

EPISTEMIC NORMATIVITY AND THE MENTAL¹
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Work in Progress

***Abstract:** The idea that mental states are normative is explored by connecting issues in epistemology and philosophy of mind, which are usually thought of in isolation. Epistemological considerations shed light on the thesis that mental states are normative. Conversely, reflections on normativity in the philosophy of mind have epistemological consequences pertaining to epistemic normativity.*

§ I provides grounds for taking representational attitudes to be normative in nature.

§ II discusses how the notion of normativity may be conceived of as epistemic normativity.

§ III considers how this conception bears on the internalism-externalism debate about attitude-individuation.

§ IV investigates how the internalism-externalism debate about attitude-individuation bears on the epistemology of reasoning. Mind-internalism is shown to motivate a version of epistemic phenomenalism – neo-phenomenalism.

§ V presents a transcendental argument which purports to refute neo-phenomenalism.

§ VI develops the notion of epistemic normativity on the assumption that representational attitudes are externally individuated.

¹ I'm indebted to Tyler Burge and Mark Greenberg for comments and discussion about earlier versions of this work in progress.

I. NORMATIVITY OF THE MENTAL

A thesis along the line of ‘the realm of the mental is normative’ has received considerable attention. However, as the thesis stands, it is not all that clear. Even if it is restricted to concern mental states, a specification of the notion of normativity is called for. Prior to attempting any specification, however, it will be useful to consider why the thesis that mental states are normative is considered attractive.

Saul Kripke called it to our attention that linguistic meaning is subject to ought-claims which do not reduce to descriptive claims. Notably, the line of reasoning which lends weight to such a ‘normativity thesis’ with regards to linguistic meaning seems to have an equally weighty analog with regards to representational mental states. Consider a Kripke-inspired line of reasoning which deals directly with a paradigm representational mental state – belief:² If Fatima believes that p and she believes that p entails q (and the question as to whether q comes up), then it is intuitively mistaken to say that Fatima *will* believe that q. Rather, it is the case that Fatima *ought* to believe that q. Likewise, it is intuitively clear that Fatima *should* avoid beliefs or sets of beliefs which are inconsistent but not that she *does* so and so forth.

If these intuitions are to be trusted, it is part of the nature of representational mental states that they are subject to ‘ought’-claims. But to say that representational states are subject to ought-claims is to say that they are subjects to normative judgments and evaluations. That is, judgments and evaluations in accordance with sets of norms. Such norms may naturally be understood as standards relative to which the mental states may be determined to be good, bad or adequate. This explains why a single belief may be subject to various apparently conflicting ought-claims. Plausibly, a belief may be evaluated with respect to different sets of norms and, pending argument to the contrary, these different sets may be in conflict. Pragmatic, epistemic and moral norms are candidate kinds of norms of belief. And, perhaps, there are beliefs which one pragmatically ought to entertain, but which one morally ought to abandon.

² See K. Saul, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (1982), esp. p37ff.

Since a particular mental state may be subject to apparently conflicting normative judgments, it is imperative to distinguish between the sets of norms by reference to which it can be evaluated. Furthermore, it must be made clear which aspect of ‘the mental’ the normativity claim applies to. A normative judgment may apply to a certain class of mental states or events alone. The line of reasoning above dealt with belief. The subsequent discussion will be confined to a kind of normativity which applies to representational propositional attitudes such as, and especially, belief.³

II. FROM NORMATIVITY OF THE MENTAL TO EPISTEMIC NORMATIVITY

Since we shall soon consider Paul Boghossian’s and Tyler Burge’s disagreement about the nature of representational attitudes, their insightful discussions of the normativity of the mental provide welcome points of departure.

In recent work Boghossian argues, against a particular extrapolation of Kripke’s considerations, that explanations of normativity in terms rule-following are only derivatively relevant.⁴ Rather, says Boghossian, the primary explanation of the intuition that mental states are subjects to ought claims is that they are intimately connected to correctness or veridicality. Specifically, the thesis

For any p: One ought to believe that p only if p

is said to be ‘the standard expression of the norm of belief’ in the sense that “...the holding of this norm is one of the defining features of the notion of belief: it is what captures the idea that it is constitutive of belief to aim at truth” (ibid. p38). Of course, Boghossian acknowledges that there are circumstances in which one ought to violate the norm of belief. If Fatima has great evidence for believing non-p, she ought not believe that p although p is in fact true. However, says Boghossian, “...it is because belief is

³ Not all propositional attitudes are representational: E.g., wishes, fears etc. Conversely, not all representational mental states are propositional: E.g., states within perceptual subsystems.

⁴ P. Boghossian, ‘The Normativity of Content’, *Philosophical Issues*, 13 (2003), p30-45. The opponent is A. Gibbard, ‘Thoughts and Norms’, *Philosophical Issues*, 13 (2003), p83-98.

governed by this objective ought that the less controversial subjective oughts hold of it as well... . . . All these familiar epistemic norms are grounded in the objective norm of truth.” (ibid. p 39)

While parts of Boghossian’s take on normativity are debatable, this much seems quite right. Only the remark about objective vis-à-vis subjective norms calls for a qualification. Consider a gambler who is offered a one-to-one bet which she wins only if the queen of hearts is drawn from a deck of cards. Assume that, due to the poor odds, she abstains. But if she then were to see the queen of hearts being drawn she might well utter: ‘I should have taken the bet!’ Clearly, her utterance is only right in a *purely* objective sense. But this is hardly the sense relevant for an explanation of whether her decision was epistemically rational. She really *should* abstain since the odds were crappy and objectively so. Thus, the so-called ‘subjective’ epistemic norms (roughly; bet according to the odds) trump the purely objective one (roughly; bet only if you win thereby). This is because the purely objective norm is entirely detached from the subject and her circumstance. But we primarily evaluate the subject according to her circumstance. In general, the epistemic norms are, in one sense, primary to the purely objective one of believing truly.

This qualification is compatible with Boghossian’s claim that the epistemic norms are in *another* sense secondary since they are ‘grounded in the objective norm of truth.’ In the gambling-example, the epistemic norms of gambling are ‘grounded in’ the purely objective one insofar as the objective odds are the best guide to winning given the gamblers circumstance. In general, epistemic norms normally further true belief when one believes in accordance with them. Such an objective truth-connection is in essence what makes them epistemic norms.⁵ So, the epistemic norms are not *normally* at odds with the ‘objective norm of truth.’ Note that the notion ‘normality’ has entered the stage. The putative connections between the notions of (epistemic) normality and epistemic normativity will be explored in Section VI. The present upshot is that belief and other representational attitudes are subject to epistemic norms which are essentially truth-conducive, i.e., which normally further the overarching epistemic end of believing truly.

⁵ This is one reason to avoid thinking of epistemic norms as ‘subjective’. See, however, R. Foley, *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

Interestingly, externalists about representational attitudes tend to agree to the Boghossianesque story – at least in the rough ‘n ready outline above. Consider, for instance, Tyler Burge: “I think it a priori that a *representational* function of a system of belief is to form true beliefs. Understanding what a belief is suffices a priori to warrant the view that such a system has a function to represent truths.”⁶ Much like Boghossian, Burge connects this essential function of representational attitudes to the view that they are subjects to epistemic norms: “Epistemic norms govern the acquisition, transformation and employment of *representational contents* in a system of belief... .They are standards for representing reliably and well, given the capacities and perspective of the individual or subsystem. They are norms governing achievement of the representational good, truth.” (ibid. p513). Note that Burge also takes epistemic norms to be derived from the overarching function of representational states: Namely, representing veridically. Furthermore, Burge too takes the epistemic norms to be ‘subjective’ in the above-mentioned sense that the individuals ‘capacities and perspective’ are relevant for whether the norms are met. In contrast, such considerations are simply irrelevant for whether the purely objective ‘ur-norm’ of believing truly is met.

So, insofar as Boghossian and Burge are representatives of internalists and externalists, respectively, then the opposing camps share, at least in rough outline, the conception of the mental as epistemically normative.

Another, less theory-laden, reason for of conceiving of representational attitudes as epistemically normative is that such a conception makes good sense of the Kripke-inspired argument which motivated the normativity thesis in the first place. Recall the intuition that if that Fatima believes that p and that p entails q and the question as to whether q is relevant, she is *ought* to believe that q. Given that the overarching norm of belief is to believe truly, the ought-claim may be explained as follows: If Fatima comes to believe that q on the basis of an inference from her antecedent beliefs, she believes in accordance with the overarching epistemic norm. The belief that q is truth-conducive in the sense that it is based on truth-preserving reasoning. Clearly, Fatima satisfies more specific epistemic norms than this ur-norm if she comes to believe that q on the basis of

⁶ T. Burge, ‘Perceptual Entitlement’, *Philosophy & Phenomenological Research*, Vol. LXVII, No 3 (2003).

such reasoning. However, more specific epistemic norms of the form ‘in conditions thus-and-thus; believe so-and-so’ qualify as epistemic norms only insofar as in conditions thus-and-thus, so-and-so is normally true.

In conclusion, at least one notion of ‘normativity of the mental’ is epistemic normativity. Specifically, representational attitudes are subject to normative evaluations in virtue of being subject to epistemic evaluations. That is, evaluations in accordance with epistemic norms – norms which are essentially associated with the overarching epistemic end of believing truly. So we may conceive of one aspect of the initially elusive ‘normativity of the mental’ as ‘epistemic normativity’.

III. EPISTEMIC NORMATIVITY AND INTERNALISM- EXTERNALISM ABOUT MENTAL STATES

An important aspect of the internalism-externalism dispute (henceforth: I-E dispute) in philosophy of mind pertains to the nature of representational mental states and their contents. Crudely put, mind-internalism is the view that factors internal to an agent exclusively determine what attitudes she entertains. In contrast, the externalist has it that certain relations between the individual and environmental factors also play a part in state individuation. In this section this dispute will be related to the idea that representational attitudes are epistemically normative.

The I-E dispute may be illustrated via a Twin-Earth Scenario. Such a scenario involves two internally similar twins Iris and Iris* who interact with two distinct, but phenomenally indiscernible environments E and E*. The externalist concludes on the basis of arguments from such scenaria that the representational state-types of Iris and Iris* are distinct in virtue of the environmental differences between E and E*. Thus Iris and Iris* entertain belief-tokens of distinct belief-types although they are physiologically, phenomenologically, functionally and dispositionally alike.

Externalists disagree among themselves as to the strength of the thesis. An extreme externalism, disjunctivism, has it that singular thought is object-dependent. The idea is, roughly, that an instance of interaction with a particular object suffices to

individuate the singular state which the instance gives rise to.⁷ A weaker externalism requires that there be patterns of interaction between the individual and kinds of entities in her environment. On this view, kinds of entities in the environment partly individuate state types only if one normally interacts with them.⁸ Today only the weaker, less controversial version of externalism about representational attitudes will be considered.

In contrast, the internalist has it that Iris and Iris* entertain tokens of the same belief-type. Internalists disagree among themselves about the nature of the internal factors which are state-individuating. The phenomenal character of the individual's mental states typically plays a substantive role. On some views functionalistic considerations and behavioral dispositions of the individual are equally important. Note, however, that the internalist is obliged to specify the relevant functional and dispositional traits without reference to the individual's environment. Consider, for illustration, an internalist advocating a dispositional account according to which the individual is in state _ iff she is disposed to behave in a particular way (e.g., to carry out a certain inference) under conditions, C. It is clear that if external conditions were to enter into C, the account would cease to be an internalist one. It would be possible to generate twin-cases in which two internally similar individuals were in distinct states due to external differences. However, the internalist must specify conditions C somehow and here phenomenal character presents itself (pun intended) as an obvious candidate. A similar consideration applies to functionalist accounts. It seems therefore that phenomenal characters play important parts (pun intended, again) in any internalist theory – be it a functionalist, dispositionalist or conceptual role version.

This outline of the frontlines of the I-E dispute about representational attitude types will have to do. But what does the dispute have to do with the idea that representational attitudes are epistemically normative? Recall that both sides of the debate (represented by Boghossian and Burge) agree to the idea that the mental states they argue about are epistemically normative. This point of agreement casts the dispute in

⁷ See, e.g., J. McDowell, 'Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 68 (1982), p455-79.

⁸ See, e.g., T. Burge, 'Other Bodies', *Thought and Object*, ed. A. Woodfield, (Oxford UP 1982).

a new light: A central aspect of the disagreement is whether the sort of mental state types which are epistemically normative are internalistically or externalistically individuated?

Often the debate is not conducted in terms of normativity but in terms of rationality. Burge emphasizes that it is important to recognize that not only de re belief ascriptions, but also de dicto belief ascriptions, are partly externally individuated. It is important precisely because it is de dicto ascriptions which are the subjects of rational evaluations. Such evaluations presumably include evaluations of epistemic rationality in accordance with epistemic norms (Burge 1982 *Op. Cit.* p99). Indeed, Burge has it that “Epistemic norms are certain types of standards governing fulfillment of representational functions of psychological states” (Burge 2003 *Op. Cit.* p513).

Boghossian attempts to counter such a motivation for externalism by a line of reasoning which it will be illustrative to consider in condensed form. Boghossian develops Burge’s intriguing ‘slow-switch’ cases in which someone, Peter, is unknowingly transported to twin-Earth. It is assumed that some of Peter’s concepts, e.g., ‘apple’, become twin-Earthly individuated after a while of interaction with twin-apples. It is also supposed that when Peter recollects Earthian apple-thoughts stored in memory, they surface with their original non-switched contents. Hence Peter is bound to engage in fallacious reasoning due to misequivocations of apple and twin-apple individuated concepts.⁹ Boghossian takes the cases to show that if the states operative in Peter’s reasoning are externally individuated, then he can not know a priori whether his reasoning is valid. Moreover, Boghossian takes it to be a minimal requirement on rationality that one can know a priori whether one is heeding or violating norms of logic. But since Peter is perfectly rational, it follows that the states operative in his reasoning are not externally individuated: “...there is an important sense in which Peter the traveler’s behavior makes perfect sense from his point of view, we would appear to have here an argument for the existence of a level of intentional description which conserves this sense” (Boghossian 1992 *Op. Cit.* p28).

⁹ The slow-switch cases and Boghossian’s spin on them are too complex to discuss responsibly here. See P. Boghossian, ‘Externalism and Inference’, *Philosophical Issues*, 2, (1992), p11-28 and P. Boghossian, ‘The transparency of mental content’, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 8, (1994), p33-50. See also, e.g., J. Brown, *Anti-Individualism and Knowledge*. The MIT Press (2004); T. Burge, ‘Memory and Self-Knowledge’, *Externalism and Self-Knowledge*. Eds. Ludlow and Martin, (CSLI Publications 1996); S. Goldberg, ‘Anti-individualism, Slow-Switch and Illusions of Epistemic Relevance’ to appear in *Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology and Semantics*. Ed. S. Goldberg. (Oxford UP).

Here the argument is stated in terms of rationality. But plausibly the sort of rationality in question is – or at least involves – *epistemic* rationality. Evaluations of rationality are in general normative, and evaluations of epistemic rationality are not exceptional in this respect. Hence the discussion of epistemic rationality is intimately connected to epistemic normativity. Consequently, both Burge’s reasoning and Boghossian’s counter-reasoning are aligned with the conception – which both subscribe to – of belief as epistemically normative.

I shall not discuss the subtleties of the arguments and counter-arguments. I merely present, in condensed form, Boghossian’s and Burge’s views as paradigms of one important aspect of the I-E debate. I focus on Boghossian and Burge because they are sophisticated and quite orthodox representatives of internalism and externalism, respectively. It is, however, a general phenomenon that the I-E debates revolve, albeit in various ways, around the question of epistemic normativity.¹⁰

In summary, some internalists argue that since mental states are epistemically normative, they are individuated *internalistically*. In contrast, some externalists argue that considerations about epistemic normativity show mental state types to be in part *externally* individuated. For the present purpose, the important point is that a central aspect of the internalist-externalist dispute is based on a point of agreement. Each side takes it to be a desideratum on the principles of attitude individuation that they capture the epistemic normativity of representational attitudes. Hence, the thesis that representational attitudes are epistemically normative is agreed upon. The debate is about whether the internalist or externalist theory of state-individuation vindicates this thesis.

IV. INTERNALISM VS. EXTERNALISM ABOUT MENTAL STATES AND EPISTEMIC PHENOMENALISM

¹⁰ For externalists see, e.g., M. Davies, ‘Individualism and Perceptual Content’, *Mind*, 100 (1991), p. 461-84; C. Peacocke *The Realm of Reason*, (Oxford UP 2004); R. Stalnaker ‘On What’s in the Head’ *Philosophical Perspectives* 3. Ed. J.E. Tomberlin, p 287-316. Atascadero: Ridgeview (1989). Internalists are represented by, e.g., J. Chase: Is externalism about Content Inconsistent with Internalism about Justification?, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 79 (2001), p227-246; F. Jackson, ‘Representation and Narrow Belief’, *Philosophical Issues*, 13 (2003), p99-112; G. Segal, *A Slim Book About Narrow Content*, MIT Press (2000).

We have seen how the internalism-externalism debate may be conceived of as a debate about how to understand the individuation-conditions of the attitudes which are epistemically significant. Indeed, the idea that representational attitudes are subject to epistemic norms has been taken to motivate both internalism and externalism.

I shall attempt to shed light on the internalist-externalist dispute about epistemic normativity by considering the converse direction of motivation. What sort of epistemology does internalism and externalism, respectively, motivate? However, this question may be too general to receive an interesting answer. But since the previous discussion was confined to representational propositional attitudes, the subsequent discussion may be confined to the epistemology of *reasoning*. This is because reasoning is a form of transaction between propositional attitudes. The inquiry will revolve around a question about epistemic reasoning:

(Q) *What is the nature of the mental states operative/used in epistemic reasoning?*

It is presupposed that epistemic warrant for a belief can be generated by epistemic reasoning. Paradigmatically, if I believe that p and that p entails q and infer q from those beliefs, then I may thereby generate novel warrant for the belief that q.¹¹ Clearly, such warrant depends on the reasoning for its existence. The warrant for the belief that q would not exist were it not for the reasoning which I went through.

A bit of terminology is useful at this stage. I shall refer to epistemic warrant which depends for its existence on reasoning as ‘warrant by reasoning’ and to the sort of reasoning which, when successful, generates such warrant as ‘epistemic reasoning’. This kind of warrant is plausibly an epistemically internalist kind. In Burge’s terminology it is a kind of justification rather than a kind of entitlement.¹²

¹¹ I say ‘may’ due to familiar issues about transmission of warrant. See, e.g., C. Wright, ‘Cogency and Question-Begging: Some Reflections on McKinsey’s Paradox and Putnam’s Proof’, *Philosophical Issues*, 10 (2000), p140-163; M. Davies, ‘Epistemic Entitlement, Warrant Transmission and Easy Knowledge’, *Aristotelian Supplementary Volume*, 78 (2004), 213-48.

¹² I adopt only Burge’s terminology of warrant as the genus under which justification and entitlement are the internalist and externalist species. I do not adopt the way he draws the justification-entitlement distinction. Cf. Burge 2003 *Op. Cit.* p504ff.

Having confined ourselves to epistemic reasoning, let us begin by inquiring into the ramifications of mind-internalism for **(Q)**. Internalism about representational attitudes may naturally be – and has been – taken to support a revival of a traditionally prominent epistemological theory (or family of theories). It has come and gone in many versions throughout the history of philosophy. But these versions may be subsumed under the broad label ‘epistemic phenomenalism’. Traditionally the view was launched as an epistemology of perception. The central idea is that a believer’s epistemic connection to the world around him is essentially mediated by the phenomenal aspects of his own mind. The phenomenal aspects in question have come and gone by the names of ‘phenomena’, ‘impressions’, ‘ideas’, ‘sensations’, ‘sense-data’, ‘the given’ and so on. The view goes back to the British Empiricists and had a renaissance in the early 20th century due to Russell and one line of logical positivism.

The novel development of the view is primarily about reasoning, not perception. Its central idea is that internalistically or narrowly individuated attitudes are epistemically normative in the sense that they are the ones which are operative in epistemic reasoning. Various theorists articulate and motivate this idea in various ways, but I think it is fair to state the core idea of the view as a straightforward answer to **(Q)**:

Neo-phenomenalism: *The attitudes which are operative/used in epistemic reasoning are internalistically individuated.*

Thus ‘internalistically individuated attitudes’ or ‘narrow belief’ substitute the traditional notions of ‘phenomena’, ‘impressions’, ‘sense data’ etc. Note that neo-phenomenalism is a purely epistemological view. As opposed to certain traditional views, it is not committed to *metaphysical* phenomenalism – the view that the reality (or ‘our’ reality) is constituted by sense-phenomena. The name ‘neo-phenomenalism’ is due to the fact that the phenomenal character of mental states plays a crucial part even in sophisticated functionalist, dispositionalist and conceptual-role theories of narrow content.

James Chase advocates neo-phenomenalism quite explicitly. He considers the beliefs **A** ‘water is the stuff usually found in lakes’ and **B** ‘there is water in front of me’. Chase sets forth the view that “...the justification relations **A** stands in to **B** are *not* the

factors relevant to justification of S's belief that **B**" (Chase 2001 *Op. Cit.* p238). On the contrary, says Chase, it is the narrow content which is relevant for justification: Call **A*** and **B*** the classes of potential beliefs which are identical in narrow content to **A** and **B** respectively. A factor relevant to the justification of S's belief **B** will then be the fact that **A*** beliefs, given certain other experiences, can be evidence for **B*** beliefs" (ibid. p238).

Chase does not restrict his view to the epistemology of reasoning, but it should be clear from the cited remarks that he would assent to the neo-phenomenalist thesis.

Another advocate of internalism about representational attitudes, Frank Jackson, also seems to subscribe to some sort of neo-phenomenalism: "When we project, we draw on all sorts of views about how things are outside the region we are projecting from. It might be asked, How, then can internalism be true of rational projection? The answer is that the way we draw views about how things are outside the region in question supervenes on what is given about how things are in the region from which we project" (Jackson 2003 *Op. Cit.* p110).

Though Jackson considers space-time regions here, the drift is clear enough. When we make rational projections about the extinction of the dinosaurs we rely on the evidence given to us today. This insight is supposed to support the view that beliefs are internalistically individuated. Presumably, then, in the case of inferential projection, we use internalistically individuated or 'narrow' beliefs in making projections about external matters. This view amounts to neo-phenomenalism as characterized.

Finally, recall Boghossian's suggested conclusion that in order to account for the fact that 'Peter the slow-switched' is a good reasoner and thus, presumably, a good *epistemic* reasoner, we must abandon the idea that the states relevant for the reasoning are externally individuated. Hence we must accept that they are internalistically individuated and so we must accept neo-phenomenalism (Boghossian 1992, 1994 *Op. Cit.*).

Neo-phenomenalism is far more interesting than the traditional versions of epistemic phenomenalism which it replaces. It provides a coherent picture of the relationship between the epistemic normativity of representational attitudes and their individuation-conditions. If we take the intuition that representational attitudes are epistemically normative as data to be explained, neo-phenomenalism seems to deliver. It purports to explain not only *that* but also *why* it is internalistically individuated attitudes

which are the subjects of epistemically normative evaluations: Since such attitudes – narrow beliefs – are used in epistemic reasoning, the norms governing such reasoning (i.e., epistemic norms) are about transitions from narrow belief to narrow belief.

The line of reasoning from considerations about normativity of the mental to epistemic phenomenalism has been presented in the rough. Of course, it may be contended on extra-epistemological grounds. E.g., one could argue that there is no genuine type of mental state which is internalistically individuated. However, since internalism about attitudes is motivated in large part by epistemological considerations, it is of paramount importance to understand the *epistemological* reasons why neo-phenomenalism fails. Moreover, the historical prominence of phenomenalist theories provides ample reason to take the recent sophisticated developments of them seriously.

V. A TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENT AGAINST NEO-PHENOMENALISM

Via a transcendental argument concluding that neo-phenomenalism is mistaken I attempt a principled explanation of why neo-phenomenalism is mistaken. Simultaneously, the transcendental argument provides a positive, attitude-externalist answer to **(Q)**.

The argument is restricted to empirical belief. It presupposes that it is possible to justify an empirical belief by epistemic reasoning from other beliefs. Moreover, the argument presupposes some general facts about warrant by reasoning (i.e., justification) to be discussed shortly. The argument may be said to be transcendental since epistemological assumptions are used to establish something about the nature of the mental states operative in epistemic reasoning. Thus the conclusion provides an answer to **(Q)**, which, in turn, constitutes a partial answer to the Kantian question: How is justification conceived as warrant by reasoning possible?¹³

¹³ I'm afraid that the length and complexity of the premises contributes to the Kantian flavor of the argument. However, it resembles more substantively Tyler Burge's transcendental argument (in Burge 2003 *Op. Cit.* § VII) concluding that "The account of perceptual entitlement *must* take as privileged the normal environmental conditions that help individuate perceptual states and competencies." (p536). There

- T1:** It is non-accidental that a belief that p justified by reasoning is normally true.
- T2:** It is non-accidental that a belief that p justified by reasoning is normally true *only if* it is non-accidental that the attitudes α uses in the reasoning justifying the belief that p are normally about the same environment as the belief that p .
- T3:** It is non-accidental that the attitudes α uses in the reasoning justifying the belief that p are normally about the same environment as the belief that p *only if* the environment which α is embedded in partly determines the attitudes which α uses in reasoning justifying the belief that p .
- T4.:** It is non-accidental that a belief that p justified by reasoning is normally true *only if* the environment which α is embedded in partly determines the attitudes which α uses in reasoning justifying the belief that p . [T2, T3]
- T5.:** The environment which α is embedded in partly determines the attitudes which α uses in reasoning justifying the belief that p . [T1, T4]

Before the premises are motivated, consider a rejoinder to the argument: The premise

- T6:** If the environment which α is embedded in partly determines the attitudes which α uses in reasoning justifying the belief that p , then it is necessary that the environment which α is embedded in partly determines the attitudes which α uses in reasoning justifying the belief that p .

seems plausible.¹⁴ A modal conclusion is then derivable:

- T7.:** It is necessary that the environment which α is embedded in partly determines the attitudes which α uses in reasoning justifying the belief that p [T5, T6].

are differences from both Kant, who considered the general question ‘how is empirical cognition possible?’ and Burge, who considers the more specific questions “Why is the normal [state-individuating – MG] environment privileged? Why does its contribution to entitlement carry over to other environments that the individual might form perceptual beliefs within?” (p353ff). An important difference is that the issue is epistemic reasoning, not perception.

¹⁴ S. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, (Harvard UP 1972) [some elaboration may be in place here].

In Kripke's arguments for the necessary a posteriori, the antecedents of the conditionals which share the form of T6 (e.g., if Water is H₂O, Water is necessarily H₂O) are, of course, a posteriori. In contrast, T5 is plausibly an instance of the synthetic a priori. It is derived a priori from premises justified by considerations which are plausibly a priori. Thus if T6 itself is a priori, so is T7. The motivation of T6 requires an inquiry into modal epistemology. Consequently, I remain content with the non-modal T5 which will do as an answer to (Q).

But even the argument for T5 requires some elaboration. While its structure is simple enough, the premises are pretty ugly. In consequence, the remainder of this section is dedicated to explaining and motivating the premises T1-T3.

T1: It is non-accidental that a belief that p justified by reasoning is normally true:

Two general principles about epistemic warrant motivate the premise. I take them to be platitudes about epistemic warrant. First and foremost, the essence of epistemic warrant is to render belief truth-conducive. In other words, warrant is marked by what has been labeled the 'truth-connection' between a belief that p and p.¹⁵ Hence, warranted beliefs are normally true in virtue of being warranted. A fortiori, justified beliefs are normally true in virtue of being justified. This is the underlying principle which motivates T1.

Perhaps the notion truth may be left as a primitive (correspondence theoretic) notion. But there is a good deal to be said about the notion 'normally' occurring in T1. The notion used in the argument is epistemic. It may be illuminated in terms of a sister-notion of epistemically normal circumstances. I postpone elaboration to section VI.

The other general principle about warrant is reflected in T1 by the qualifier 'it is non-accidental that...' The principle reflected by this qualifier imposes a constraint on what counts as a distinctively *epistemic* connection between warranted belief and true belief. Certain accidental connections to truth do not qualify as the special epistemic 'truth-connection' essential to warrant. Even if the tokens of a belief-type are normally true, they will be unwarranted if their being true is epistemically accidental. To wit: Paul forms beliefs about the future by reading a horoscope. By reading the horoscope Paul comes to believe that he will die happy, that life will evolve on Mars, that his

¹⁵ First, I believe, in S. Cohen, 'Justification and Truth', *Philosophical Studies*, (1984), p270-95.

granddaughter will become president and so forth. Assume that the future turns out precisely as the horoscope predicts. Consequently, all of Paul's horoscope-beliefs happen to be true. But intuitively, they are not warranted. Given that it is accidental that any of the horoscope-beliefs are true, it is clear that although they are all true, they are not truth-conducive in the sense required for warrant.

Importantly, the notion of 'accidence' occurring in the qualifier is not metaphysical, but epistemic. Were the requirement put in terms of unrestricted metaphysical accidence (i.e., contingency), it would be violated trivially. It is a metaphysically contingent fact that there are any believers (*pace* certain theological doctrines). Hence it is contingent that any empirical belief is true. But some beliefs are warranted (*pace* certain skeptical doctrines). Hence 'epistemic accidence' and 'metaphysical contingency' are distinct notions. Today the 'non-accidence'-requirement will be left as motivated by the horoscope case.¹⁶

In sum; T1 is motivated by some general and fairly intuitive reflections about the nature of epistemic warrant. The assumptions are quite minimal: The essence of warrant is to render belief truth-conducive, and so, warranted beliefs are normally true. This connection between warranted belief and true belief must be non-accidental. Finally, since the requirement applies to warrant in general, it also applies to its species 'justification' including the sub-species 'justification generated by epistemic reasoning'.

T2: It is non-accidental that a belief that p justified by reasoning is normally true only if it is non-accidental that the attitudes α uses in the reasoning justifying the belief that p are normally about the same environment as the belief that p: T2 is motivated by considerations about epistemic relevance and truth-conduciveness of empirical epistemic reasoning. The general idea is that attitudes with empirical contents are epistemically relevant to one another only if they are about subject matters which are normally related to each other. But this is only the case if the attitudes are normally about the same environment.

¹⁶ See P. Unger, 'An Analysis of Factual Knowledge', *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968): 157-70, Peter Unger (1967) and D. Pritchard, *Epistemic Luck*, (Oxford UP 2005).

Clearly, reasoning about non-related subject matters does not normally yield justification. I.e., if there is no epistemically relevant relation between the propositional contents of a series of beliefs, then that series simply does not qualify as epistemic reasoning for a target-belief that *p*. This, in turn, is because the non-accidence requirement on warrant would be violated. If the belief that *p* were true, it would be accidental relative to the reasoning. The sort of relation between beliefs used in reasoning which is epistemically relevant must, of course, be articulated in terms of truth. But it is surprisingly hard to articulate. The case of deductive reasoning suggests something like the following: the premise-beliefs, $r_1 \dots r_n$, and the conclusion-belief are appropriately related only in the case that the truth-conditions of, $r_1 \dots r_n$, are met only if the truth-condition of the conclusion-belief is met. However, this is too strong to be a viable general characterization. It rules out that non-deductive kinds of reasoning such as inductive and abductive reasoning are sorts of epistemic reasoning.¹⁷

Yet, since epistemic reasoning is truth-conducive, the relation of epistemic relevance is one of veridicality. Epistemic reasoning for an empirical belief, *p*, by other empirical beliefs, $r_1 \dots r_n$, is truth-conducive only if there is a connection between the truth of the premise-beliefs that $r_1 \dots r_n$ and the target-belief that *p*. Let a familiar instance of the contra-positive illustrate: Since truth of my beliefs about some shoes that they are white does not bear on the truth of my belief that all ravens are black, there is no line of epistemic reasoning from the ‘premise’-beliefs which justifies the target-belief. Not even an inductive or abductive line. This is because the required truth-connection between the ‘premise’-beliefs and the ‘conclusion’-belief is absent. So in general, in lieu of a truth-connection between the beliefs used in reasoning and the target belief, no line of epistemic reasoning from the former may provide justification for the latter.

In the context of *empirical* epistemic reasoning, the link between epistemic relevance and the truth-connection between premise-beliefs and conclusion-belief have the following upshot: truth-connection between the premise-beliefs and conclusion-belief will normally be lacking unless the attitudes used in the reasoning are normally about the same environment. The truth of a set of beliefs about multiple distinct environments does

¹⁷ To make matters worse, the condition of validity is perhaps not sufficient for deductive epistemic reasoning to generate novel warrant. It may be required in addition that a principle of restricting transmission of warrant is not violated. See, again, Davies (2004) and Wright (2000) *Op. Cit.*

not normally bear on the truth of a belief about yet a distinct environment. At any rate, it would be accidental if it did. E.g., truths about the chemical constituents of twater, bwater and schmwater do not bear on truths about the chemical constituents of water. And even if there was a truth-connection between the premise-beliefs and the conclusion-belief, it would be accidental, hence epistemically irrelevant.

There is an important caveat here: Consider the belief that q_1 and the belief that if q_2 , then p . Grant that the truth of the conjunction of those beliefs does not at all bear on the truth of belief that p . Nevertheless, given certain conditions the beliefs may still contribute to epistemic reasoning which justifies the belief that p . This is, however, only the case in which the reasoner rationally takes – or rather *mistakes* – q_1 to be identical to q_2 . In cases of epistemically rational misequivocation, it may be rational for the believer to reason as if there is a veridical connection between the premise-beliefs and the target-belief. Thus these *particular exceptions* to the *general rule* that only veridically related beliefs are epistemically relevant are explained in terms of that very rule: It is only in the case that the reasoner is epistemically rational to reason as if that there is such an objective truth-connection that her reasoning may provide justification. The details of this issue are very subtle. Fortunately, for the purposes of T2, something more modest is required: T2 merely requires that it is non-accidental that the attitudes used in empirical epistemic reasoning are *normally* about the same environment as the belief they justify.

T3: It is non-accidental that the attitudes α uses in the reasoning justifying the belief that p are normally about the same environment as the belief that p *only if* the environment which α is embedded in partly determines the attitudes which α uses in reasoning justifying the belief that p : The third and final premise is motivated by relating considerations about accidentence to considerations about mental state individuation. Simplified it says that it is non-accidental that the attitudes used in epistemic reasoning are normally about the same environment only if they are in part externally individuated. As stated, T3 pertains to epistemic reasoning. But it reflects a more general principle about all sorts of empirical reasoning – reasoning which involves attitudes purporting to be about the reasoner’s environment.

The main motivation for T3 is abductive: externalism about representational attitudes appears to be the best explanation as to why such attitudes are normally about the same environment. Indeed, the very idea of externalism about representational attitudes is that the nature of such attitude-types is partly determined by the environment which the individual is actually embedded in. (e.g., causally connected to, interacting with). Moreover, since externalism about representational attitudes is a view about their essence or nature, it fits naturally in an account of why it is non-accidental that the attitudes used in epistemic reasoning are normally about the same environment. According to mind externalism, it is in the nature of an agent's attitude to reflect the environment which she has been interacting with. Hence it is non-accidental that the attitudes used in reasoning about the environment are normally about the same environment.

In contrast, it is far from obvious how an internalist theory of representational attitudes could explain that it is non-accidental that the attitudes operative in empirical reasoning are normally about the same environment. For an internalist account denies that the nature or essence of the mental states operative in reasoning is constitutively dependent on the environment. But if the very nature of the attitudes is constitutively independent of the normal environment, how could it be non-accidental that they are normally about the same environment?

On the contrary, it would seem that the kind of attitudes which are non-accidentally about the same environment should depend, in some important (i.e., constitutive) sense, on the environment. Externalism about representational attitudes types is the view that they do in virtue of patterns of relations holding between the subject having the attitude and the environment. So it seems reasonable to say that it is non-accidental that the attitudes operative in epistemic reasoning are about the same environment only if they are externally or widely individuated. But that is, in effect, T3.

VI. EPISTEMIC NORMATIVITY AND THE MENTAL – TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED THEORY

The conclusion of the transcendental argument, that (necessarily) the mental states operative in empirical epistemic reasoning are externally individuated, provides an answer to (Q) which is incompatible with neo-phenomenalism. Thus the argument purports to refute neo-phenomenalism.¹⁸ But it also provides some general constraints (for Kant-aficionados; ‘*möglichkeitsbedingungen*’) on an account of epistemic reasoning. And while phenomenalist-trashing is good fun, it is ultimately more interesting how these constraints bear on a positive account. Moreover, something important about epistemic normativity may be learned by recognizing a grain of truth in the neo-phenomenalist debris. Therefore, I shall take the conclusion of the transcendental argument as a point of departure for a brief exploration.

I begin with the basic assumption that an empirical belief entertained in accordance with the relevant epistemic norms (i.e., a warranted belief) is normally true. Given this assumption, there is an important link between epistemic normativity and epistemic normality. So perhaps we can address our investigatum, epistemic normativity, by addressing the hitherto unspecified notion of epistemic normality. As mentioned in passing, this notion of epistemic normality may be understood in terms of epistemically normal circumstances. The idea is, crudely, that beliefs entertained in accordance with the relevant epistemic norms are true in epistemically normal circumstances. However, since epistemically circumstances are normally normal, beliefs which are entertained in accordance with the relevant epistemic norms are normally true. This conceptual link aligns with an account of the phenomenon of false warranted belief in terms of *abnormal* circumstances. Even in the case that one entertains a belief in accordance with the relevant epistemic norms, it may be undermined by epistemically abnormal circumstances.

This way of relating epistemic normativity, epistemic normality and epistemically normal circumstances connects to the attitude-externalist conclusion of the transcendental argument. In particular, the notion of epistemically normal circumstances connects to an externalist notion of a normal environment. The attitude-externalist conceives of the normal environment as the one which is partly attitude-individuating given certain patterns of causal interaction between the attitude-bearing individual and prominent

¹⁸ I believe that the argument thereby compromises internalism about mental states.

features of it. Although this notion of a normal environment is not completely developed, it is sufficiently robust to set forth important constraints on what counts as epistemically normal circumstances for empirical reasoning. The general idea is that the attitude-individuating environment is *ceteris paribus* the one which one is epistemically rational to take oneself to be in. Hence one is epistemically rational to ignore – as an irrelevant alternative – the possibility that one is in an abnormal environment. Accordingly, the epistemic norms of empirical reasoning should be specified by reference to the normal (attitude-individuating) environment.

These programmatic remarks may be substantiated by revisiting Boghossian's slow-switch cases in which Peter reasons fallaciously because he uses tokens of Earthly concepts as if they are type-identical to tokens of twin-Earthly concepts. But since Peter has no indication about the switch, he appears to be epistemically rational.

Interestingly, the account of why Peter is epistemically rational touches on the announced grain of truth in neo-phenomenalism. Peter is epistemically rational because his belief-tokens involving Earthly concepts *appear to him* to be type-identical to belief-tokens which involve twin-Earthly concepts. If Peter experienced a distinctive phenomenal difference in using Earthian and twin-Earthian concepts, he would hardly be epistemically rational in equivocating them. However, this 'phenomenalist insight' is perfectly compatible with externalism about representational attitudes. Externalism merely denies the thesis that there is no role for relations between the individual and the environment in an account of state-individuation. It does not entail the further claim that phenomenal character is *irrelevant* for attitude-individuation. Accordingly an externalist account of the conditions under which one is epistemically rational in reasoning fallaciously should include considerations about the phenomenal character – or, in general, the mode of presentation – of the attitudes used in the reasoning. However, it should *also* include considerations about epistemically normal circumstances.

We can now see the contours of a principled explanation of why it is epistemically rational for Peter to reason as he does. In the absence of reasons to the contrary, it is epistemically rational for him to *reason as if* he is in his normal environment rather than a distinct, twin-environment. Reasoning thusly is normally truth-conducive and, according to externalism about attitude-individuation, non-accidentally

so. So despite that Peter is in fact reasoning in an abnormal environment, his reasoning justifies the target belief. Moreover, such a ‘normal environment’-account partially explains the exception to the rule that attitudes operative in reasoning provide justification only if the truth of the premise-beliefs bears on the truth of the conclusion-belief. As noted in the discussion of T2, this ‘ur-norm’ of epistemic reasoning is subject to exceptions. It may be epistemically rational to reason as if there is such an objective truth-connection between the premise-beliefs and the conclusion-belief although there is in fact not. Again, it is *ceteris paribus* epistemically rational to reason as if one is in one’s normal environment rather than a twin-environment.

For illustration, consider a rough approximation of a principle connecting epistemically normal circumstances and the normal environment: Epistemic circumstances, with respect to a line of reasoning, are normal only if the reasoner is not prone to changes in the attitude-individuating environment, which are relevant for the attitudes used in the reasoning. I cannot stress enough the approximate status of the principle. However, if such principles can be explicated in a precise manner, they will be epistemologically important. They will figure in a theoretical account of the epistemic norms of reasoning. Moreover, cases like the slow-switch case may be explained by reference to such epistemic principles. Since the slow-switch scenario exemplifies a subtle form of an abnormal environment, it constitutes an epistemically abnormal circumstance. Accordingly, the slow-switch scenario is an epistemically *irrelevant alternative*: a possibility which Peter is epistemically rational to ignore in his reasoning.

I re-emphasize the importance of proceeding cautiously in formulating principles of the sort just sketched. It would, e.g., be a mistake to identify the notion of normal environment found in externalist theories of attitude-individuation with the notion of epistemically normal circumstances. There are sides to epistemically normal circumstances which are quite independent of attitude-individuation. Conversely, there will be cases of changes in the normal environment which are epistemically insignificant for a particular line of reasoning.

Despite these crucial qualifications, the mind-externalist notion of a ‘normal environment’ has a substantive explanatory value in epistemology. Of course, its value is

commonly recognized in the epistemology of perception.¹⁹ But according to our transcendental argument, this ‘normal environment program’ plausibly extends to the epistemology of reasoning. This may be somewhat startling inasmuch as reasoning has traditionally been taken to be immune to empirical considerations. Indeed, a grand rationalist tradition is built on this dogma. In contention I have argued that the notion of a normal environment is relevant for notions such as ‘epistemic normality’ and ‘relevant alternative’ as they apply to epistemic reasoning. Accordingly, *abnormal* environmental conditions may undermine epistemic reasoning.

I have focused on how an attitude-externalist epistemology of reasoning may shed light on the question about normativity of the mental when conceived of as a question of epistemic normativity. However, the externalist conception of a normal environment illuminates the *general* thesis that representational mental states are epistemically normative. It does so because an externalist account sets forth general environmental constraints on epistemically normal circumstances – the circumstances relevant for epistemic evaluations of mental states and transitions between them. And it is in virtue of being subject to such evaluations that mental states are epistemically normative. Accordingly, epistemic norms and principles may be articulated by reference to the notion of the normal environment which is found in externalist theories of mental state individuation.

Alas, space has permitted nothing more than a programmatic attempt to illustrate how an attitude-externalist fueled ‘normal environment’-epistemology may provide a partial, but indispensable explanation of the ‘ought’ in ‘thought’.

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¹⁹ See, e.g., Davies (1991), Burge (2003), Peacocke (2004) *Op. Cit.*

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