

Pažinimo ir mokslo filosofija

WARRANT, CONCLUSIVE REASON, AND FAILURE-OF-TRANSFER-OF-WARRANT

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Abstract. *Fred Dretske motivates his denial of epistemic closure by way of the thought that the warrant for the premises of a valid argument need not transfer (or 'transmit') to the argument's conclusion. The failure-of-transfer-of-warrant (FTW) strategy has also been used by advocates of epistemic closure as a foil to Michael McKinsey's argument against the compatibility of first person authority and semantic externalism, and also to illuminate, more generally, why certain valid arguments appear ill-suited for the purpose of establishing their conclusions. This paper takes re-examines some of the central attempts to explain transmission-failure, and a central line of objection to the strategy from Begging-the-Question theorists. The ultimate goal of this paper is to promote a decidedly Dretskean explanation of the unpersuasiveness of the said arguments.*

Keywords: *Failure of transfer of warrant, Conclusive reasons, Epistemic closure, Question begging*

Background and Aims

The *failure-of-transfer-of-warrant (FTW)* thesis is the thesis that the warrant for the premises of a deductively valid argument may in certain cases fail to “transfer” to, and hence fail to warrant, its conclusion. The idea can be found in Dretske (1970, 1971), where he defends the rejection of *epistemic closure*, i.e., the thesis that if one knows p , and knows that q follows (from p), then one knows, or is at least in position to know, q . Consider, e.g.:

ZEBRA

- Z1 The animal in the pen is a zebra.
- Z2 If the animal in the pen is a zebra, it is not a cleverly painted mule.
- Z3 The animal in the pen is not a cleverly painted mule (disguised as a zebra).

One may be able to tell just by looking at an animal in a cage in a zoo that it is a zebra, but not be able to tell just by looking (from that same position) that it is not a cleverly painted mule disguised to look like a zebra. Thus, the (perceptual) warrant for the main

premise of ZEBRA, Z1, in this case does not transfer to, and apparently does not give one adequate warrant to accept, the conclusion, Z3. This is an instance of the FTW thesis.

One might think this failure of transfer of warrant gives succour to the view that one may know Z1 and Z2 without being in a position to know Z3 – and, thus, the denial of closure. But, it is in fact the failure of transfer of a special kind of warrant, a *conclusive reason*, that Dretske takes to establish the invalidity of epistemic closure. Very briefly: *R* is a *conclusive reason* for (believing) a proposition *P*, if *were P* not to obtain, *R would* not obtain. And an individual *S* *knows* that *P* if, and only if, *S* has a conclusive reason for believing it. One's perceptual experience *E* at the zoo may be a conclusive reason for Z1 – if the animal in the pen had not been a zebra, one would not have had that experience – but *E* would not be a conclusive reason for Z3, since if Z3 had been false, i.e., if the animal in the pen had been a cleverly painted mule, one might still have had that same experience. Thus, on Dretske's theory, closure is violated.

My concern in this paper is with the two kinds of warrant-transmission failure in play: the general FTW thesis and the more specific FPCR thesis, as I shall dub it.

The FTW thesis has been more prominent in recent epistemology. It re-emerged in the wake of McKinsey's (1991) attack on the compatibility of *content externalism* and *first person authority*, which does not deny epistemic closure. Here is a brief sketch of McKinsey's attack, beginning with rough characterizations of content externalism and first person authority:

(CEX) *Content externalism* holds that the content of one's thoughts are in part determined by one's interaction with

the environment and community. E.g., that one is thinking about *water* and not some other possible transparent thirst-quenching liquid that falls from the sky and fills our oceans, etc., is determined in part by the fact that members of our community have interacted with water. If we lived in a waterless world, we could not have thoughts about *water*.

(FPA) We have *first person authority* if, e.g., we have *privileged access* to what we are thinking, if we know what we are thinking in a way that is fundamentally distinct from the way we know what is happening in the external world. (Rather than saying that such propositions are knowable *a priori*, let us say, *pace* Davies (2000), that they are knowable “*from the armchair*” (or *A-knowable*, for short).

Now, consider the following valid argument:

WATER

W1 I am thinking (entertaining the proposition) that water is thirst-quenching.

W2 If I am thinking that water is thirst-quenching, I must be in a water-containing world.¹

W3 Hence, I am in a water-containing world.

That the argument is valid is clearly something we can know from the armchair. According to FPA, W1 is A-knowable too. That *water*-thoughts demand acquaintance (albeit indirect acquaintance) with *water* follows from the fact that “*water*” is a natural-kind term, which is presumably a conceptual truth; in that case, W2 is A-knowable as well. But, the conclusion, W3, clearly is *not*

¹ Read this premise as affirming: *to have* the thought that *water is thirst-quenching* I must be in a water-containing world.

knowable from the armchair. This presents us with a dilemma: *if we can A-know that WATER is valid, and that the premises are true, why can't we use that A-knowledge to attain A-knowledge of the conclusion too?*

McKinsey takes the dilemma to show that CEX and FPA are incompatible. Crispin Wright (2000) and Martin Davies (2000) defend CEX and FPA by appeal to failure of transfer of warrant. While one may have “armchair-warrant” (*A-warrant*) for the premises, they argue, this warrant does not transfer to the conclusion, so the conclusion need not be A-knowable. But, even if A-knowledge is not closed under A-known entailment, standard epistemic closure still holds. The Wright-Davies view is that in McKinsey type cases one does indeed know the conclusion, but one knows it in virtue of *other* facts – *not* in virtue of (or by way of) *knowing the premises*.

Moreover – and this is the central concern of this paper – the FTW thesis is put to wider use by Wright and Davies to explain the unpersuasive nature of other arguments involving deductively valid lines of reasoning. ZEBRA is one such argument; Moore’s “proof” of the external world is another:

MOORE

M1 I have a hand (– here!)

M2 If I have a hand, there is an external world (of mind-independent objects).

M3 There is an external world (of mind-independent objects).

Prima facie, this FTW strategy seems apt: intuitively, in these arguments the warrant for the premises indeed does not appear to warrant the conclusion. As before, what is denied here is merely that knowledge of the conclusion *stems from* knowledge of the premises – the reason being that *the*

warrant for the premises does not transmit to the conclusion. However, that one knows the conclusion is not denied.

The strategy certainly has some intuitive appeal, but matters are far from straightforward. To begin with, it is evident that there are different transmission principles in the offing: for example, we have already distinguished between transmission of knowledge, transmission of armchair-warrant, transmission of warrant more generally, and transmission of a conclusive reason; and, as our discussion progresses we will consider other varieties of transmission failure.

I have two main goals in this paper. My primary goal is to identify what I take to be the most fundamental variety of transmission failure, the one which provides the deepest and most satisfying explanation of what is wrong with the likes of ZEBRA and MOORE. As you might have guessed, I’ll be arguing in favour of FTWR. The second main goal is this. While I agree with FTWR theorists that we should look to failure of warrant transfer for a satisfactory explanation of the oddity of the sorts of arguments we have considered, I do not endorse their accompanying denial of knowledge transmission in all such cases. Contra Wright and Davies, I will argue that in many of the cases under consideration knowledge of the conclusion does flow from knowledge of the premises despite the failure of warrant transmission. I will also mention some other misgivings about their approaches along the way.

Aside from these main aims, I shall also address a couple of issues arising from “begging-the-question” (*BTQ*) theorists. Some BTQ theorists (e.g., Beebe 2001; Brown 2004) argue that the FTW strategy cannot get off the ground because the cir-

cumstances in which warrant *supposedly* fails to transfer are in fact circumstances in which the premises are not warranted in the first place – so there is simply no warrant to transmit! By contrast, another BTQ theorist, Pryor (2000; 2004; 2012) agrees with the FTW theorist in the case of ZEBRA but denies that there is transmission failure in the case of MOORE! I will make some brief remarks about these diverging BTQ concerns, indicating why I think the FTW project is still worth pursuing; but my primary goal here is not to decisively refute rivals so much as to explicate and promote the FTWR strategy I favour.

Let's begin with the issue of epistemic closure.

Conclusive Reasons, Knowledge, and Closure

Should FTW theorists deny epistemic closure, as, e.g., Dretske argues? Dretske observes that one can know *that there is red wine in the bottle (R)* by way of perception without being able to know by way of the same perceptual evidence *that the liquid in the bottle is not (merely) coloured water (¬C)*, even though *R* manifestly entails *¬C*. Such observations motivate his rejection of epistemic closure. Defenders of closure, however, will emphasise the distinction between closure pertaining specifically to perceptual knowledge – that is, the view that if one perceptually knows *P*, and knows *Q* to follow, then one perceptually knows *Q* – and closure pertaining to knowledge *per se*, or knowledge “in general”, or knowledge *however acquired*, as it were. Dretske is surely right that one may perceptually know *R* without *¬C* being perceptually known;

but this does not force us to deny that one knows *¬C*. For example, as we have noted, some FTW theorists will maintain that *¬C* is known (or knowable) *on other grounds*. Indeed, they may go further and maintain that (perceptual) knowledge of *R* is in fact *grounded* on this non-perceptual knowledge of *¬C*! The main point is that closure can be preserved.

Even so, this does not yet answer the question we began with: while we are not *obliged* to deny closure – one may still wonder whether we *should*. Why hang onto closure? After all, it is closure which underwrites many of the familiar arguments for scepticism: for example, sceptics argue that we do not have everyday knowledge of the external world precisely because we cannot know that we are not BIVs or being systematically deceived by demons, etc. There would appear to be benefits of denying closure.

One reason for not taking this line may be that familiar ways of accommodating knowledge without closure, e.g., by imposing a Dretske (1971) or Nozick (1981) style *tracking* requirement, have highly counterintuitive consequences – see, e.g., Kripke (2011) and Hawthorne (2005). For example, according to Hawthorne, in the ZEBRA example, such tracking conditions allow that one knows the conjunction *Z1 & Z3 – that is a zebra and it is not a cleverly disguised mule*, even though one does not know *Z3*! But maybe there are other ways of denying closure which do not have such horrid results. Is there a more general reason for retaining closure? I think so. To my mind, the reason why Kripke's and Hawthorne's examples are so persuasive is

that it just goes too far against the ordinary conception of knowledge to allow that some belief is “sufficiently *kosher*” to count as knowledge, while attendant beliefs *dictated by rationality* are deemed insufficiently *kosher*.

So, as far as the dispute between FTW theorists who deny closure and those who endorse it is concerned, I am persuaded by the endorsers. However, as mentioned earlier, I do dispute the Wright-Davies take on *knowledge-transmission*. Before elaborating on this, I should like to consider two objections to the FTW strategy arising from a rival strategy.

BTQ versus FTW: The No-Warrant-to-Transfer Objection

Certain *begging-the-question* (BTQ) theorists (e.g., Beebe 2001; Brown 2004) claim that the unpersuasive nature of the arguments under consideration is adequately explained by the fact that doubters of the conclusion would deny that the premises are warranted in the first place. The point certainly seems apt in the case of radical sceptical hypotheses such as the Cartesian argument below:

RASH

R1 I am sitting down writing down these ideas.

R2 If I am sitting down writing down these ideas, I am not a brain in a vat on a remote planet having such experiences fed into me artificially (a BIV).

R3 Hence, I am not a BIV.

A doubter of the conclusion will be someone who takes BIV to be a live, an at-least-for-the-sake-of-argument, possibility;

they will therefore take the *provenance* of one’s evidence to be in question. One is not entitled, in their eyes, to assume that one’s evidence is *bona fide*.

Likewise, a doubter of MOORE’s conclusion, someone who questioned the existence of an external mind-independent world, might well question the supposed veracity (or “factivity”) of the perceptual evidence which supposedly supports the premise that one has (material) hands; they will therefore treat that premise as unwarranted.

The central objection to the FTW strategy follows naturally from the foregoing observations: anyone who doubts the conclusion of one of the arguments in question will not accept that the premises are warranted in the first place; the unpersuasive nature of the arguments cannot then be put down to failure of transfer of warrant, for there is simply no warrant to transfer!

But, I do not think the FTW strategy is rendered irrelevant here. To begin with, to hold that one’s warrant for a belief may not be *bona fide*, that it may be “tainted” or illusory, still falls short of the claim that one has *no* warrant for that belief – for, on the face of it, it is merely the *authenticity* of one’s warrant that is called into question. Secondly, not all the candidates for the FTW diagnosis are cases where authenticity is an issue. Consider ZEBRA again. Someone who doubts the conclusion, i.e., who allows that the animal in the pen might be a cleverly disguised mule, need not deny the authenticity of the evidence for the main premise (that the animal is a zebra); after all, there is no suggestion here that one’s perceptual faculty is defective or that one’s evidence is tainted because

of deviant causal interactions. What the doubter perhaps will deny is that one's perceptual evidence constitutes *adequate* warrant for accepting the premise, because the evidence would (could) be the same, or at least appear the same, whether the animal in the cage was a zebra or a cleverly painted mule instead. So, returning to the BTQ objection against the FTW strategy, such a doubter may well deny that the main premise is warranted, but, importantly, this is not to deny that there *is* warrant, only that it is adequate.

The same point applies in the following sort of case, though, as it transpires, there are interesting differences:

LAPTOP

L1 My laptop is at home.

L2 If my laptop is at home, it has not been stolen in the last 5 minutes.

L3 My laptop has not been stolen in the last 5 minutes.

Suppose my evidence for L1 is that I remember leaving my laptop at home a few hours ago. Doubters of L3 will understandably be unimpressed by this as a case for accepting the conclusion; it seems that I could have had exactly the same evidence whether L1 (and L3) were true or whether L3 (and L1) were false. This observation does not commit L3 doubters to denying that I have *bona fide* evidence, only that this evidence constitutes *sufficient reason* for accepting that premise.

The foregoing remarks are not intended to discredit the BTQ theorists' view that all these arguments beg the question against doubters of the conclusion. The target, rather, is their objection that the FTW strategy cannot get off the ground because,

as far as doubters of the conclusion are concerned, there is *no* warrant to be transferred in the first place. As we have seen, in the case of ZEBRA and LAPTOP at least, these doubters are entitled to hold merely that the evidence does not constitute sufficient warrant. One may then ask whether this "insufficient" warrant for the premises transfers to the conclusion, thereby giving *some*, albeit insufficient, warrant for *that*. The FTW strategy is therefore not otiose in such cases, contra the BTQ objection.

However, this line of response gives FTW theorists only partial victory. The BTQ camp may concede the point for the likes of ZEBRA and LAPTOP but insist that their original objection still holds good for the likes of MOORE and RASH. They may then argue that since their strategy applies across the board, it is to be preferred: it alone offers a unitary, general explanation. But they would be wrong. I will be arguing that failure of transfer of conclusive reasons also offers a unitary, general explanation; and a better one at that.

Let us turn to the concerns of another BTQ-theorist.

BTQ versus FTW: A Distinction between MOORE and ZEBRA?

Pryor (2000; 2004a; 2004b; 2007) has a different bone to pick with FTW theorists. He grants their take on ZEBRA – so far as I can see, he does not push the no-warrant-to-transfer objection we have just considered – but he does not endorse their take on MOORE: there is, according to him, no failure of warrant transfer in the latter case. Here are the two arguments again:

ZEBRA

- Z1 The animal in the pen is a zebra.
- Z2 If the animal in the pen is a zebra, it is not a cleverly painted mule.
- Z3 The animal in the pen is not a cleverly painted mule.

MOORE

- M1 I have a hand.
- M2 If I have a hand, there is an external world (of mind-independent objects).
- M3 There is such an external world.

Pryor’s reasoning is that, so long as one does not have reason to doubt M3, the visual experience which warrants the premise M1 warrants it *directly* (or *immediately*), no inference is involved; but the visual experience which warrants Z1, on the other hand, warrants it *indirectly*, presumably by way of directly warranting some other, more general, proposition of the form *there is such-and-such shaped thing with stripes in that area*; the move to Z1 involves an inference from this more general proposition, but an inference which requires one to already hold or assume, or have warrant for, Z3. Thus, there is a kind of circularity in the case of ZEBRA,

ZEBRA*

- Z1 The animal in the pen is a zebra.
- Z2* If the animal in the pen is a zebra, I am not a BIV.
- Z3* I am not a BIV.

which is absent in the case of MOORE. So, Pryor thinks there is transfer failure – because of the circularity – in the case of ZEBRA but not in the case of MOORE. And, consequently, following Davies’s and Wright’s view that knowledge-transmission tracks warrant-transmission, he holds that one can attain knowledge of M3 by virtue of knowing M1 and M2, but cannot attain knowledge of Z3 by way of knowing Z1 and Z2 – the key word is *attain*.

For now, I wish to express a couple of misgivings I have with Pryor’s stance. Consider the following variations on ZEBRA and MOORE:

MOORE*

- M1 I have a hand.
- M2* If I have a hand, I am not a BIV.
- M3* I am not a BIV.

As regards *persuasiveness*, ZEBRA* and MOORE* are surely in the same boat: anyone taking the premises of one to support its conclusion will surely take the premises of the other to support *its* conclusion; and, more relevant to our purposes, anyone who finds the one fishy, unpersuasive or circular will take the same line with the other. But, Pryor’s reasons for distinguishing ZEBRA and MOORE should apply here too, for the leading premises (Z1 and M1) are the same. That is, if Pryor is

right, one’s visual experience as of a hand immediately warrants M1, whereas one’s visual experience as of a zebra in the pen only warrants Z1 indirectly, by way of inference from a more general proposition. Pryor’s reasoning therefore fails to account for the seeming unpersuasiveness of *both* ZEBRA* and MOORE*. It is tempting to conclude, along with Davies (2009), that Pryor and FTW theorists are engaged in two different epistemic projects.

My second misgiving is that I simply do

not share Pryor's view that M1 is immediately warranted by the visual experience in question. The proposition that *I have a hand-shaped thing in front of me* strikes me as a better candidate, in which case M1 would be *inferentially* warranted from that more general proposition. Of course, more needs to be said, but there is some cause to question Pryor's view. And if one does go my way – in taking M1 to be warranted by perceptual experience only inferentially – then the FTW theorists' take on the arguments they discuss is untouched.

Transmission of Knowledge

Let us turn to something I take issue with in the FTW strategy. As we have noted Wright and Davies take failure of transfer of warrant to go hand-in-hand with failure of transfer of knowledge: where warrant fails to transfer, one does not, and cannot come to, know the conclusion *by virtue of* knowing (or inferring it from) the premises – one knows the conclusion by other means. But, in some pertinent cases, I do not think FTW theorists are entitled to assume that there are such other means. Consider, e.g., LAPTOP again:

LAPTOP

- L1 My laptop is at home.
- L2 If my laptop is at home, it has not been stolen in the last 5 minutes.
- L3 My laptop has not been stolen in the last 5 minutes.

Suppose I know L1 by virtue of recollecting my leaving it on the dining table before I left home. My warrant does not transmit to the conclusion. According to FTW theorists I must know L3 on other grounds. But *what* other grounds? Maybe I know that my neighbourhood has had very

few burglaries in the past. The pertinent question is whether I can know L3 by way of this following argument:

LAPTOP*

- L1* My neighbourhood has had very few burglaries in the past.
- L2 If L1*, my laptop has not been stolen in the last 5 minutes.
- L3 My laptop has not been stolen in the last 5 minutes.

Intuitions may be divided here; but mine is that we are in the same predicament here as with LAPTOP. My evidence for L1* just does not speak to someone who questions L3.²

One might resort to a leading premise that *entails* L3, such as:

L1** My neighbourhood is 100% safe.

Then, I grant, I can know L3 by way of knowing that premise. But now the pivotal question is how come I know L1**? My *grounds* for endorsing L1** will surely fall short of entailing it; and so long as the warrant for the propositions affirming those grounds does not transfer to L1**, we are effectively left with the initial question: on what grounds do I know L3? The FTW theorist simply assumes that there will be such grounds, but the foregoing considerations surely cast some doubt on that.

So, if we are to hang onto epistemic closure, I think we must allow that I *do* know L3 by virtue of knowing L1. I favour the view that when we come to know a proposition on the basis of evidence, we at the same time come know, or come to be in a position to know, attendant propositions we have to

² The point is perhaps much clearer in the case of RASH: *any* premise I might have evidence for is going to fall far short of persuading someone who doubts its conclusion, that I am not a BIV.

believe by the dictate of rationality. So, in the case of MOORE, ZEBRA, RASH and LAPTOP, the idea is that we do come to (be in a position to) know their conclusions, if we did not know them before, when (or as) we come to know the corresponding premises.³ This is not to say that those conclusions are *unwarranted*: they are warranted by the premises themselves and logic and rationality, but not by the evidence which warranted those premises. (As it will emerge, I have a different view on WATER.)

The source of the intuition that we *don't* know the conclusions by virtue of knowing the premises stems, I conjecture, from the mistaken conviction that we must have evidence for all the things we know. I take the arguments under consideration to reveal that this is not so: the premises may indeed be warranted by evidence or seeming-evidence, but the conclusions are not; this is what is behind the arguments' seeming-impotency. But we should not confuse this with failure of epistemic closure or knowledge-transmission.

As far as I can see, one could take the line I am proposing on knowledge but retain the FTW explanation of why our arguments are unpersuasive. So, let me briefly rehearse a few other misgivings I have about Davies' approach—misgivings about Wright's will emerge in the course of elaborating the FTWR strategy I wish to promote.

³ This holds only for conclusions which are manifest consequences of the premises: in such cases, we cannot believe the premises without believing the consequences. Some consequences may be unobvious – e.g., mathematical theorems. Here, knowledge of the conclusions is not acquired at the time one acquires knowledge of the premises. However, I still maintain that one can attain knowledge of them *by virtue of knowing the premises themselves*.

Davies' Epistemic Limitation Principles

Over a series of papers, Davies (1998; 2000; 2003; 2009) has developed what he calls “epistemic limitation” principles, which he takes to *explain* failure of transfer of warrant, not just *demarcate* FTW cases from cases where warrant does transfer. He proposes one principle to explain transmission failure in the case of WATER and its ilk, and another to explain transmission failure in MOORE and ZEBRA. Here are later versions of his two principles (taken from Davies 2003):

First Limitation Principle (revised version)

Epistemic warrant cannot be transmitted from the premises of a valid argument to its conclusion if, for one of the premises, the warrant for that premise counts as a warrant only against the background of certain assumptions and acceptance of those assumptions cannot be rationally combined with doubt about the truth of the conclusion. [This is meant to apply to MOORE and ZEBRA]

Second Limitation Principle (revised version)

Epistemic warrant cannot be transmitted from the premises of a valid argument to its conclusion if, for one of the premises, acceptance of the assumption that there is such a proposition for the knower to think as that premise cannot be rationally combined with doubt about the truth of the conclusion. [This is meant to apply to WATER]

I have doubts about both principles.

The second limitation principle is intended to explain why A-knowledge (arm-chair-knowledge) of the premises of WATER does not yield A-knowledge of its conclusion:

WATER

- W1 I am thinking (entertaining the proposition) that water is thirst-quenching.
W2 If I am thinking that water is thirst-quenching, I must be in a water-containing world.
W3 Hence, I am in a water-containing world.

The idea is that because of content externalism, if I were not in a water-containing world, I *couldn't* have thoughts about *water* in the first place; not only would W1 not be true, it would not be available for me to think or entertain.

It is not clear, however, that this explanation generalizes to other failures of A-knowability transmission, as we might call it. Consider the following valid argument:

RECALL

- R1 I recall Manchester United losing last night.
R2 If I recall Manchester United losing last night, they did lose last night.
R3 Hence, Manchester United lost last night.

Arguably, I can know the premises from the armchair, but it seems wrong to conclude that I know from the armchair that Manchester United lost last night. Yet, the falsity of the conclusion here does not render R1 unthinkable. Davies can respond that his first limitation principle serves for this example – one's warrant for R1 certainly cannot be "rationally combined" with the denial of R3. But it is at least odd that failures of transfer of armchair-knowability should have differing explanations.

Moreover, RECALL suggests an alternative response to McKinsey's dilemma. One might plausibly maintain that A-knowability of R1 piggybacks on R3's being known a posteriori. It is not a far

step to the thought that W1 being known a priori or from the armchair piggybacks on W3's being known a posteriori. This tack preserves epistemic closure; but in this case knowledge of the leading premise WATER flows from knowledge of its conclusion, not vice versa – precisely the line Wright (1985; 2000; 2003) generally takes.⁴ This line of response to McKinsey clearly has no need to resort to Davies' second principle.

Here is another kind of problem. Suppose my friend tells me of recently discovered cat-like creatures, *schats* let us call them, which can whistle Broadway melodies. I am sceptical. Then one day I come across a cat-like creature whistling the tune of *I Could Have Danced all Night*. It seems I could argue as follows:

SCHAT

- S1 That is a schcat.
S2 If that is a schcat, schcats are real creatures.
S3 Schcats are real creatures!

Surely one's warrant for, and knowledge of, S1 *does* transfer to S3? Yet, if S3 were not true, one couldn't even have the thought expressed by S1. So we appear to have a direct violation of Davies' second limitation principle here.⁵

⁴ Wright (2007; 2011; 2012) has since shifted tack, to focus instead on failures of transmission of *claims to warrant*. It would take us too far afield to explore the ramifications here. See Alspector-Kelly (2014, section V) for a critique.

⁵ McLaughlin (2003, p. 85 ff.) offers the following objection to Davies' second principle. Consider the following argument: [*John is in pain and in the building; if John is in pain and in the building, then someone in the building is in pain; hence, someone in the building is in pain*]. McLaughlin's view is that doubt about the conclusion cannot rationally be combined with the assumption that there is such a proposition as the *second* premise for the knower to think (or entertain). I don't find this objection persuasive. Firstly, I don't really see why one cannot even merely *entertain* the second

Let us turn our attention to Davies' first principle. Like McLaughlin (2003: 84), I cannot see why it does not block warrant-transmission for *any* one-premise valid argument: doubt in the conclusion of such an argument surely will not be "rationally combinable" with assumptions that render the premise warranted. Secondly, the notion of "rational combinability" is terribly vague. For example, in the SCHCAT case, it is quite unclear to me whether the assumptions which render the leading premise warranted *can* be rationally combined with doubt about the conclusion. It seems, rather, that whether we take them to be rationally combinable will depend with whether we take the premises to support the conclusion or not – in which case, the former cannot be said to *explain* the latter. Finally, as it is formulated, the principle plays directly into the BTQ theorists' hands. We noted earlier that anyone who doubted the existence of mind-independent objects would question whether the subject's warrant for the main premise, "I have a hand", was *bona fide* or *veridical* evidence in the first place. Thus, any assumptions which underpin the warrant's authenticity presumably cannot be rationally combined with doubt about the conclusion. But this, as BTQ theorists pointed out, means that doubters of the conclusion will not take to the premises to be warranted in the first place, so the question of warrant failing to transfer to the conclusion simply does not arise.

The upshot of the foregoing considerations is that the FTW theorist is still in

premise while doubting the truth of the conclusion. And, secondly, it strikes me that the second premise in the above arguments is really redundant: it is only needed to render the argument *formally* valid; removing it would still leave a semantically valid argument where Davies' second principle does not get purchase.

want of a satisfactory, unified account of our unpersuasive arguments. I think we should look to the failure of transfer of conclusive reasons instead, setting aside the question of knowledge altogether.

The FTCR Strategy (A Very Brief Sketch)

Here is a first thought. It is the failure of transfer of conclusive reason that makes an argument unpersuasive. Thus, ZEBRA is unpersuasive precisely because one's perceptual experience is a conclusive reason for the leading premise Z1, *that the animal in the pen is a zebra*, but is not a conclusive reason for the conclusion, Z3, *that the animal in the pen is not a cleverly painted mule*. This proposal makes no claim about whether knowledge or justification can transfer from premises to conclusion: it purports merely to explain the unpersuasiveness nature of the arguments under consideration.

But why should conclusive reasons have a bearing on persuasiveness? Well, I venture, it is because a conclusive reason for any contingent proposition *P*, being sensitive to whether *P* is true or not, will be *evidence* of *P*. So, it is not implausible to hold that an argument which does not yield evidence (conclusive reason) for its conclusion will be unpersuasive. Some conclusions, such as RASH (3), *that I am not a BIV*, could *never* have evidence: radical sceptical hypotheses such as this supposedly offer alternative explanations of *all* our actual experiences; so no experience will be a conclusive reason for denying such a hypothesis.⁶

⁶ So, whereas Williamson (2000) equates evidence with knowledge (E = K), I equate it with conclusive reason (E = CR), which is not the same as knowledge in my book.

This is an attractive explanation of the widely held view that arguments against radical sceptical hypotheses are invariably unpersuasive. ZEBRA and MOORE also come out unpersuasive on this proposal. (Just to remind you though: an unpersuasive argument need not be one where warrant or knowledge fails to transfer.) The proposal also accommodates our take on SCHCAT, for conclusive reason for the premise *there's a schcat* (our perceptual experience of the whistling creature) is clearly also conclusive reason for the conclusion, *that schcats are real creatures*.

So far so good. But there is a glitch. This proposal does not speak to arguments like LAPTOP, where we do not have conclusive reason for the premise. My memory-experience of having left my laptop at home this morning is a conclusive reason for the proposition: *my laptop was at home (this morning)*, but it is not a conclusive reason for L1: *my laptop is at home*.

Here is a plausible development. A valid argument will be unpersuasive if some premise has a conclusive reason, or is based on a belief for which one has a conclusive reason, that is not a conclusive reason for the conclusion.⁷ In LAPTOP, my belief that my laptop is at home (premise L1), is based on my belief that *it was* at home (this morning), for which I do have a conclusive

reason, namely, my memory-experience, and this is not a conclusive reason for the conclusion (L3) *that the laptop has not been stolen in the last 5 minutes*.

But Gettier cases motivate a further modification. Suppose my colleague Nogot dupes me into believing (F1) *that Nogot, one of my colleagues, owns a Ford*; this is based on beliefs about his actual behaviour, for which I have conclusive reasons; yet, these will not be conclusive reasons for (F3) *that one of my colleagues owns a Ford*. Here, I take it, we will allow that the argument from F1 to F3 is persuasive. Our FTCT proposal predicts otherwise, however.

My final proposal is that we shift from *actual* conclusiveness to *believed conclusiveness*. A valid argument will be unpersuasive if premises believed to have conclusive reasons, or believed to be based on other beliefs with conclusive reasons, which are believed not to be conclusive reasons for the conclusion. This delivers the correct verdict in the Nogot-case: I believe (albeit tacitly) that I wouldn't have the evidence I have for F1 if F3 were false: so this evidence is a conclusive reason for F3 too. The proposed modification preserves the correct verdicts we have already secured on other cases. This FTCT strategy therefore merits further attention.⁸

⁷ Wright (2000) employs something close in his 'template' for transmission-failure (p. 155); it is vulnerable to the same objection I am about to make to the second FTCT proposal. See Brown (2003) for a discussion of Wright.

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PAGRINDAS, IŠVADOS PAGRINDIMAS IR PAGRINDO NEPERDAVIMO ATVEJAI

Murali Ramachandran

Santrauka. Fredas Dretske savo episteminio uždarumo (*epistemic closure*) atmetimą grindžia tuo, kad pagrįsto samprotavimo pagrindas (*warrant*) neprivalo pereiti (arba būti „perduotas“) samprotavimo išvadai. Pagrindo neperdavimo (*failure of transfer of warrant*) strategiją taip pat naudojo episteminio uždarumo šalininkai kaip apsaugą nuo Michaelo McKinsey'io argumento prieš pirmojo asmens autoriteto suderinamumą su semantiniu eksternalizmu, taip pat kaip bendresnį paaiškinimą, kodėl tam tikri pagrįsti samprotavimai atrodo neįtikinamai jų išvadų pagrįstumo požiūriu. Šiame straipsnyje naujai nagrinėjami kai kurie svarbiausi mėginimai paaiškinti pagrindo neperdavimo atvejus ir pagrindinė kontrargumentavimo strategija atsakant teoretikams, įžvelgiantiems ydingą ratą. Pagrindinis šio straipsnio tikslas yra apginti dretskišką minėtų samprotavimų neįtikinamumo paaiškinimą.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: pagrindo neperdavimas, įrodančios priežastys, episteminis uždarumas, ydingas ratas

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