondary* qualities of macroscopic objects (eg. we don't need to think of microscopic parts as being coloured at all).
2. **Causation**: The perceptual event of an object's looking square has a **causal** explanation that requires us to attribute a shape to the cause. But, an object's looking blue requires no similar property in the object, but only relations between primary properties of object, eye, brain and local conditions.

- Hence, parsimony requires us to abandon things like colours-as-we-see-them in the object.
- While the appeal to the authority of physics is obviously impressive, Ockham's razor is only a methodological principle not a necessary truth, so the naïve direct realist can maintain his position. Even though the argument from parsimony raises an obstacle to naïve direct realism, Dancy still finds this the most attractive form, for two reasons:
  1. **Berkeley's arguments**: (*Principles* 8:14-15; first *Dialogue*). Given that our ordinary perception of the world has primary and secondary qualities intermingled, can we conceive of the separation scientific realism enjoins, of a spatial world with primary but no secondary qualities? The argument goes that it'd be impossible to perceive objects separately in a colourless world[17]. So, how can we conceive of such a world if we can't conceive of how it looks?
  2. **Inconsistency**: even if the primary / secondary distinction is sound, is it available to the scientific direct realist? This incompatibility is difficult to pin down:
     a) Both primary and secondary qualities are presented with equal directness.
     b) There's a danger that the account of colour vision given by a scientific direct realist will be a form of indirect realism, since colours are directly perceived if anything is. We'd have to admit an intermediate object to bear the coloured properties, which is altogether to abandon direct realism[18].
- The naïve form of direct realism also has problems, but these are problems also for scientific direct realism:
  1. **Secondary qualities**: we can't conceive of these existing unperceived. However, this is as much a problem for scientific as for naïve direct realism, for the former, while arguing that science has ruled out this possibility, still allows that it might have been the case. However, if this complaint is valid, why doesn't it also apply (as Berkeley argued) to primary qualities (eg. to shape-as-we-see-it)? There's no argument from intuition, as intuition seems to be on the naïve side. Arguments:

[17] What about B&W TV?

[18] Does direct realism insist that there is never an intermediate object. Why not go for direct realism for primary qualities, indirect for secondary?

a) **Perceived colour alters** according to the condition of the surroundings (light) and observer (jaundice?). Hence, there's no such thing as the **real** colour of the object – any choice of apparent colour as the real colour would be arbitrary and merely reflect human purposes. So, haven't we abandoned the naïve realist claim that colours exist unperceived? Dancy thinks not. We define real colour as that perceived in normal circumstances, and suggest that objects merely retain *a* colour unperceived. This (Dancy says) is compatible with (i) that we perceive objects directly as coloured and (ii) that the colour of an object can change with its surroundings (eg. neon light).
b) Objects **lose their colour in the dark**. Hence, colour only exists in situations suitable for perception and is unlikely to exist unperceived. Two responses: (i) objects retain a colour in the dark which we contingently cannot see and (ii) even admitting that colour requires light still leaves open the possibility that both colour and light exist unperceived[19].

2. **Perceptual error and hallucination**: present a more worrying problem for naïve realism. There are right and wrong ways to argue the case:
   a) It is often claimed that naïve realism is simply refuted by perceptual error, since we can't be directly perceiving something if that's not the way it is. Dancy sees this as the old confusion between directness and infallibility. Even so, perceptual error requires an explanation, and it's not clear how direct realism can provide one.
   b) So, the right way of putting the point is to say that naïve direct realism is unlikely to be able to explain perceptual error without collapsing into indirect realism. This is the same problem as faced scientific direct realism.

- Dancy takes the difficulties facing any form of direct realism seriously, but before considering them further, he looks at indirect realism to see how and why it does better.

### 3.10.4 Indirect Realism

- The concern of this chapter is with the simplest for of indirect realism; ie. that in perception we are indirectly aware of physical objects in virtue of being directly aware of internal, non-physical objects.
- In 2.11, Dancy will reject other forms, including the idea that we are never *aware* of physical objects, but *infer* their presence from the nature of the internal objects of which we are directly aware.
- Dancy gives four arguments for indirect realism:
  1. **Introspection**: it seems that two people aware of an external object will be in different **perceptual states**, which have different **perceptual content**. In turn, perceptual content must be the object of awareness, the only way in which we are

[19] This seems remarkably feeble. Have I got the argument right?

indirectly aware of the material object. So, the content of our perceptual state is the direct object of awareness, our indirect object.

2. **Time Lag**: because a star may have ceased to exist by the time we see it, it can only be an indirect object of perception, as it's not presented at the moment of perception. There must therefore be another direct object of perception, and since there is always a time lag, this is true in all cases. **Response**: This argument trades on the confusion pointed out in 3.10.2, that of supposing that the direct object must be present at the moment of perception. With this in mind, all the argument claims is that awareness must have a content, present at the moment of perception, the internal direct object. This is just the first argument, so the time-lag argument adds nothing new.
3. **Illusion**: genuine perceptual experiences are qualitatively indistinguishable from illusory experiences. The argument is strongest when we have **hallucination** rather than illusion. Since in this case the object doesn't exist, the direct realist seems forced to say that whereas most cases of perception are a relation between a perceiver and an external object, there are exceptional cases where there is no relation at all, but just a non-relational state of the perceiver. We ought not to analyse qualitatively identical situations differently, so the indirect realist argues that the best analysis is to suppose both states have an internal object, though only one has an external object. **Response**: not conclusive – we can insist that two states do differ fundamentally despite phenomenal similarity, though this stance is unattractive and best avoided. Dancy thinks, awkward though it is, it's better (for reasons to be given in 3.11.2) than indirect realist alternatives.
4. **Neurophysiology**: stresses the complexity of the causal processes involved in perception and asks how we can claim to perceive external objects directly given the number of brain processes between external object and perception. **Response**: Dancy thinks this argument mistaken. Brain processes stand between us and the external object in the relation of causal necessity, but we're not aware of their occurrence. Hence, neurophysiological processes aren't intermediary objects of perception, and this isn't an argument for indirect realism at all.

- In conclusion:
  1. The point of argument (1) – more an assertion than an argument – that the content of awareness should be taken as an indirect object, will be addressed in 3.11.2.
  2. The awkwardness exposed by the argument from illusion awaits further discussion in 3.11.3 of how direct realism copes with perceptual error.

### 3.10.5 Naïve and Scientific Forms of Indirect Realism

- The distinction between the **naïve** and **scientific** forms of indirect realism are entirely parallel with those of direct realism, and again with reference to what the **physical** object (in this case the **indirect** object) has. In the case of **secondary** properties, the naïve form claims that the physical object truly possesses them as well as the direct object, whereas the scientific form (much the commoner view) claims that only the direct object possesses secondary qualities.

- Dancy sees problems with both views. However, the scientific form is a possible option based on what was said of the scientific form of direct realism. There were two objections:
  1. The scientific form of direct realism collapsed into indirect realism. This is clearly not a problem for indirect realism.
  2. It was left undecided whether we can conceive of a world in which physical objects have no secondary properties.
- The naïve form is grossly implausible, since it claims that there are two forms of colour, one of which we are aware, and another invisible – or probably more fairly that there are two ways of being aware of colour, directly and indirectly. Dancy thinks we should stick to our intuition that we can only be directly aware of secondary qualities.
- So, of the four possibilities, we're left with:
  1. **Naïve direct realism**: reflecting our strong intuition that we're directly in touch with the physical world, and
  2. **Scientific indirect realism**: since science's pronouncements on primary and secondary qualities fit it better.

### 3.10.6 Phenomenalism and Idealism

- Dancy considers the contrast between phenomenalism and idealism.
- This is best seen by considering Berkeley's **metaphysical** idealism. Physical objects just are collections of actual ideas. An object can't exist unperceived. Esse est percipi. Because objects can reappear after a gap in perception, most objects on this account are very gappy, with a consequent problem of re-identification after a gap. For Berkeley, God assures that objects enjoy continuous existence by permanently perceiving them. This gives physical objects a continuous existence analogous to that given by realism, though a **dependent** existence in contrast to an **independent** one.
- Dancy sees in Berkeley a more flexible view, approximating to phenomenalism, that physical objects exist so far as it is possible to perceive them, even though in fact they are not being perceived. This makes objects into collections of actual and possible ideas, though Dancy finds this notion to be odd for two reasons:
  1. Just what is a possible idea?
  2. Can a possible idea be collected into a bundle with actual ones?
- Phenomenalism is more plausible than idealism, giving a more natural sense to objects existing unperceived, and consequently a better theory of perception because it can explain perceptual events. The reason I can perceive a physical object is that it's there all the time waiting to be seen (though Dancy will reconsider the persuasiveness of this explanation in 3.11.1). Consequently, phenomenalism is thought of as the main form of perceptual anti-realism, despite Berkeley maybe having been correct to prefer idealism as the more consistent theory.
- There are two sorts of phenomenalism, just as there are two forms of idealism:
  1. **Eliminative idealism**: there is no such thing as a material object, only experience.
  2. **Reductive idealism**: there are material objects, but they are nothing other than complexes of experience. Berkeley was of this type, though he rejected material

objects as conceived of by scientists and accepted them only as conceived of by ordinary people.

- Moving on to phenomenalism, we now need to distinguish carefully between its account of material objects and that of a perceptual realist.
- The perceptual realist holds that material objects exist unperceived and retain most of their properties. The eliminative phenomenalist denies this, but the reductive phenomenalist asserts it.
- It's the presumed nature of the world when not experienced distinguish these accounts. Both agree that the possibility of experience remains, that if someone were appropriately placed, they would have the relevant experience. However, the realist claims a permanent **ground** for this possibility, distinct from and supporting it, namely a material world. Phenomenalists deny this, wherein the weakness of their position lies.

## 3.11 Perception: the Choice of a Theory

### 3.11.1 Phenomenalism and the Explanation of Experience

- How are we to explain the occurrence of a perceptual experience? The realist has an appealing answer – namely, that the object of perception was there all the time, so that when we were in the right place with the right perceptual apparatus in the right conditions we perceived it – and the question is whether this can or should be resisted.
- The phenomenalist agrees that there's something continuous, but claims it's the continuous possibility of experience – a permanently true subjunctive conditional (if had … would …).
- The problem with the phenomenalist's response is that it itself needs an explanation. The realist agrees with the truth and relevance of the subjunctive conditional, but can also explain it – a continuous physical object acts as the **ground** for the possibility.
- The standard phenomenalist response is an appeal to **past regularities**. However, this induction-style explanation is of the **wrong sort**. We don't simply want to know the fact of the regularity, we want to know **why** (and why in this particular case). Only the realist can supply the answer – a contemporaneous and relevant ground for the subjunctive conditional about experience.
- Dancy refers back to 2.6.3 and the criticism of the phenomenalist account of **meaning**. The meaning of a statement about a physical object is not equivalent to the meaning of any collection of subjunctive conditionals about experience. It is only if the two differ in meaning that the one can provide the ground for explaining the other.
- The proper phenomenalist **response** is to query the grounds of the argument. We can distinguish two classes of property of an object:
  1. **Dispositional**: the abilities the object has to act in certain ways under certain conditions.
  2. **Categorical**: the grounds of the object's dispositional properties.
- This distinction is all there is to the realist intuition that dispositions need a categorical ground – an intrinsic nature of the object – to explain them. Despite this intuition seeming like a conceptual necessity to some people, it can still be questioned. Dancy does so by invoking the principle in contemporary physics that the basic properties of matter are dispositions – and, if basic, presumably ungrounded dispositions.
- The **example** is of electric charge. This is a basic property, but Dancy asks what the distinction is between this and a disposition to act in a certain way. Hence, if we can accept basic dispositional properties in physics, why not in philosophical psychology?
- In reply, Dancy considers three stages of explanation:
  1. **Subjective dispositions**: an object's dispositions to appear in a certain way to a perceiver.
  2. **Objective dispositions**: dispositions to act in a certain way, without reference to a perceiver.
  3. **Categorical states**: of the object, which ground dispositions to act, while not themselves being dispositions.

- The phenomenalist **claims** that we can do without (3). The realist **response** is that the fact that physics takes some objective dispositions (2) as basic in no way justifies the claim that the subjective dispositions (1) could be basic, which is what the phenomenalist needs. Hence, this phenomenalist move, though it raises the standard of the argument, doesn't succeed in explaining phenomenal experience in phenomenalist terms.

### 3.11.2 Indirect Realism: Double Awareness and a Double Object

- Having rejected phenomenalism, Dancy spends the rest of the chapter arguing in favour of direct realism. He thinks he has a sufficient argument against indirect realism, namely an inability to make sense of the supposed "internal direct object of awareness".
- In 3.10 we saw that the indirect realist thinks we are more directly aware of something other than physical objects. What might these more direct objects be, and what role might they play?
- Various answers have been given to the first question: percepts, sensa, sensibilia, sense-data, appearances, ideas, etc. Whatever name we chose (Dancy takes "sensa"), we need to determine what sensa are like, and, in particular, what "internal" means.
- The argument from illusion (see 3.10.4) claims that, because the object of the perception is ex hypothesi a hallucination, it can't be logically dependent on facts about the perceiver's surroundings, body or organs. Because this is so, it claims further that, even in the normal case, how it is for the perceiver entails nothing about the perceiver's body or the surrounding world. How it is with the perceiver can be characterised solely with reference to an internal direct object of awareness, independently of any implications for the physical world. Consequently, a sensum can't be the surface of a physical object, for instance. However, the argument from illusion doesn't tell us much else. Dancy thinks we'll find difficulties even with the minimal characterisation it does provide – that the internal direct object of awareness is the object bearing the properties that form the content of the perception, described without implications for the physical world.

#### 3.11.2.1 The Sceptical Objection

- The classic objection is that indirect realism leads to general scepticism about the physical world. For, if all we directly perceive are internal objects, how can we have any justified beliefs about the external world?
- Berkeley argued that it is logically possible, even given our perception of internal direct objects, that there should be no external world; and so, no argument from internal to external world can be deductive. However, an inductive argument is no use because it would rely on previously established internal to external links. Ex hypothesi we cannot establish such a link, because to do so we'd need to be aware of external objects directly, contrary to the hypotheses of indirect realism, which demands the mediation of a sensum.

- This argument has been very influential and a prime motivation for phenomenalism. Someone convinced of the existence of sensa, but sceptical of anything else, may adopt the radical response of doing without everything else and constructing a world entirely from sensa.
- Despite the sceptical argument's pedigree, current opinion is that it is mistaken. There could be two critical points it's trying to make:
  1. The sceptical argument is mistaken if it claims that we cannot establish the required correlations because we can't observe external objects. Indirect realism doesn't imply that external objects are unobservable, but simply says what it is to observe them.
  2. If the sceptical argument trades on the argument from error, it again misses the mark since on any theory there's the possibility things aren't as they seem. The argument form error does not uniquely target indirect realism, but any theory of perception.
- Consequently the sceptical argument is ineffective against indirect realism as presented here. It might have been effective had the indirect realist claimed that physical objects are unobservable, but merely inferred from our knowledge of perceptible internal objects. However, it's powerless against the view that there are two analogous forms of awareness – direct and indirect. Dancy now asks whether we can make sense of this view (that is, as we will see, why awareness is supposed to be **double**, and why the forms are supposed to be **analogous**).

### 3.11.2.2 The Direct and the Indirect

- Locke's theory is a classic statement of indirect realism.
- According to Locke, the awareness in perception is **double**, each with its own object:
  1. The **internal** object – the idea – is **perceived**.
  2. The **external** object – the material object – is **seen**.
- In favourable cases, perceiving an idea is seeing a material object.
- The natural **objection** is that the perceiver is only aware of one sort of awareness and one sort of object. What justifies the claim that to see an object is to be in two distinct but analogous states of awareness? There **response**: is that we are very familiar with the notion of being aware of one thing by being analogously aware of another. There needn't seem to be two forms of awareness going on. There are two possibilities suggested for the relation between the two objects:
  1. **Constitution**: the indirect object (material thing) is **constituted** by the direct object (sensa). The analogy is of a TV image being constituted by its dots, or of a cow being constituted by its surface. **Response**: sensa are not part of the indirect object according to the realist, only according to the phenomenalist.
  2. **Resemblance** & **causation**: the analogy is of reflection, or of a TV image of a scene. **Response**:
     a) **Resemblance** fails on two counts. (1) The indirect object isn't supposed to possess secondary qualities. (2) Sensa don't resemble material things. Sensa aren't large, and the feeling of a square object isn't square. Sensa can only

resemble the way things look (as in a picture) not the way things are. But, sensa just <u>are</u> the way things look.

b) **Causation** fails because it can't sustain the analogy on its own. While (in the examples) we're aware of both the image and what it portrays, this is not in virtue of the events portrayed being the prime causes of the images. There are many events which cause our awareness without us being aware analogously of these events. An **example**: we're aware that someone's there by seeing only their **shadow**, but the awareness of the person isn't relevantly similar to the awareness of the shadow. We see the shadow but not the person. The removal of the resemblance, which was supposed to ground the analogy, destroys it.

- While not conclusive, these difficulties suggest we look elsewhere, to direct realism, which doesn't face them. However, Dancy first considers and rejectgs a third alternative.

#### 3.11.2.3 Inferential Realism

- Inferential realism escapes the problems of double awareness in the opposite manner to direct realism, namely by accepting direct internal objects but rejecting the indirect external one. Hence, the claim is that we're not aware of material objects in any way analogous to our awareness of sensa, but is only **inferential**. Supporters of the theory are Russell and Ayer. Sensa are our only objects of perceptual awareness, the material objects which are their cause being merely inferred.
- An **objection** is that a theory that tried to explain what it is we see (material objects) has left the material world **invisible**. Also, the sceptic will ask us what reason we have to believe in the existence of invisible material objects.
- The standard **response** to the objection is to point out that physics standardly infers the invisible from the visible. Dancy rejects the analogy. The physicist infers objects and events in an "arcane" world by observing normal physical objects. The objection to the inferential realist is that the objects from which he infers don't have the properties to bear the inference. This objection comes from those raised in 2.5 against private languages. We can't institute a primary language for describing sensa, so we can't support the inferential realist's belief that our knowledge of material objects is inferred from our primary awareness of our sensa.

#### 3.11.2.4 Conclusion

- Before siding with direct realism, we need to see how it codes with its major problem, that of explaining perceptual error.

### 3.11.3 <u>Direct Realism and the Explanation of Perceptual Error</u>

- While direct awareness doesn't imply infallibility, we need an **explanation** of perceptual error that doesn't collapse into indirect realism.

- Indirect realism is attractive because it presents perceptual error as a **mismatch** between two objects. However, the direct realist has only one object.
- The argument from illusion claims that in cases of hallucination there is **no external object** present at all. So, how is it with the hallucinator? He has a **perceptual experience** and is in a **perceptual state**. The perceptual state must be capable of being characterised independently of the surrounding physical world.
- This objectless perceptual state must also be available to the non-hallucinating perceiver. We can independently describe the perceiver's state without reference to the surrounding world. But, for the direct realist, the perceptual state has no internal object and isn't an intermediary between perceiver and external object. So, any misfit must be between perceptual state and the world. So, what account could we give of this perceptual state that fails to fit the world?
- Dancy thinks the direct realist need not go along with this argument:
  1. An extreme **externalist** would deny the possibility of a perceptual state whose nature is logically independent of it supposed object. There's no residue, common to perceptual and hallucinatory states, describable without reference to its object.
  2. **But**, most direct realists are **internalists** who admit that the perceptual state exists as an objectless residue.
- What are "perceptual states", and how can we account for them without turning them into new objects of awareness? The way out is to adopt the Chisholm's **Adverbial Theory of Sensation**. In this theory, **objects of experience** are replaced by **ways of experiencing**. Even though this may attribute special sorts of properties to states of awareness, this isn't incompatible with direct realism, since these states aren't objects.
- Even so, how does this help us escape the argument from perceptual error? What sort of mismatch is there between way and world? We know that the world may not be the way we take it to be, but this just restates rather than answers the question.
- To make progress we need to consider theories of perception, of which there are three:
  1. The **Pure Sensation Theory**: perception is a complex form of sensation.
  2. The **Pure Belief Theory**: perception is essentially a form of belief
  3. The **Mixed Theory**: perception is a mixture of sensation and belief.
- Theory (1) – the **pure sensation** theory – could adopt the adverbial theory and deny that perceptual sensations are objects. However, it's likely to see only a difference of degree between perceptual sensations and simpler sensations such as pain. Even if we admit that there are such things as visual sensations (bright lights, strobes), we may still be unhappy about a close analogy between "visual sensation" and a sensation like pain. For, even if perception involves sensation, that form of sensation can't occur without at least a tendency to form a belief about the nature of the object responsible. Thus, pure sensation isn't cognitive enough to be a model of perception.
- So, should we adopt theory (2) – the **pure belief** model? Armstrong held this view – that sensory elements are inessential to perception and that what really matters is a tendency to acquire beliefs about the surrounding world. This position is supported by **blind-sight**, which might count as pure non-sensory perception, showing that visual sensation, though normal, is inessential to visual perception. However, Dancy just

dismisses this. Whatever blind-sight is, it is not our way of seeing. There's more to seeing something to be true than coming to believe that it is.

- This leaves us with (3), the **mixed** theory. What sort of mixture? We've seen that perception is **cognitive**, but not to the exclusion of the characteristic ways things **look**. We have a choice:
  a) Either we see sensation and belief as **separable** – the tendency to believe can be extracted from the whole leaving only the appearance behind – or,
  b) We see them as ultimately **identical** – to see the world in a characteristic way just is for us to acquire a tendency to acquire a belief. The tendency to acquire belief isn't something had in the absence of the characteristic way of seeing, so isn't something that can occur to the blind-sighted.
- Dancy supports (a). We should think of perception as a characteristic **form** of belief that isn't shared by those without the sensory input, from which it can't be separated.
- In **conclusion**, either theory (2) or (3) can explain perceptual error in terms of a mismatch between perceptual state and world. The mismatch is between belief and world when the **belief is false**. While we may be left with a problem about false belief, this is isn't a new problem peculiar to the direct realist.

### 3.11.4 A Causal Element

- Dancy rehearses the background to a hallucination. What more is required beyond being in a perceptual state for someone to **see**?
- It won't do to say that someone sees iff he is in a perceptual state and the world is as he believes it to be. The counter-example is that if I was wired up to a computer, then my seeing a blank expanse because it stimulated me so to do isn't equivalent to me seeing the blank wall that's in front of me. Hence, we need to improve our account – and do this by adding that the way the world is must **cause** my belief. This is the **causal theory of perception**.
- While there's something obviously right about the suggestion, Dancy has two further comments.

#### 3.11.4.1 Comment 1: Reliability Requirements

- We need to specify the causal relation between world and perceptual state in greater detail. **Reason**: example of the benevolent scientist who controls my perceptual states by computer in such a way that they are exactly as they would be if I were seeing. My perceptual states are therefore indirectly caused by the way the world is; yet, I still wouldn't be said to be seeing my surroundings. The reason is that the link from world to perceptual state isn't **reliable**, depending as it does on a capricious experimenter.
- One way of ruling out unsuitable links (due to **Grice**) is to rely on the future progress of **neurophysiology**. We provide a list of paradigm cases of perception of the environment and say that all perceptual states caused in relevantly similar ways are to count as cases of seeing (etc.). This should rule out unsuitable links. The reason we have to rely on the future of neurophysiology is that ordinary people (like

philosophers) have no idea what the causes are – so we help ourselves in advance to the promissory note of the neurophysiologists' success.

- The problem with this is that, even if the promissory note is cashed so that I know the causal route of my perceptual states, we still might not know which causal paths are relevantly similar. If we found an apparent perceptual state caused in an entirely new way, who would decide whether it was relevantly similar to a paradigm case? Dancy claims that we (and not neurophysiologists) would decide according to whether we wanted this new case to count as one of perception which we'd add to our cache of paradigm cases, and not by comparison of causal histories.
- We can't say that "suitably caused" perceptual states are seeings, because this simply avoids answering the question. So we are left with problems (which Strawson tries to resolve) and a second comment …

#### 3.11.4.2 Comment 2: Externalism

- We need the causal element because the difference between seeing and not is not an internal difference (both seeing and hallucinating seem the same). The difference lies in the fit and causal relations between perceptual state and world. This raises the traditional questions:
  1. What evidence we now have that we are seeing and not hallucinating, and
  2. What needs to be added to the internal perceptual state to make it seeing?
- We can avoid these issues if we deny that there's a residual core, which the argument from illusion tried to establish, common to the two situations. This is what an **externalist** in the philosophy of mind does (2.9.3), claiming that the two situations sometimes differ despite being internally indistinguishable. He claims this doesn't mean "internally identical". Instead, seeing is a state of mind only available when a suitable external object exists. This object isn't separable from the state, so we can't ask whether or not it's causing the state in the right way. It can't cause that state (seeing) in the wrong way, and it's another matter entirely whether there's another state (hallucinating) that might be caused in the wrong way. See McDowell for this perspective.
- Hence, externalism is attractive because of the way it can handle the argument from illusion and the answer awkward questions about the causal link from world to perceptual state. However, Dancy claims that this externalist theory isn't fully worked out, so its internalist rival remains the received approach.

### 3.11.5 Perception, Causation and Justification

- Dancy argued in 3.11.2 that perceptual states (pace externalists) are characteristic forms of belief rather than complex sensations. We must distinguish two questions.
  1. What **conditions justify** a perceptual belief? Dancy's answer is broadly **coherentist**.
  2. Whether and why our perceptual beliefs have **antecedent security** (see 2.8.2), being harder to dislodge merely because they are perceptual.

- Dancy gives four responses as below:

#### 3.11.5.1 Justification 1: Truth Tracking

- Following Nozick, our perceptual beliefs are normally true because they track the truth. Dancy finds two problems:
  1. The question is why such beliefs track the truth.
  2. The response is externalist in the sense of 2.9.1-2. I needn't be aware that my perceptual belief tracks the truth and that it's in virtue of this that they count as knowledge. Dancy claims we're no reason to be externalists other than laziness (!), so can't rest content with this answer.

#### 3.11.5.2 Justification 2: Conceptual Necessity

- It's a conceptual necessity that our perceptual beliefs are normally true (Shoemaker).
- If true, this idea must be externalist since most people and most philosophers don't accept it. Dancy doesn't think the two arguments in favour are conclusive:
  1. **Cannons of correct translation**: we'd be wrong to translate a foreign word as "perceive" if most of what we were taking as perceptual claims turned out false. Hence, we can only understand as perceptual a process whose results are normally true. **Response**: a reductio. This argument is too strong, for if valid it would mean that we couldn't understand the natives as having moral beliefs unless the moral beliefs we attribute to them came out true (by our lights).
  2. Better, perceptual reports from others form a large proportion of our evidence for how the world is. Hence, it's impossible for the world to be generally different from how people say it is. **Response**: we're working within a direct realist approach, while this argument is at least tinged with anti-realism. Also, it exaggerates the role of agreement. It may be that we can't construct a theory of the world independently, but it's not the case that the role of others is crucially defined by a need for agreement. Without this, the notion that our perceptual beliefs **must** normally be true gets nowhere[20].

#### 3.11.5.3 Justification 3: Coherentism

- The discussion in 2.8.5 suggested accepting *p* – "demanding extra before a perceptual belief is rejected increases the coherence of a belief-set".
- There are, however, problems with this coherentist approach. What we want to show is that, even if people don't take perceptual beliefs to be justified, they ought to. Hence, we can't rely on the fact that in practice they do. We can do this if increased reliance on perceptual belief does indeed increase coherence; ie. if proposition *p* above is true. This would argue from truth to justification within the framework of internalist coherentism.

[20] I don't understand the argument – review on a second reading.

- What tells us that *p* is true? Unless we know this, we don't know that its addition will increase the coherence of the belief-set, which Dancy says "turns the argument on its head" and leaves us with an unsupported hypothesis (presumably, *p*).
- Dancy would like to be in a position to bolster the argument, as this is in accord with the position taken in his book, but otherwise will have to look elsewhere.

### 3.11.5.4 Justification 4: Causal

- Picking up on the causal discussions in 3.11.4, one difference between perceptual beliefs and others is that we take perception to be a response to an open world that confronts us. A perceptual belief that *p* can have as a main cause the fact that *p* (the world is that way). This distinguishes perceptual beliefs from others. I cannot perceive that all men are mortal, so even if such a non-perceptual belief is causal in some way, such a fact can't be the main cause of my belief that it is true.
- If every perceptual belief had a fact as a main cause, perceptual error would be impossible. The claim isn't that this is so, only that in each case it might be so.
- Since the causal point isn't statistical, we can't say that perceptual beliefs are more likely to be true than other beliefs. However, we can (introducing a new term) say that perception is a particularly **direct** rapport with the world. Directness isn't a weak substitute for infallibility, but says that perceptual belief is our securest form of contact with a world directly presented to us.
- This is equivalent to the claim that successful perceptual belief is normally knowledge, and that if there is any knowledge of the world, perception is it. But, how can we use this to show what grounds the justification of perceptual beliefs?
- Dancy refers back to 1.3.2, which derived justified belief from knowledge, claiming that "a belief is justified iff in circumstances C it would be knowledge". A possible circumstance C would be if the believed proposition *p* were true, ie:

  $JBap \equiv (p \;\Box\!\!\rightarrow Kap)$
- Dancy sees a special case of this approach in his account of perception. The reasons why perceptual beliefs are justified are reasons why these beliefs will be knowledge if true[21].

### 3.11.6 Direct Realism and Coherentism

- Dancy now argues for the following claims:
  1. Pure anti-realists[22] such as Dummett should be committed to phenomenalism in the theory of perception, shown to be unsatisfactory in 3.11.1.
  2. A coherentist should be a direct rather than indirect realist.
  3. Scientific direct realism may prove stronger that naïve direct realism.

[21] Lost again!

[22] **Pure anti-realism** (see 2.9.5): allows that some conceivable propositions concern matters other than the possible or actual experiences of oneself or others. However, these propositions must not be true *unrecognizably* – ie. they must not be evidence-transcendent. The material world may be allowed to exist provided it has no evidence-transcendent properties.

### 3.11.6.1 Pure anti-realists should be phenomenalists

- The relation between perceptual and metaphysical realism is as follows:
  1. The **perceptual realist** holds that objects can exist and retain some of their properties unperceived.
  2. The **metaphysical realist** holds that there are some propositions that have a definite truth value, but whose truth or falsity is left undetermined even after all possible evidence is in (ie. that there are evidence-transcendent truths).
- Can one adopt one form of realism and not the other? Of the various forms of metaphysical **anti-realism**, solipsism, idealism and phenomenalism clearly imply perceptual anti-realism. However, can't a pure anti-realist be a direct perceptual realist?
- The perceptual realist takes it that the **ground** for perceptual experience is independent of that experience; namely, a continuously existing material world. So, we can combine perceptual realism with pure anti-realism provided we can:
  1. Conceive what it is like for there to be such a ground, but …
  2. NOT conceive what it would be like for that ground to exist unrecognisably.
- However, this requires that our perceptual realism be **direct**. If it were indirect, we'd have to say that the material world, since on this view it's the indirect object, might exist beyond the reach of possible experience, and so fail condition (2) above.
- Even so, Dancy finds a tension between perceptual realism and pure metaphysical anti-realism, which destroys the amalgam. The pure anti-realist cannot accept that it's possible for something to be unrecognisably true on any occasion. This is because he closely connects truth with the evidence for it. But, the direct realist, since he accepts that there is an **independent** and distinct ground for all possible experience, can admit that the ground can be unrecognisably present or apparently present but in fact absent. Since this is inconsistent with pure anti-realism, the anti-realist would seem to be committed to the next "worst" anti-realist perceptual position, namely phenomenalism, which has already been found to be unsatisfactory.

### 3.11.6.2 A coherentist should be a direct rather than indirect realist

- Dancy argued in 2.9.5 that a coherentist could still be a realist. If he is, he'll also adopt realism in perception. But, what sort? Dancy supports direct realism because indirect realism re-opens the gap between justification and truth. He makes two points:
  1. The coherentist claims that justification and truth are not properties of radically different type; justification grows into truth, even though it may never quite get there. The realist who supposes that the properties of physical objects are both observable and can continue to exist unobserved supposes that the very thing that he does observe could exist unobserved. This is direct realism. The indirect realist, however, denies that the objects of which we are directly aware can continue unperceived. This drives a wedge between the continuing world that makes our states of awareness true and that which we appeal to in justification of our beliefs.

**Truth** is a relation between direct and indirect object, whereas **justification** is a relation between direct objects of awareness (for the coherentist, beliefs are justified if they fit well with other beliefs). For the coherentist, this creates the wrong sort of distinction between truth and justification.

2. Indirect realism is prone to the sort of scepticism that the real world might be radically different from the perceptual world, or might even not exist. Indirect realists, while accepting this possibility, have argued that we can nonetheless know things about the real world via our awareness of the apparent. Things are easier for the direct realist. While there remains a distinction between the way the world appears to be, and how it is, the distinction is less radical because the two worlds are of a piece. The properties we perceive the world as having are just those it does have, and retains unperceived.

- Consequently, Dancy concludes that the consistent coherentist must adopt perceptual direct realism, which we've already shown on independent grounds to be the most plausible.

### 3.11.6.3 Scientific direct realism is better than the naïve form

- Dancy had argued in 3.10.3 that naïve direct realism is more consistent than the scientific form. There were two arguments for this, which now seem less persuasive:
  1. Doubts about the primary / secondary quality distinction.
  2. Use of this distinction will collapse scientific direct realism into indirect realism for colour perception.
- However, our discussions in 3.11.3 seem to show (2) as groundless, which therefore allows the coherentist to adopt the primary / secondary quality distinction, and along with it scientific direct realism.

## 3.12 Memory

### 3.12.1 Theories of Memory

- The naïve view is that to **perceive** is to be aware of one's **present**, and to **remember** is to be aware of one's **past**. This chapter will show that the similarities between memory and perception outweigh the dissimilarities.
- However, in perception what we're aware of need not be temporally present, and we'll see that memory isn't restricted to awareness of one's past.
- There are **direct realist**, **indirect realist** and **phenomenalist** theories of memory, just as there are for perception. This correctly tempts us to consider memory as being perception of the past, though we must note that there may be non-perceptual forms of memory.
- The arguments for these three theories will parallel those for perception, and will give us the opportunity to evaluate them in a new context.
- **Realism** about memory is that real and possible memories are grounded in the **past**, the previous history of the world, which is different from them and explains their possibility. The way the past was is not dependent on our ability to remember it.

### 3.12.2 Indirect Realism

- According to the indirect realist, in memory we're indirectly aware of the past. There's a direct object of awareness – the memory image, our internal direct object – that acts as an intermediary.
- Arguments for indirect realism in memory parallel those in perception:
  1. The content of awareness is a second object.
  2. The time-lag argument.
  3. The argument from illusion.
- These arguments were inconclusive for perception and remain so for memory. There's no argument to compel us to accept the existence of an intermediate direct object of memory.
- This dismissal is too quick, given that most contemporary philosophers are indirect realists in this respect. So, Dancy raises the following more considered objections:

#### 3.12.2.1 Objection 1: double awareness

- It was double awareness of the double object that caused problems for perceptual indirect realists. This remains so for memory – how does the memory image function as an intermediate direct object?

#### 3.12.2.2 Objection 2: double intermediacy

- Because similar arguments imply that the indirect memory realist is also an indirect perceptual realist, there's a double intermediacy between the remembering mind and the past event:
  1. The original direct object between the perceiver and the thing perceived.
  2. The second direct object present to the remembering mind and related to / resembling the perceptual direct object, which is now beyond awareness as (from the time lag argument) it has ceased to exist.
- There are two reasons why we can't suppose the previous direct object recurs after a gap of dormancy:
  1. We ought to suppose that a new image is created after a gap, resembling the previous one. Other wise we'll have to say the recurring image is stored during gaps in awareness. Dancy finds the idea of memory as a storehouse of unused images "a most unattractive proposition".
  2. Memory images often differ so much from the original perceptual direct objects, it's hard to see them as survivors of these images.
- Because of all these intermediacies, with their dissimilarities, anyone impressed by the argument given in 3.11.2 will be even more impressed by its application to this case. The argument was that the existence of a distinct object of awareness between us and the world makes it impossible for us to know what the world is really like.

#### 3.12.2.3 Objection 3: memory and imagination

- The indirect realist considers both memory and imagination to produce **images**. So, how do we tell them apart?
- This is often expressed as a demand for an infallible criterion for distinguishing memories from imaginings, else memory can give us no knowledge of the past.
- Dancy thinks this is a misplaced sceptical concern. There <u>are</u> no infallible criteria, and consequently it's no objection to a theory that it can't provide one. The argument from error is a *general* problem that needs to be dealt with.
- There are two classic answers to the question of how to distinguish memory-images from others:
  1. **Hume**: Memory-images are more vivid, **forceful** and lively than others. This seems unlikely at face value, given that the products of the imagination are often more lively that fading traces of the past. So, to understand what Hume means, we remember that he uses this criterion to distinguish beliefs, as the more lively, from imaginings. He means that beliefs are **action-guiding**, whereas imaginings aren't. Memory is a form of belief, and distinguishing memories from imaginings is a special case of distinguishing what we believe from what we don't.
  2. **Russell**: suggests that it's the feeling of **familiarity** that distinguishes memory from imagination. While this can be strong, weak or misplaced (in the case of déjà vu), it is generally present and is the criterion we're after.
- Dancy responds in reverse order:
  1. **Response to Russell**: The problem isn't that familiarity isn't an infallible criterion (since there is none) but rather to distinguish the feeling of familiarity from the

belief that the present image resembles the past. Russell claims that beliefs are always based on feelings, from which they are distinct. However, the response to this claim is that there is no feeling of familiarity other than the belief the feeling is supposed to ground. That's what the feeling of familiarity is. The belief can't be the distinguishing criterion, since it's the belief we're seeking the criterion for and which now appears criterionless.

2. **Response to Hume**: This is similar. Agreeing with him that memory is a form of belief attached to the present image, we have no criterion by which we ascribe belief in the case of memory, but not in the case of imagination. The ascription of belief is again criterionless.

- Consequently, the indirect realist can't answer the question of which images are memory-images, though we could expect an answer from him. The direct realist doesn't need to answer this question, but a different one, which he can answer; namely, which beliefs are memory-beliefs.
- The main problem with accepting indirect realism in the case of memory is that we'd then have to accept indirect realism for perception, which we've previously rejected. Mixed theories are unattractive because the arguments accepted in the one case spill over into the other.

### 3.12.3 Direct Realism

- The direct realist argues that our awareness of the past is direct, with no intermediary internal object. Memory images are not as prevalent as philosophers think, and when they do appear, it's not as an object of awareness but part of the **way** in which we're aware of a past event.
- We may ask whether it is reasonable for the direct realist to play down the role of images, since this seems to be what's most characteristic of memory. To answer this question, we need to consider the different **forms** of memory and the role images play in each. Dancy seems to consider two, **factual** and **perceptual**.

#### 3.12.3.1 Factual memory

- Factual memory hasn't received much consideration so far, yet is the most common form. It is factual knowledge, knowledge that *p*, which was acquired in the past, and which might have been forgotten and recovered or simply retained. Most of our knowledge is factual memory. Knowledge of what we current perceive isn't factual memory, though much of this knowledge will be reliant on factual memory.
- Memory isn't necessarily concerned with the past, let alone one's **own** past. Examples: I remember that I will be in London next week, or that there are several varieties of woodpecker.
- Factual memory has no reliance on images, partly because they are usually unavailable (eg. for numerical knowledge).

#### 3.12.3.2 Perceptual memory

- Factual memory is quite unlike the kind of memory conceived by the indirect realist, since it need not be of the past and images are neither required nor relevant. However, this just goes to show that there's **another form** of memory that the indirect realist was talking about. Dancy calls this **perceptual memory**. If knowledge recollection was all there was to memory, we'd not be tempted to make analogies between memory and perception. Also, nothing about factual memory says anything about the restriction that only **some** things can be remembered, namely that our non-factual memory is restricted to our own past history. It is in this context that there's room for analogy between perception and memory and for debates between direct and indirect realists about, say, the function of imagery.
- A none-too-good way of drawing attention to the distinction between factual and perceptual memory is by appeal to **language**. We can distinguish between:
  1. **Remembering that** : which requires no imagery, and …
  2. **Remembering**, or **remembering how** something looked, which requires us to recall the event with the same consciousness had of it at first.
- Dancy doesn't think this linguistic distinction quite works, because perceptual memory can without error be described in terms of remembering-that. For all we know, perceptual memory might just be a type of factual memory.

### 3.12.3.3 Definitions, distinctions and contrasts

- Dancy offers a couple of initial definitions:
  1. A **factually** remembers that *p* iff *a*'s present knowledge that *p* is grounded in *a*'s previous **knowledge** that *p*.
  2. A **perceptually** remembers that *p* iff *a*'s present knowledge that *p* is grounded in *a*'s previously **perceiving** that *p*.
- Given (3.11.5) that perception is a form of knowledge, perceptual memory is a special form of factual memory. While a *distinction* remains, there's no *contrast*.

### 3.12.3.4 Problems for direct realism

- What has the direct realist to say about perceptual memory, the ability to see again in the mind's eye, to re-experience one's feelings or to re-live one's actions?
- This ability is grounded in past perceptions, so we need to refer back to the account given of perception. The direct realist has rejected intermediate objects of perception, so won't admit them here. What difficulties does this raise?
- A possible problem is that our awareness of the past may **alter** through time, and may even **improve** with attention. Why is this a problem for the direct realist? Dancy thinks the possibility of improvement is an argument for, rather than against, direct realism since otherwise it's difficult to explain improvement without direct access to the object, albeit at a temporal distance.
- How does direct realism stand in relation to **sensory**, **pure belief** and **mixed** theories of memory? Pure belief is obviously correct for factual memory, but should the

analogy between perception and perceptual memory force us to adopt a mixed theory for perceptual memory as we did for perception?

- Philosophers are less resistant to pure belief theories of memory than they are to those of perception, because memory, unlike perception, doesn't essentially involve **appearance**. This, however, says no more than the already admitted claim that appearances are irrelevant to factual memory.
- However, appearances do count for perceptual memory, so it's best to preserve the analogy and adopt a mixed theory for both perception and memory. Perceptual memory is a distinctive form of belief about one's past, and hence is a distinct form of factual memory. Factual memory can be had without perceptual memory, but not vice versa.

### 3.12.4 Phenomenalism

- As before, we can distinguish between:
  1. **Reductive phenomenalism**: there is such thing as the past, but it is nothing other than a complex of present experiences. For an event to be past is for us to be able to have present memory-experiences.
  2. **Eliminative phenomenalism**: there is no such thing as the past, only present experiences.
- This sort of hypothesis (eg. Ayer) suffers from the same defects as perceptual phenomenalism:
  1. We would normally explain a memory-experience by appeal to a previous occurrence of some perceived event, now remembered. This is unavailable to the phenomenalist, who has no resource other than the present experience itself.
  2. The phenomenalist can't appeal to previous regularities in memory-experiences, but not because these lie in the past, since the phenomenalist can describe the past in terms of present memory experiences. The reason is that previous regularities provide the wrong sort of explanation. While previous regularities assure us of the predictability of memory experiences, they don't explain why they are of this sort rather than another.
- Dancy claims there is something to be learnt from the contrast between realism and phenomenalism.
  1. For the phenomenalist, factual memory can exist only if there is perceptual memory, since factual memory consists in past knowledge, which in turn consists in the availability of experiences of having known that *p*, which requires perceptual memory.
  2. This is the **reverse** of the realist situation where (as we saw in 13.12.3.3) perceptual memory requires factual memory in such tight connection that in favourable cases, to perceive that *p* is to know that *p*.
- This contrast is important now that we consider the sceptical question of how **memory** can ever be **knowledge**.

### 3.12.5 Russell's Hypothesis

- Russell's "hypothesis" – that the world was created 5 minutes ago with false memories in place – points out the sceptical difficulties, since nothing can ever show, or even provide evidence, that this situation doesn't pertain.
- Can we know that Russell's hypothesis is false if we've no evidence against it? If we don't, can we know anything about the past, since (say) there was no WWII if the universe was created 5 minutes ago?
- Dancy provides two comments on the argument before providing three possible answers:
  1. This is just the BIV argument from error given in 1.1.2. Where two hypotheses are indistinguishable, we can't claim to know, nor have justified belief, whether one rather than the other is true.
  2. The focus of this argument is factual memory, nor perceptual memory. Even if there are such things as memory experiences, there could be no such thing as present knowledge grounded in past knowledge.
- Possible answers:

#### 3.12.5.1 Nozick's response

- Much as in 1.3: $PC^k$ is false, so we can't use it to infer that we don't know anything given that we don't know Russell's hypothesis to be false.
- Dancy had argued in 1.3 that Nozick's argument fails even if $PC^k$ is false. Our intuitions are strong that Nozick can't be right to say that we can know we had breakfast today, yet not know that the universe wasn't created 5 minutes ago.

#### 3.12.5.2 The phenomenalist response

- Phenomenalism would provide a better response if it were tenable. It holds that the existence of the past is nothing more than the availability of present memory-experiences. If this is what the past is, it's impossible for present memory-experiences to be available and yet for the past not to exist.
- Consequently, Russell's hypothesis provides no grounds for the phenomenalist to be worried by sceptical doubts. This is a case of the facility of the anti-realist in disposing of sceptical arguments.
- So, for the phenomenalist, we're directly in touch with the past, and there are no past events beyond the reach of memory. Any sentences that purport to be about the past, but which are beyond the reach of memory, are neither true nor false.
- This view of the past contrasts strongly with the realist view, since the realist thinks there are ways the world was which are beyond the reach of memory. The past is richer than possible memory-experience. The realist holds to the **law of excluded middle** when it comes to statements about the past – each statement is either true or false. The phenomenalist is committing to denying this.

- However, the line that past events and memories can come apart exposes the realist to the usual sceptical arguments. The argument from error starts from the point that however consistent our memory-experiences might be, there's always the possibility that they are false, to which we've seen no satisfactory response. It should be deflected by some general move within epistemology, such as phenomenalism.

#### 3.12.5.3 The transcendental argument

- This was considered in 1.1.4. We try to maximise the effect of Russell's hypothesis, noting that if it were true, factual memory would be impossible. Also, the acquisition of new knowledge would be impossible, for how would I recognise a fire if I don't remember what one is? Dancy (says) he had noted the dubious validity of this move, but the point is that we try to maximise the effect of the hypothesis so that we can then not see ourselves as rational at all. Given such enormous effects, the sceptical argument must be rejected in true reductio style.
- The above counter-argument isn't expressed as in 1.1.4, but the **response** to it is the same. Sceptical arguments aren't weakened by the scope of their consequences. This isn't an independent reason for rejecting the sceptical premises.

#### 3.12.5.4 Conclusion

- All three of the above arguments have failed to defeat the classic sceptical argument about factual memory. Dancy will provide his response to the argument from error in 3.15.5.

### 3.12.6 Perceptual Memory and Justification

- Perceptual memory has been analysed as a special kind of **belief**. There are therefore two questions to ask:
  1. Under what conditions is such a belief justified? **Response**: coherentism – a belief is justified by its effect on the system as a whole.
  2. Why is the fact that a belief is of a special sort a reason for retaining it?
- Our response in the case of perception was that our contact with the world is so direct that successful cases must count as knowledge. However, this won't do here, since the causal route isn't so direct. The original, distant event can't be the main cause of the present perceptual memory. So, another approach is needed.
- We've already taken it that factual memory – which in suitable cases is knowledge – is possible. Perceptual memory, on the other hand, is present belief caused by past perception. So, in favourable cases, perceptual memory is present belief caused by past perceptual knowledge; perceptual memory is a belief grounded in previous knowledge. This provides the extra resilience required.

## 3.13 Induction

### 3.13.1 Induction, Perception and Memory

- So far we've considered the gathering and retention of knowledge. Now we want to consider the construction of new knowledge on the basis of old. We do this by reasoning, of which there are two sorts: **deductive** and **inductive**.
- **Deductive** reasoning claims **conclusive** reasons. In a deductively **valid** argument, it is impossible for the beliefs on which the conclusion rests to be true and the conclusion false.
- **Inductive** reasoning doesn't claim to be conclusive, but claims to provide sufficient reason to accept the conclusion (or at least reasons which, with yet further reasons, will be sufficient). This is best explained by **probability**. A successful inductive argument makes its conclusion more probable than any equally detailed alternative, though this may still not be sufficient to believe the conclusion as the sum of the alternatives may be still more probable. It may, however, justify us in looking for further reasons that will collectively justify the conclusion.
- Inductive reasoning may be applied from present knowledge to beliefs about the past, or from beliefs about the past to beliefs about the future. So, it's not specifically about the future, but we should ask whether knowledge of the future can be gained other than inductively. Dancy gives two possibilities:
  1. We have non-inferential knowledge of our own **intentions**, and therefore sometimes know what will happen in the future. However, this may not be entirely devoid of inductive support, because we need to know that in general our intentions are implemented.
  2. In certain cases we can **see** what will happen. This varies from extreme cases of fortune telling, to knowing that the car will crash or the ball will go out of bounds. However, there are powerful arguments that we can never observe the future in such cases. Such powerful arguments are needed, as the story so far in this book implies that some limited observation of the future is possible. Perceptual belief is a matter of degree, so maybe we can say that one can see that a climb is difficult – that we can see what will happen.
- The argument that completely rules out perception of the future is an argument about the **direction of causation**. Perceptual beliefs differ from others in that, in favourable cases, their **content** is the **main cause** of the belief. But, for perception of the future, the **contents** of belief must lie in the future, so how can this cause a present event?
- We might allow simultaneous causation, but there are arguments that the present can't be the effect of something that hasn't yet happened.
- Dancy gives an **example** of someone always waking up 5 minutes before their alarm. The cause of their waking up isn't the future ringing of the alarm, because of cases where they woke up even though (due to mechanical failure) the clock didn't go off. Hence the correct explanation isn't backward causation, but double forward causation (waking and ringing are both caused by winding).

- We can't wriggle out of this example by saying that there might be someone who wouldn't wake up if their alarm wasn't going to ring. The structure of the argument requires that the effect be over before the cause starts, leaving a gap for someone to interfere to prevent the cause from starting. We don't actually need to interfere – the mere possibility of intervention is incompatible with the thought that the effect is caused by a future event. This is because of **what it is** for one event to be the effect of another. B is only the effect of A if A is **necessary** for B. On a morning on which our man wakes up, we can stop the alarm[23], so the alarm can't be necessary for his waking up.
- This "**bilking**" argument shows that the causal order can't be the reverse of the temporal (see Flew). Since perception requires a causal link between belief and fact, this argument shows that we can never perceive the future. Hence, we don't really see that it'll rain or that the car will crash – we only reason inductively from present conditions to future events.

### 3.13.2 Two Conceptions of the Future

- As usual, we have the **realist** and **anti-realist** accounts. The anti-realist denies that there can be evidence transcendent truth. So, a sentence about the future is to be evaluated as true or false in the light of present and past evidence. In the absence of evidence, as in most cases about the future, the sentence lacks a truth-value.
- This argument is appealing. Because the future hasn't yet happened, we feel that there's nothing for sentences about the future to describe. The openness of the future isn't an epistemological defect, but a metaphysical necessity that distinguishes the future form the past. The past is complete, giving truth-values to statements about it. Not so the future.
- Accepting this line of argument is to adopt realism about the past and anti-realism about the future. A more complete anti-realism would say the same about the past as about the future. Dancy gives an argument for anti-realism about the future – the claim that a realist about the future cannot have **free will**.
- Dancy rehearses the argument for **causal determinism**, which is independent of the anti-realism controversy. For A to be the cause of B, if A and the attendant circumstances happen, B must happen. So, if the causal determinist is right, and every event and action is caused by other events, then no event can be other than it is, and free will is impossible.
- Compatibilists deny this, saying that an action can be both caused and free. However, we're concerned with the **fatalist** rather than the **determinist**. The fatalist takes a realist line, supposing that every statement about the future has a truth-value. This fixes what will happen in the future. If it is already true that I will go to the restaurant next Friday, how can I be said to have the option of going?

[23] Maybe this supposition is incorrect? In cases where there's a future cause of a past event there can be no successful intervention?

- Despite the appearance of verbal trickery, this argument persuaded Aristotle to abandon realism about the future. The adoption of anti-realism has the usual advantages against the sceptic. What it is for a statement about the future to be true is inseparable from what it is for us to have the best possible evidence that it is true, so there's no possibility for us to have this evidence and yet our statement to be false.
- The difficulty is to hold anti-realism about the future without adopting general anti-realism, which we've already argued against in the theory of perception.
- All this aside, there's a more severe sceptical argument that attacks the very notion of the evidence the anti-realist relies on. This is Hume's question about induction in general, and about the **unobserved** in general, not just the future.

### 3.13.3 Hume and his Critics

- The questions about induction were raised in 1.1.2 and have not been discussed since. Dancy doesn't repeat them, but moves immediately on to consider answers to Hume.

#### 3.13.3.1 Is the Circularity Vicious?

- Hume claims our attempts to justify appeals to experience are circular, because we use experience to justify experience. However, some philosophers have argued that the circle isn't vicious.
- The argument that "inductive reasoning has proved reliable in the past, so it is generally reliable" has as its conclusion a statement that the principle of inference which takes us from premise to conclusion is reliable. This isn't circular, there being a crucial difference between a **principle of inference** and a **statement**. It's mistaken to think that the argument requires as a premise the statement of the conclusion. There are two mistaken reasons to suppose that it does:
  1. The argument is inconclusive without the addition of the conclusion to the premises. But doing so brings blatant circularity. **Response**: the argument is perfectly sound inductively as it stands, and doesn't need making deductively valid by the addition of extra premises. It's no part of the justification of induction to show that all inductive arguments are covertly deductive!
  2. We should insert explicit statements of all principles of inference involved as premises. **Response**: this leads to infinite regress. Each argument in turn will depend on some principle of inference that needs premising.
- Hence, the argument is agreed not to be covertly circular, because in no sense is the conclusion amongst the premises. An argument can establish the reliability of its own principle of inference when its conclusion asserts that reliability; induction can be justified inductively.
- We can see why this ingenious argument is **unsuccessful** by looking at it Hume's way. I can only accept that this argument gives me reason to accept its conclusion if I accept on independent grounds the principle of inference on which it relies. Hence, the argument only gives me sufficient reason to accept the conclusion if I have sufficient reason to accept the conclusion already.

### 3.13.3.2 Appeals to Analyticity

- Hume's question is how we can have reason to suppose that past and present observation provides evidence from which we can argue inductively. Without this there can be no such thing as evidence, and no inductive reasons for belief.
- Strawson's response – the **analytic justification of induction** – is that it's not possible to question whether past and present observation provide evidence for further belief. It does so in virtue of what we mean by "evidence". We can't be wrong about what "evidence" means, so there's no possibility that observation should fail to provide evidence of the unobserved.
- This argument isn't available to those who accept Quine's rejection of the analytic / synthetic distinction, but there's a further argument against Strawson due to Urmson.
- The argument goes as follows:
  1. To see something as **evidence** is in part to evaluate it, seeing it as a reliable guide we're justified in following.
  2. But, terms like this have a peculiar characteristic, best seen in a general term of approval, such as "good".
  3. We learn to use this term by examples given by our mentors. But, we're not restricted to approving what they approve, and our use of the term can cast off all reliance on the original examples. We can approve of a radically different set of objects – or approve of none – without demonstrating that we've forgotten what we were taught.
  4. The same is true of "evidence". We learnt it in one set of circumstances, but can apply it to others – taking different sorts of thing as evidence, or (as Hume did) denying that anything is evidence for anything else.
  5. Hence, the analytic justification of evidence fails to rule out Hume's question as incoherent.
- Maybe we've missed the force of the analytic justification, which may be intended as an **anti-realist answer to a realist question**; and, we've missed the point by rebutting it in realist terms:
  1. Hume may think there are matters of fact about the unobserved past and future, about which our accumulated experience is inconclusive but relevant evidence.
  2. Hume then points out that experience gives us ne reason to suppose we can cross from observed to unobserved.
  3. The anti-realist responds by saying that there's no gap between evidence and fact.
  4. What it is for propositions about the unobserved to be true is indissolubly tied to what counts as relevant evidence.
  5. Our concepts of truth and evidence go together, so that it is an analytic truth that the observed past is evidence for the future.
  6. A proposition about the future is true iff there is evidence available for it; to understand what it is for a statement to be true <u>just is</u> to know what counts as evidence for it.

7. Therefore, we can't be wrong about taking observation as evidence. This is so not on account of the meaning of the word "evidence", but because of the meaning of the propositions for which observations count as evidence.

- This anti-realist version of the analytic argument for induction is the more formidable. Before he can address it, Dancy needs to approach the matter from a different direction.

### 3.13.4 Goodman's New Riddle of Induction

- Hume argued that the practice of inferring from observed regularities the probable continuance of those regularities could not be justified if by justification we mean a reason for thinking inductive reasoning to be reliable.
- But, Hume didn't conclude that inductive reasoning was **irrational**. Instead, he claimed that, while we have no reason to reason inductively, we can't help it because **human nature** is such that we acquire the **habit** of expectation after observing enough regularity in nature. We understand what it is to be rational not in virtue of what we ought to (but don't) do, but what we do do. Hence, inductive inference is rational, though ungrounded in reason.
- Goodman argued that Hume's answer gives rise to even harder questions of the same type it seeks to solve. Correct inductive inference is defined in terms of inference to events similar to those observed; the most reliable inference being that the world will continue as it has been wont. Goodman argues convincingly that this appeal to similarities conceals a hard-to-justify assumption.
- Dancy rehearses the grue / bleen argument. An object is grue at *t* iff it green and t < 01/01/2000 or it is green and t > 01/01/2000. While all our evidence points to future emeralds being green, it also points to them being blue, since (writing in the last century) all have been found to be grue just as much as green.
- This means that we cannot characterise correct inductive inference in terms of the continuation of previously observed regularities. There are infinitely many regularities, but we're inclined to treat some inferences as correct and others not. However, we've not provided any reason for doing so, nor have we a workable account of what an inductive inference is to which we might appeal in support.
- The natural response is to claim that there's something suspicious about artificial predicates like grue. But, the new riddle of induction just is the question what is wrong with them. Complaints about artificiality just show we don't use such predicates, not that we oughtn't to.
- A common answer is to complain that no "sound" predicate could contain reference to a particular point in time or space. Hence, grue is unsound. There are two things wrong with this response:
  1. Grue / bleen and green / blue are inter-definable. An object is green at *t* if it grue and t < 01/01/2000 or it is bleen and t > 01/01/2000. Hence, even "green" is unsound from the perspective of someone using "grue".
  2. Even if such predicates were called "unsound", we've not said what it is about them that makes inferences from them unreliable.

- Dancy doesn't try to solve Goodman's new riddle, but instead tries to relate it to previous concerns.
- The anti-realist response to Hume is no use in response to Goodman:
  1. We do use past observations as evidence for future cases, and our understanding of what it is for something unobserved to be true is linked to what we take as evidence that it is so.
  2. So, in the case of "green", our understanding of what it is for something to be green in the future is linked to what we take as evidence that is will be green.
  3. Given the meanings we attribute, there is no chance of us being wrong in what we take as evidence for something to be green in the future.
  4. But, this applies as much to "grue" as to "green". The only hope that this not be the case is the thought that we have been using the predicate "green" but not "grue".
  5. But, this isn't useful, for two reasons:
     (a) We can't show a predicate to be invalid merely because we haven't used it.
     (b) How do we know from our previous practice that we've been using "green" rather than "grue"?
- The above point (5b) is important. It is true that we've used the word "green", but what shows that we haven't all along been thinking in terms of grueness? How do we know we won't suddenly start calling blue[24] objects "green" on 01/01/2000? Until we know which concept we've been using, we can't hope to favour one on the grounds that it is the one we've been using.
- Again, the importance of this point is shown by the argument that we should discount concepts like grueness because they can't be learnt from examples. We think we know we've acquired the concept of greenness, but maybe it's the concept of grueness that we've acquired. If so, we've acquired it from our experience of grue objects.
- We should now be reminded of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations (see 2.5.5-7). Goodman's asking, just as Wittgenstein did, what justifies one way of going on rather than another.

### 3.13.5 Coherentism and Induction

- We've two forms of inductive scepticism to contend with. Anti-realism had some success with Hume's, but failed against Goodman's. Does coherentism do better?
- Coherentists (Ewing and Blanchard) claim that coherentism is the only perspective from which inductive scepticism collapses. This requires two constraints:
  1. Externalist answers are no good since we prefer internalism.
  2. The answer must be as effective against Goodman as against Hume.
- We're to imagine we've a succinct statement of an IPI (an Inductive Principle of Inference):

[24] Prior to 01/01/2000, grue and green have the same extension, so we might have been adopting grue / bleen concepts all along (ie. the meaning we give to our word "blue" is bleen). If so, after 01/01/2000 a green object will be bleen, which in our vocabulary is "blue").

1. An externalist claims that our use of an IPI is justified by its resulting in increased coherence in our belief-set.
2. An internalist adds that we additionally need to believe that our use of the IPI increases coherence, and we're justified in using it if this belief is true. Internalism doesn't need to show that this belief is true, because, as we showed in 2.9.3, this leads to regress and return us to Humean scepticism.

- We still need to know whether it's true that adopting the IPI will improve coherence. Appeal to the past would lead to circularity, so it can't be an entirely empirical matter that use of the IPI would increase coherence. We need an a priori, conceptual link inductive inference and increased explanatory coherence.
- Coherentists can supply just this, by Harman's claim that the guiding principle behind inductive inference just is **inference to best explanation**. Hence, it's no accident that induction increases explanatory coherence. Also, because both truth and justification are seen in terms of coherence, induction must take us nearer the truth.
- Further, by reviewing Hume's argument is detail, we can see why coherentism is the only successful explanation of induction. We use the example of a brick smashing a window:
  1. We see a brick heading for the window. Our natural belief about what will happen next is arrived at by inductive inference, but what justifies that inference?
  2. There's no contradiction in supposing the brick will not break the window, which there would be if the connection between the brick's flight and the window's breaking were one of **logical necessity**.
  3. Hence, the two events are **conjoined** but not **connected**.
  4. Our inference from one to the other must, therefore, derive from experience of similar conjunctions in the past, but this sort of inference can't be justified empirically without the circularity we saw in 1.1.2.
- Coherentists stop this argument by rejecting the thought in (2). They claim another form of necessity – **natural necessity**. This links the two events together, and anyone who denies it is doomed to inductive scepticism.
- Without natural necessity, **explanation** is impossible. To explain something is to see why it had to happen (in the circumstances), not just that it was going to or will happen. To see **why**, we need more than the knowledge that in previous cases this sort of thing happened, which only provides "bleak predictions"; we need **understanding**.
- The reply to Hume is that for there to be the possibility of explanation, there has to be necessary connection between events. The window must break, not just will break.
- Knowledge that the window will break is knowledge by inference; the brick's flight entails the window's breaking. We know that, given the brick, the window must break because it'd be far harder to explain its not breaking than its breaking.
- Ewing and Blanchard's explanation for their escape from Hume's argument is that they deny his **atomism**, the view that individual events are conjoined but never connected. However, this still leaves Goodman.
- Goodman points out that there are many other inductive practices than our own, each with its own language, and nothing to choose between them. If one is justified, all are. On the assumption that we've defeated Hume, why should **multiple justification**

disturb us? We normally think that justification can be shared, and that another person's belief-set can be as justified as our own. The **plurality objection** (see 2.8.2) only bites when we talk about truth.

- The situation is that for each belief we are justified in holding, there's another equally well-grounded practice that recommends the opposite belief – the example is the green to blue case given above. This means that the two practices are not just **different** but **competing**.
- This is where we must turn to **Wittgenstein**. We've found that there's no internal feature of our practice that makes it more justified than any other. Nor is there any external factor. The only relevant feature was that we use one practice and not the other.
- This doesn't help much, but the conclusion of Wittgenstein's discussion of rule-following (2.5.6) was that a practice doesn't need an independent external ground to justify it.
- The reason we were looking for an external ground was that we think of such questions as external questions since they ask about our practices from a purportedly external perspective.
- But, this is wrong. Just as questions about the justification of elements of our language use (eg. of ethical language) are asked within our linguistic practice, so questions about induction are within our scheme of things. It shouldn't disconcert us that they cannot be justified from the outside.
- If this Wittgensteinian response to Goodman is cogent, this means that Goodman's advance beyond Hume was a move from an answerable question that the coherentist can answer, to an unanswerable one that no one can answer. It guarantees its own unanswerability and so rules itself out of court. So, if we can ignore Goodman, Ewing was right to say that only coherentism can show the rationality of induction.

## 3.14 A Priori Knowledge

### 3.14.1 Foundationalism and A Priori Knowledge

- What justifies the principles of inference on which foundationalism's inferential justification relies? They can't be justified by appeal to basic beliefs, nor as conclusions of inferences from them. Hence, for the foundationalist programme to succeed, there must be a third form of justification, the a priori.
- Foundationalism is a form of empiricism, with basic beliefs being those presented to us in experience. Foundationalism, therefore, offers us an empiricist reason for claiming that some knowledge is not empirical, though there are other reasons as well.

### 3.14.2 Empiricism. The A Priori and the Analytic

- An extreme form of empiricism distinguishes ideas from propositions, which are complexes of ideas combined so as to be true or false. It held that:
  1. All our ideas were derived from experience.
  2. No proposition could be known to be true apart from experience.
- Dancy will later show dissatisfaction about the distinction between ideas and propositions.
- Locke tried to prove (1) by running through our key ideas them one by one and showing how they could be so derived. He had mixed success, with problems in particular with identity, equality, perfection, God power and cause.
- Tenet (2) was no sooner stated than abandoned, because it conflicts with the intuitively correct claim that some propositions can be known to be true with no further appeal to experience than is required to acquire the relevant concepts. We need no experience to verify that "2 + 3 = 5" or that "red is a colour". Anyone who understands them already knows their truth without empirical investigation.
- This needn't worry empiricists, who argued that these propositions had a special status. They express relations between our ideas or concepts – **conceptual knowledge** rather than substantial knowledge about the non-conceptual world. Locke agreed that they were knowable by the exercise of reason alone, but held that his was compatible with, and explained by, his concept-empiricism. All the ideas whose interrelations we can know in this way are empirical.
- An empiricist who admits a priori knowledge must explain it in his own terms. Locke held a priori propositions are trivial relations between our ideas. Ayer held that a proposition can only be known a priori if it is **analytic**, ie. true in virtue of the meaning of words rather than how the world is. Accordingly, all a priori knowledge is of analytic truths and synthetic truths can only be known empirically.
- This is awkward for the foundationalist who claims our principles of inference are known a priori, since they are hardly analytic. As we saw in 3.13.3 about induction, they are not true in virtue of the meaning of words alone. They appear to be synthetic, so how can they be known a priori?

### 3.14.3 Can Synthetic Truths be Known A Priori?

- Are there examples of the synthetic a priori? Our a priori knowledge of synthetic principles of inference is one. Another is **colour exclusion** (nothing can be red and green all over at the same time), which we know without having to check by appealing to experience.
- An objection is that it's a fact of experience that being red excludes being green. While we know this without further experience once we know what it is for something to be coloured, knowing that one colour excludes another isn't a substantial fact about the world, so colour exclusion isn't the sort of a priori knowledge of synthetic truths we're after. Instead, it's an empirical fact about *appearance*, that nothing can have two competing qualities simultaneously.
- Dancy finds two problems with this argument:
  1. It begs the question. Experience only tells us that no object is red and green all over simultaneously, not that it can't be. Colour exclusion is created by the way we distinguish between colours. So, colour exclusion is an artefact of our conceptual scheme, not a reflection of the way the world must be. But, don't we mirror our language on what we find in the world? Isn't colour a matter of appearance, and hence a relation between us and the world? So, colour exclusiveness is as much a fact about us and the way things appear to us as about the world.
  2. There are other examples of this sort of exclusiveness which don't concern appearance in this way. Eg. nothing can be both a cow and a horse at the same time. Additionally, it's not convincing to say that this is a fact about our conceptual scheme, rather than about cows and horses. Is it part of the **meaning** of "is a cow" that it excludes being a horse? If so, this example is analytic and again not what we're after. However, couldn't someone who knew the meaning of "cow" never have heard of horses and still understand "cow" perfectly well. We must remember that there are indefinitely many things cows are not. If the meaning of "is a cow" included all these exclusions, no one could learn it, especially given that the other words would contain their own exclusions. So, the proposition that nothing is both a cow and a horse is not analytic, but nor is it about appearance, so can't be held to be empirical on that account. We know a priori that a cow isn't a horse once we know what it is to be each. No further experience is necessary. Hence, we do have an example of a priori knowledge of a synthetic truth.
- We will grant that mathematical knowledge is a priori, but are mathematical truths analytic or synthetic? Kant defined "analytic" not in terms of meaning but of **concepts**, holding that a judgement is analytically true if the concept occurring as predicate is contained in the concept occurring as subject. In this sense, he initially thought of arithmetical truths as analytic. Later he changed his mind. While one might be tempted to say that the knowledge that $12 = 7 + 5$ is required for possession of the concept 12, 12 is made up of infinitely many pairs of numbers, as well as of products. Since we can't predicate **all** these of someone who possesses the concept 12, we must reject

them all. [Though, if we define integers by the successor relation, we might allow 12 = 11 + 1 to be known a priori]. Hence, mathematical truth is synthetic in Kant's sense.

- If we follow the non-Kantian line of defining analyticity in terms of meaning, we get the same result. There are two many interrelationships between one number and another for these to be contained in the meaning of one of them. So, mathematical knowledge is synthetic in this sense as well, though knowable a priori.
- Kant's approach to this question makes the appeal to examples more or less redundant. The classical empiricists claimed that our concepts (or ideas) are derived from experience, attempting to prove this by enumeration. Kant doesn't argue directly against the enumeration, but argues that some concepts cannot be derived from experience because they are required for **any** experience at all.
- Kant's complex **argument** is briefly as follows. The basic idea is that the world is experienced spatially, temporally and causally. These concepts cannot be derived from experience. Rather, one can only have an experience if one possesses them, as the matrix within which experience is presented. Hence, these concepts are not empirical. Though presented in experience, they cannot be extracted from experience because any such extraction would only be possible for someone who already possessed the concepts that provide the experience that makes extraction possible.
- In reply, we might argue that Kant has failed to distinguish the claim that all **concepts** are empirical from that that all **knowledge** is empirical. Concepts are constituents of propositions, and our knowledge that certain propositions are true may be empirical even when the contents of the propositions are not empirical.
- The distinction between concepts and propositions is dubious, however. In the present context, we're implausibly alleging that it's possible to possess the concepts of space, time and causation without knowing any propositions in which they feature. To possess the concept of causation we have to be able to distinguish events that are causally connected from those that aren't, in order to understand what it is for two events to be causally connected. So, the person who possesses this concept already has a lot of propositional knowledge.
- Kant himself makes such claims. For instance, someone possessing the concept space has (according to Kant) to know that it is infinite, homogeneous and Euclidean. So, conceptual knowledge involves propositional knowledge for Kant. The propositions involved are known a priori, if at all, and are not analytic since they involve substantial knowledge of the world we experience.
- While we might dispute Kant's version of the propositional knowledge required to possess the concepts of space, etc., it's hard to resist the claim that conceptual knowledge requires some relevant propositional knowledge. So, any response to Kant must concentrate on his argument that some of our concepts are not empirical.
- If we admit the distinction between a priori and empirical knowledge, the empiricist will have a hard time maintaining that only analytic truths can be known a priori. So, a more effective empiricism – Quine's position – will deny the distinction between empirical and a priori, claiming that no knowledge is unilaterally one or the other.
- To go further, we must ask various questions, and examine various claims, which Dancy will address in turn:

1. What is the subject matter of a priori knowledge?
2. What is the nature of those truths, if any, that can be known without appeal to experience?
3. Kant held that any truth knowable a priori is both **universal** and **necessary**.

### 3.14.4 A Priori Knowledge and Universal Truth

- The reason Kant supposed that a priori knowledge must be of universal truth is because knowledge of particular objects must depend on their examination, and so be empirical. Kant saw no real distinction between necessity and universality. Granting, for the sake of argument, that a priori knowledge is of necessary truth, we can argue that it is not for this reason universal.
- Kant can accept necessary truths about particular objects, provided these truths are inferred from parent universal truths. The direction of discovery must be from universal to particular if the knowledge is to be a priori rather than empirical. If universal knowledge was obtained from particular cases, it would be empirical since that from particular cases is.
- Kant's view is weak because he insists that all knowledge of particular objects is empirical because it involves their examination. We might be able to obtain a priori knowledge of particular objects by reflecting on their nature rather than by examining them.
- There are two stages to our demonstration. We need to find two **examples** of necessary truths about particular objects that are:
  1. Not known empirically, though it might have been. Something that can be known either empirically or a priori.
  2. Is known, but cannot be known empirically. Something that can only be known a priori.
- In either case we have an example of a priori knowledge, which is something that **can** be acquired without appeal to experience, it being irrelevant whether it can be known in other ways.
- **Kripke** supplies an appropriate example. Could the table on which he was lecturing have been made of ice, given that he knew empirically that it was in fact made of wood? Our strong intuition is that any ice-table would not have been the wooden one before which Kripke was lecturing. By reflecting on the wooden table, we can see that it could not have been made of ice instead. This ($q$) isn't empirical knowledge, though knowledge ($p$) that the table is wooden is empirical. Hence:
  1. We know empirically that $p$,
  2. We know that ($p \rightarrow \Box q$),
  3. We know that $\Box q$.
- Our knowledge that $\Box q$ is empirical since derived by inference from our empirical knowledge that $p$. But, our knowledge that ($p \rightarrow \Box q$) is not empirical, because we can't conceive of any experience that would verify or falsify it. So, the conditional is a necessary truth known a priori.

- So, is $\Box (p \rightarrow \Box q)$, which is a necessary truth about a particular object, known by reflection on the nature of that particular object, or as a simple instance of a universal truth? Do we infer the universal from the particular or vice versa?
- Dancy thinks that Kripke's audience, at least, took it that the inference is from the particular to the universal. The necessary universal truth was discovered by reflection on the necessity of a particular case ($\Box (p \rightarrow \Box q)$). So, their a priori knowledge was not universal (it concerned a particular table) and need not have become so had they failed to reflect further.
- What this example suggests is that just as contingent universal truths ("all ravens are black") can be inferred from particular contingent truths ("these ravens …"), so with necessary truths ("no wooden table could have been made of ice", "this table …"). Even so, the universal knowledge is not empirical since it's inferred from particular instances known a priori. Hence, Kant was wrong to suppose that no necessary truths about empirical objects can be know a priori. Some can.
- Indeed, perhaps some necessary universal truths can only be discovered by reflecting on particular cases. Kripke's table example is one such case. Dancy supports Broad in suggesting an **ethical** case, that some universal moral truths may be necessary, but can only be known by reflection on particular cases – by what ethicists refer to as **intuitive induction**. The example is of actions being the better for being generous.

### 3.14.5 A Priori Knowledge and Necessary Truth

- Our argument that Kant was wrong to suppose that a priori knowledge can't be of **particular** truths depended on his claim that a priori knowledge must be of **necessary** truth. Contingent truths cannot be known a priori because they might have been false, so we need to investigate empirically to determine whether the proposition is false. Thus, contingent truths can only be known empirically.
- A contingent proposition is one that's true in some possible worlds, false in others. To know whether it is true in the actual world, we need to investigate whether this world is one of those in which it is true.
- To summarise: while contingent truths can only be known empirically, some necessary truths can be known a priori. The claim isn't that where *p* is necessarily true we can know empirically that it is true, but that where *p* is necessarily true we can know empirically that it is necessarily true.
- The example was of a necessary truth known empirically because it was inferred from two propositions, one of which was known empirically[25]. Can we find a necessary truth known empirically other than by inference? Can we experience necessary truths? This relates to thoughts raised earlier about the range of perceptual knowledge – can we **see** that something must be true? An example might be that we can see that one person walking behind another must walk faster to overtake.

[25] Dancy (and I) need to spell this out a bit more.

### 3.14.6 Quine and the Distinction between A Priori and Empirical

- Quine argues further that nothing can be known other than empirically. This seems to suggest that Quine *does* accept the distinction between empirical and a priori knowledge, but just assigns no role or content to the a priori side. In fact, however, Quine is taking the most promising empiricist line seen in 3.14.3; namely, that there's no dividing line at all between the empirical and the a priori. While there are differences of degree, all knowledge is more or less empirical.
- Quine reaches this conclusion by a route similar to that whereby he abandoned the analytic / synthetic distinction – see 2.6.3. Indeed, the link between this distinction and the a priori / empirical distinction is so close that accepting the former would resurrect the latter. In both cases, the argument starts from Quine's holism and the indeterminacy of sentential meaning. The result is that no sentence is immune from revision – changes at the surface of our sphere of beliefs force inner changes. Since a priori knowledge must be immune to empirical results, there can be no such thing if no statement is completely immune to revision in the light of experience.
- This lack of immunity to revision means that there are no necessary truths either.
- A **qualification**: Quine is rejecting **logical** or **conceptual** necessity. These are denounced because they would be unrevisable. However, Quine can and does admit **natural necessity**. This is what science tells us couldn't be otherwise. Examples are:
  1. Paper has to burn when lit.
  2. Water has to freeze below a certain temperature.
- **Natural possibilities** are those allowed by science. Quine allows natural possibilities and necessities because the propositions concerned are revisable, just as science is revisable. However, there's no notion of **logical** possibility, whereby we can say that some things are naturally impossible (being incompatible with the laws of science) but still logically possible.
- What makes Quine's position difficult is his ambivalent position with regard to the Law of Non-Contradiction. In his "Two Dogmas", Quine this law is subject to revision, albeit in the most extreme circumstances, but later he is more willing to allow vestiges of unrevisability. In *Word and Object*, he argues that the logical connectives do have a determinate meaning, making it possible for him to allow that logical laws are true in virtue of the **meaning** of the logical connectives. People who disagree about the laws of logic are not talking the same language. But, this is to admit that the laws of logic are unrevisable analytic truths.

### 3.14.7 A Coherentist Approach

- Dancy gives three contrasting approaches to a priori knowledge and necessary truth. The first two (Hume and Quine) we have seen before. The third, due to Blanchard, is new.

### 3.14.7.1 Hume's view

- The extreme empiricist **denies natural necessity**. There's no necessity in the world, according to Hume, but only regularities and our responses to them.
- Hume's explanation of the "necessity" we see in things falling was the suggestion that our experience of regularities creates in us the **irresistible habit of expectation**.
- Hence, natural necessity is more a fact about the observer than about the world we observe. There's no distinction between what just happens to be and what can't help being.
- However, **logical necessity** is admitted and explained by the Law of Non-Contradiction.

### 3.14.7.2 Quine's view

- Quine takes the opposite view. Logical necessity is rejected in favour of natural necessity, what is required by the laws of science.
- The distinction between necessity and contingency is **within** the natural world, rather that **between** the natural and the logical.

### 3.14.7.3 Blanchard's view

- Blanchard's view is different again. He rejects the old empiricist claim that all necessity is logical necessity, arguing as in 3.14.3 that there are many synthetic necessary truths whose necessity is a fact about the world rather than a consequence of the laws of logic.
- However, he extends Quine's natural necessity for two coherentist reasons:
  1. We seek not only to **know** the truth, but to **understand**. To understand is to see why things should be the way they are, and moves from recognising something as contingently true to being necessarily true. Dancy refers us to remarks in 3.13.5 bout the coherentist attitude to induction). So, the domain of natural necessity extends as far as understanding can reach.
  2. For coherentists, **truth** and **system** coincide, and coherence is defined in terms of mutual explanation (see 2.8.2). As our system grows in coherence, its parts become more tightly bound together until the explanatory power of the system becomes so great that we can't consider that things just happen to be true. Instead, what was originally seen as **contingent** is seen as **necessary** to the whole (see 2.8.2 about the difference between **entailment** and **mutual explanation**).
- Hence, if Blanchard is correct, ultimately contingent truth vanishes leaving only necessity. However, since this is a cummulative process, necessity, like truth, is a matter of degree. This leads us to reject the distinction between a priori and empirical knowledge.

## 3.15 Is Epistemology Possible?

### 3.15.1 Hegel

- There are two classes of sceptical argument:
  1. Most sceptical arguments claim that, though we can **start** the construction of a theory of knowledge, we can't **complete** it, at least if we mean by completion the demonstration that we have knowledge. This is the role of the argument from error, to which we have as yet found no answer. While we can construct a theory of what knowledge would be like if we had some, we can't actually claim any (including the knowledge that our theory is true).
  2. Other sceptical arguments claim that the enterprise of epistemology can't even get started. We can't even begin to construct a theory because to do so either involves unjustifiable assumptions or vicious circularity.
- **Hegel** starts *Phenomenology of Mind* by considering the charge that epistemology is impossible, since in it the task of knowledge is to examine **itself**. Knowledge isn't an **object** for us, but the **instrument** with which we approach our objects, or the **medium** through which they appear to us. We cannot examine the medium itself, because it's the means whereby we are related to our objects, and treating it as an object destroys that relation.
- While suggestive, Hegel rejects this point because he's not yet made clear what he means by "instrument" or "medium".
- His first reconstruction is to suggest that the study of knowledge can't start without the **criterion** for distinguishing real from counterfeit knowledge. But, no criterion can be justified at the **start** of enquiry, because the justification of the criterion is one of the **goals** of enquiry. So, with no criterion at the start, we can't begin.
- Knowledge is the **relation** between ourselves and the object of our knowledge. That object, when we know it, exists **for us**, but also exists independently, **in itself**. The object, as it is in itself, is **truth**.
- How can we know the truth, given that whatever we know is *for us* rather than *in itself*? Nothing we can do can ensure our criterion fits the object in itself, for:
  1. The criterion of what exists *for us* lies *in us* and comes *from us*.
  2. What we judge by the criterion exists *in itself*. It need not acknowledge our criterion as relevant or suitable, since it is our **imposition** on an independent object.
- Hence, Hegel's problem of the criterion is an aspect of the more general problem of how we can ever succeed in knowing our object **in itself**. This is effectively the old **argument from error**; that the world may still not be how it appears, no matter how firm and justified our beliefs. However, it attacks the **commencement** of the enterprise rather than its **conclusion**.
- To **resolve** the problem, Hegel starts by pointing out that, in epistemology, the **object** of our enquiry is our **awareness** or **consciousness**.
- But, consciousness is such that:

1. The distinction between what exists *for us* and what exists *in itself*, isn't …
2. The distinction between what's available to us in consciousness and what isn't.

- Both sides of the distinction fall within the grasp of consciousness. Our question is how, in consciousness, we are related to our object. When our object is our own consciousness, it's obvious that there's no danger that our consciousness should have an existence that's *in itself* – hidden from us by being separate from the consciousness that exists *for us*.
- Consequently, in epistemology we're comparing the object we're conscious of with our consciousness of that object. Epistemology isn't impossible, because these distinctions (*consciousness* and *object*; *for us* and *in itself*) are within what's available to us rather than between what's within our grasp and what lies beyond.
- Despite there being no general impossibility in comparing consciousness and object, a problem may still arise. It is possible that the object *in itself* is one thing to consciousness, while the object *for us* is another, leading to a failure of correspondence.
- One attempted **resolution** is to **fit our knowledge to the object**. This **won't work** because our knowledge is that state of consciousness that best fits the criterion, yet even so it failed to fit its object. The criterion is found by consciousness in the *nature* of the object, not arbitrarily imposed from *outside*. So, without altering the criterion, altering our knowledge is no gain; and, without altering the object, we can't alter the criterion. Altering our knowledge involves changing our object. Then knowledge and object fail to correspond, we lose both of them and also the criterion we were using to determine their correspondence.
- Hegel diagnoses the problem as the emergence of a **contradiction** at a certain level of consciousness. However, he doesn't despair but supposes that the nature of the contradiction can teach us the next step to take. When we tried to change our knowledge, we changed our object, leaving us with a new pair to compare. The negation is not the destructive **abstract negation** but **determinate negation**, which drives us from contradiction to a new level, where we have a new object and a new enquiry.
- Dancy gives an example (not one of Hegel's own). We're examining sense-perception as a form of consciousness and find that sense-perception as we conceive it fails to fit its object. The object as it exists for us doesn't correspond to the object which exists in itself. There are two responses:
  1. Scepticism about empirical knowledge.
  2. A new form of consciousness, with its own object and requiring a new examination, emerges from the failure to fit (the contradiction).
- This progression from one form of consciousness to another continues until there's no difference between the object *for us* and the object *in itself*. Then, we will have reached a consciousness whose object exists *in itself* only insofar as it exists *for us*. Consciousness then is its own object.
- This progression from one form of consciousness to another is Hegel's version of phenomenology. It differs from versions we've considered before in two ways:

1. It treats sceptical arguments as sources of discovery rather than threats, since they reveal hidden contradictions within a particular level of consciousness, driving us on until consciousness and object coincide. It is determinate negation that scepticism is concerned with, and which drives the phenomenology.
2. Epistemology is possible, but only if it takes his route. Other forms, such as Kant's, are destroyed by vicious circularity. The progression from one form of consciousness to the next is the only route Hegel could see of resolving the problem of the criterion and of overcoming the separation of *in itself* from *for us*.

### 3.15.2 Chisholm and the Problem of the Criterion

- Chisholm is one of the few writers within the analytic tradition who not only exposed the methodological problem of Hegel's criterion but faced up to it and tried to find an answer.
- In epistemology, we tend to start with certain **examples** (paradigm cases) that count for knowledge (eg. empirical or mathematical), develop a theory that justifies them, and then use the theory to adjudicate other less solid forms (eg. ethical or religious). If these fail the test of the best theory, we reject them, whereas if our paradigm cases fail the test, we reject the theory.
- This is the **common-sense approach**, which Chisholm's own theory exemplifies. Chisholm accepts the possibility of empirical knowledge, but is impressed by the regress argument, so is led to foundationalism. He writes a set of epistemic principles that have the desired effect of providing the foundationalist structure, and then uses this structure to adjudicate on doubtful cases.
- An **alternative** approach is to adopt certain epistemic principles at the outset, leaving it an open question which knowledge claims, if any, they will validate. **Example**: we take sense-experience as our criterion and are unperturbed if this means we have to reject mathematical knowledge, or knowledge of unseen objects or of the past. In this case we have more confidence in the theory than in our paradigm cases, and allow the possibility that none of them will live up to its strictures.
- Both approaches make assumptions they can't validate. The common-sense approach is plainly **philosophical prejudice**, whereas the alternative criterial approach has no way of justifying its choice of criteria at the outset. While the common-sense approach avoids scepticism, this is no advantage since the whole approach rests on prejudice.
- Chisholm claims a third approach between the horns of this dilemma, known as **critical cognitivism**. Instead of insisting on the reliability of certain examples of knowledge (eg. perceptual or memory knowledge), we take certain **sources**. (such as perception, memory, reason or self awareness). When we come to a disputed case, such as ethical knowledge, we have three choices (eg. in the case of ethical knowledge):
  1. Reject if because it doesn't come from one of our allowed sources.
  2. Add a new source (ethical intuition).
  3. Achieve a compromise. Critical cognitivism agrees that none of the original sources on its own gives ethical knowledge, but tries to show that together they

allow for knowledge of ethical facts. Our sources give us knowledge that serves as a **sign** for ethical truth, which **expresses** ethical truth and through which we can **know** it. **Examples**: our detestation of an action makes evil known to us; a person's behaviour expresses their pain to us, and we can know their pain through their behaviour.

- While this theory has some merit, in enabling us to grapple with ethical knowledge without introducing new sources of knowledge, it is little more than a promissory note. To get further we need to know what it is for something to express another, and whether there are different sorts of expression in different areas.
- The problem is, however, why Chisholm thinks critical cognitivism is a third theory which escapes his original dilemma. It's mainly concerned with our approach to disputed cases, but the problem of the criterion didn't concern disputed cases but **undisputed** ones. Nothing in critical cognitivism answers the complaint that our original choice of four sources of knowledge was pure philosophical prejudice.
- Hegel would reject Chisholm's approach as uncritical cognitivism, having no foundation for its sources, and collapsing in contradictions:
  1. None of the sources individually can provide knowledge.
  2. Consciousness in each case fails to correspond to its object.
  3. Each level of consciousness creates its own criteria, but cannot satisfy it.
- Hence, if Hegel has identified a real problem, Chisholm hasn't solved it.

### 3.15.3 Quine and the Non-Existence of First Philosophy

- Quine also confronts the dilemma posed by Hegel and Chisholm: that epistemology must either assume unjustified criteria or take as paradigms examples chosen merely on prejudice.
- As we saw in 2.6.3, Quine's adoption of Duhem's thesis results in his abandonment of the analytic/synthetic distinction. Also, there are no completely unrevisable sentences, though there are differences on degree – all sentences are effectively synthetic, though some are more synthetic than others.
- This brand of holism forces us to abandon **first philosophy**, a philosophical system that adjudicates the claims of the special sciences and sense perception. There is thus no divide between philosophy and natural science. Philosophy doesn't on this account investigate concepts or enquire into the meaning of crucial words such as "know" or "justify". Instead, philosophy is only distinguished by its generality, tacking broader questions than those addressed by physics or psychology.
- This makes philosophy the study of science within science. This appears to be circular, since in studying science from within science, the philosopher cannot question the whole of science at once. He must assume the **general** validity of scientific procedures and results in order to question **particular** aspects from within.
- Hence, Quine's fondness for Neurath's parable of the mariner rebuilding his boat while staying afloat in it. We can't take it into dry dock and get off, nor can any discovery of contradictions within science allow us to rise above it in a Hegelian helicopter.

- It looks as though, with the abandonment of first philosophy, that Hegel's charge of circularity recurs in a more vicious form. Quine's suggestion is that the problem of circularity only arises within the philosophical tradition of the search for certainty and the attempt to deduce science from sense data. However, this isn't good enough. Though we would be involved in vicious circularity if we assumed science in order to deduce science from sense data, we're not in the clear simply by dropping the hope of deduction.
- Quine's suggestion only makes sense within his wider scheme. Once we've abandoned first philosophy, we must examine science from the inside, so won't impose a criterion from the outside. We use the criteria of science. This involves no circularity or prejudice, but simply recognises what epistemology is. Additionally, the only sceptical doubts that arise are those deriving from science itself rather than imposed in criticism of science from some arbitrary external "rational" perspective.
- We shouldn't ask what enables our scientific beliefs to count as knowledge, because this makes us suppose that we can't without circularity appeal to any scientific results. What we should do is ask "if science were true, how could we know it?". The epistemological question is posed within the hypothetical. Since the question assumes the truth of current science, the answer can as well. Epistemology is here taking place within science. For Quine, the dangers Hegel points to only arise when philosophy is separated from science. When we abandon the separation, there can be no methodological objection to epistemology.

### 3.15.4 Epistemology Naturalised

- Can we still ask and answer the same questions once philosophy is absorbed into science? What's the role of the sceptic?
- Traditional epistemology studied the relation between evidence and theory. It tried to show how our beliefs are justified by supporting data, and how scientific theories are justified by evidence. Can this study be continued within the new perspective?
- Dancy accuses Quine of vacillation. Sometimes he accuses the old questions of being tainted with first philosophy, or at least of having been proved unable to supply answers.
- Instead, Quine proposes that we pursue a factual study from within psychology, asking how we in fact go about forming our beliefs from the data. This is **naturalised epistemology**. It ignores questions of justification and instead considers genetic, causal questions. Instead of worrying about the gap between evidence and theory, we study the causal relation between the two.
- For Quine, there's a parallel between language-learning and theory-building that suggests a way forward. Observation sentences are the basic information for each. As we saw in 2.7.2, they are evidence theories are built on and the point at which language confronts reality sufficiently closely for individual sentences to be learnable. Hence, an empirical substitute for studying the relation between evidence and theory is the study of how language learners move from observation sentences to the complex sentences in which theories are expressed.

- Naturalised epistemology doesn't involve a change of subject, but a new way of studying the old. The old problem was the gap between "meagre input" and "torrential output". We can study this gap in two ways:
  1. The relation between observation sentences and theoretical sentences.
  2. The relation between the physical input received by the human subject and the beliefs he is thereby caused to form. The beliefs are studied via the neurophysiology of the brain activity that constitutes them. This latter approach is the most characteristic of naturalised epistemology.
- Quine is willing to accept the general epistemological question "if our science were true, how could we know it?". The sceptic can ask questions from within science whether scientific truth can be known. While it's not impossible that science could show itself to be unknowable, Quine thinks this very unlikely, since two of the standard sceptical moves are ruled out:
  1. Any version of the **argument from error** starting from the premise that it is logically possible that at <u>any</u> time or place, one's beliefs could be false. Quine won't allow the very notion of logical possibility on which the argument rests. The only possibility is physical possibility, which is what science allows. Anything else would recreate the analytic/synthetic distinction. It's <u>not</u> physically possible that at <u>any</u> place/time/circumstance one's beliefs should be false. So, this argument can't get going if the only room for falsehood is logical room.
  2. The sceptic might argue that, for all we know, reality might be completely different to how we take it to be. Our object as it exists *for us* may not be as it is *in itself*. Quine thinks this supposes that there is an object, the world, separate from our theory and providing a criterion whereby our theory may be shown to be false by some fact. But, this makes no sense on Quine's account of the relation between epistemology and science. The only criterion of reality is provided by science itself, so there's no danger our criterion should fail to fit our subject. Science provides both criterion and object.
- While these two sceptical arguments are ruled out, others that use science to confute science would be methodologically acceptable. Quine provides one. The meagre input → torrential output contrast is a result of science, and is all the sceptic needs to mount an argument from within science against the possibility of theoretical knowledge. If there's such a gap, how can there be sufficient in the input to justify the output in response?
- Quine would claim that the sceptic is overreacting. Instead of leaping to sceptical conclusions, we should wait to see what's turned up by the naturalistic study of the relation between input and output. Empirical psychology may yet show that there's more of a balance between input and output. The disparity between input and output is not yet one of the deliverances of science.
- Dancy thinks we have a misconception. Quine supposes that the question of the gap is empirical, to be resolved by the naturalistic study of the causal relations between input and output (sensory stimuli → neurophysical brain-states, the physical correlates of belief). But, in these terms there is no gap. The input is causally sufficient for the brain states which are its effects. Following this causal story we're not studying a gap

analogous to the gap between evidence and theory, because this is not a **causal** but an **inferential** matter. We don't conceive of the evidence as **causally insufficient** to ground the theory. We think of it as not providing a **sufficient reason** for the theory.

- Hence, Quine faces a dilemma:
  1. Either, he's ruling out this inferential question as not amenable to naturalistic epistemology.
  2. Or, he accepts it but fails to provide any method to answer it.
- We assume that he rejects (2), but what allows him to accept (1)? He might claim (or admit) that, viewed naturalistically, the crucial gap between input and output has ceased to exist. We've abandoned the traditional epistemic interest in evidential questions by studying the causal relation. But, what justifies this renunciation? We can't rule out questions of justification simply because epistemology has become naturalised and is a part of science rather than a superior court of reason. Science itself isn't wholly naturalistic, but contains its own evaluative criteria that can be used within science on questions such as justification. Hence, naturalised epistemology doesn't even contain a **method** for answering the sceptic.
- But why shouldn't causal enquiries themselves be enquiries into justification? We considered the causal theory of justification earlier on, whereby beliefs are justified iff they are caused in a certain way. However, attempts to avail oneself of this approach would be another form of externalism, when we've seen no reason to accept externalist answers and have given internalism the backing of intuition in 2.9.2-3. Whatever is the case, such a Quinean externalism would adopt neither of the key theses relevant here, since neither the abandonment of first philosophy nor the naturalisation of epistemology argue for externalism. So, if we want an internalist answer to epistemological questions, Quine provides neither answer nor substitute.

### 3.15.5 Conclusion

- This chapter commenced by distinguishing two arguments against epistemology: that it can't start and that it can't complete the job. Hegel defuses this argument by his conception of progression through higher levels of consciousness. Chisholm's critical cognitivism was a dud, but Quine's rejection of first philosophy provided a non-circular and non-Hegelian perspective.
- Hegel at least promises to defeat the sceptic who argues that epistemology can't be completed. Quine, however, seems to have no answer to the sceptic who raises questions from within science. Hence, we have so far no recourse but Hegel to escape the sceptic.
- Dancy comes to the rescue with his own idea (though gleaned from Stroud). This is, that we must prevent the sceptic from **generalising** from his examples. While we don't know we're not BIVs, this doesn't mean we don't know anything else either. Nozick's response in 1.3 was rejected because it leaves us asserting counter-intuitively that we can know what we will do tomorrow, without knowing whether there will be a tomorrow! However, we can focus on another sense in which the sceptic generalises

from admitted instances – as seen in the argument from illusion and as the central move in the argument from error.

- The argument from error charges that if your current cognitive state is relevantly indistinguishable from another that wasn't a state of knowledge, then you can't claim to know. Indeed, you don't know because your present state is indistinguishable from one in which you didn't know.
- Dancy's response to this argument is to make a parallel with ethical theory, of the principle of universalisability (see 1.1.2). This principle is mistaken in ethics. The argument Dancy gives is as follows:
  1. The principle of universalisability in ethics ignores the possibility that further properties in a new case may defeat what were sufficient reasons for a moral judgement in a previous case without causing us to revise our judgement in that former case.
  2. Consequent on this possibility, we're never driven to the same judgement in two cases.
  3. The fact that both cases are apparently similar in all morally relevant characteristics doesn't ensure that there are no differences.
  4. Hence, no choice in the second case can force us to revise our opinion of the first, unless we decide the two cases are similar in all respects relevant to either.
  5. But, no one who thinks the cases are morally distinct will make the above decision, so he cannot be caught by universalisability. He's consistent provided he maintains there is a difference, even if he can't point to one.
- The analogy with epistemology is as follows:
  1. It's not possible to show that we don't know now, merely on the basis that we can't point to any difference between this case and one in which we didn't know.
  2. While we assert that there is a relevant difference, our inability to point to it is no proof that we don't know.
  3. Nor does it show that we are inconsistent to claim to know.
- This conclusion isn't a form of externalism. Someone who knows now may still be in possession of factors in virtue of which his cognitive state counts as one of knowledge, despite not being able to point to a relevant difference between his situation and one in which he didn't know.
- The reason for this is:
  1. The fact that there is this particular relevant difference isn't one of the features in virtue of which he knows now.
  2. While it allows him to know now, though he didn't then, this allower isn't one of the properties that enables him to know now.
  3. Admittedly, if there were no allower, he wouldn't know now, but this doesn't show that the facts in virtue of which he knows now include the allower.
  4. The facts in virtue of which he knows now are ordinary properties he can probably point to, not arcane relations between this case and others.
- Dancy gives an **example**. I know that today is Wednesday, even though I can't say I might not make a mistake in similar circumstances. The fact that I can say how I know today is Wednesday is all that internalism (in the philosophy of justification) requires.

- This argument is similar to the externalist response (in the "philosophy of mind" sense) to the argument from illusion (see 3.11.4), which also relies on a principle of universalisability.
- Dancy admits that he can't claim his argument is wholly secure. Coherentism claims we can have empirical knowledge without a solid base to stand on, without foundations. But, scepticism may remain more durable, seductive and secure than any reply so far discovered.