



Gábor Forgács, Tihamér Margitay, Zolt Ziegler
forgacsg@gmail.com, margitay@filozofia.bme.hu,
batajba@gmail.com
Department of Philosophy and History of Science
www.filozofia.bme.hu

Epistemology: Summary I.



Knowledge and Belief

- Knowledge: **propositional knowledge** (knowing-that), **non-propositional knowledge** (knowing-how) (E.g. I can swim,
- Propositional knowledge is a special kind of belief-state
- Knowledge is **justified true belief**, that is, s knows that p if, and only if
 - s believes that p
 - s is justified in believing that p
 - p is true
- Justification **supplies reasons** for the belief that p . (It is a matter of degree.)
- This definition captures pretty much of what we require of knowledge.



Summary: Phenomenology

Consciousness needs to be examined → Consciousness cannot be a pure object → Consciousness is the condition of possibility of experience (as a space for experience) → Therefore, experience needs to be examined

Cogito: it is more natural to construct reality according to conscious experience rather than a naturalistic world view → consciousness is prior to every other way of pursuing knowledge

Analysis is required in order to determine 'real' and the contribution of consciousness to experience

Epoché: suspend (bracketing) our acceptance of the existence of the natural world.

Intentionality: All consciousness is about something ('aboutness')

Intentional Object: The object is constituted for consciousness by perception, memory, retention and protention, signification (simultaneously)

Intentional Experience: is never isolated: All perceptual experience is embedded in contexts *pragmatic, social, cultural*

Phenomenological Reduction: is to analyse the correlational interdependence between specific structures of subjectivity and specific modes of appearance or givenness.

Eidetic Variation: involves using our imagination to strip away the unessential properties of things.



Summary: Theories of Perception

	Reality 'Out There'	Illusion	Hallucination BIV/Matrix
Naïve realism	<i>Directly aware of the perceived (external) things: Object itself - Is perceived Exists Retain some properties: Perceptual knowledge is possible, since the objects are directly perceived.</i>	[1] If the objects themselves were directly perceived, it would be not possible to give an account of illusions. [2] It cannot be the case that people just misinterpret the object since they experience illusions and are often aware of the fact that what they actually perceive is an illusion	Hallucination: In case of hallucination, there is nothing out there, then naïve realism does not work, since it says the object itself is experienced. BIV: One can say that a projection by the Matrix/Demon is mind-independent. In this case, perceptual knowledge is possible since the object of perception is the projected vision.
Sense Data Theory	• We immediately perceive mental objects & • We perceive mediately the physical objects Perceptual knowledge is possible, because sense-datums represent the world	In case of illusion sense datums are <i>modified and/or affected</i> by some factors. Eg. if someone sees a mirage in the desert, then the experienced desert represented by sense datums is tied to the real desert but the experienced mirage (bunch of lake-like sense datums) fails to represent the desert properly.	In case of hallucination: <i>extra sense</i> – “fake” – datums are added, which do not refer to anything real. Seeing spiders on the wall, SD represent the spiders do not refer to anything real. In case of BIV: SDT holds the same, except that there are no sense datums which refer to real objects, since there are no real object at all. In this case, every experienced sense datums are “fake”.
Idealism	- there are only the sensations & world is composed of what we perceive only & Perceptual knowledge is possible, but the phrase 'out there' is meaningless according to Idealism.	Barkely gives an account for illusions: occur when we mistakenly infer from one experience to another: We have a visual idea of a broken stick immersed in water, and we mistakenly think that our tactile idea will also be of a broken stick. <i>'It is how a stick looks like immersed in water'</i> .	If only the experience exists, then the problem of external world is meaningless
Disjunctivism	- perception is mind-independent ≈ realism & Phenomenological indistinguishability does not & entail identity & Difference is mental & Perceptual knowledge is possible. Veridical perception is made true by real objects.	Illusion is a problematic* point of disjunctivism, since in case of illusion the object of the experience is „there” but misinterpreted or affected. It is hard to explain how it is possible and what kind of mental state is there in question. *Remember: Realism had problem with Illusion as well.	Even if the experience itself looks like the same as the veridical perception, it is not the same, in fact it is a genuinely different mental state, since it was brought about by a different source.



Induction

- We infer to general rules from *particular instances*.
- Induction as a process yielding knowledge cannot be justified.
- **The problem**: the belief that our inductive inferences which are based on experience give us reliable knowledge about the unobserved things **cannot be justified**.
 - Because the *justification* of induction *requires the inductive method itself*. We enumerate all the previous instances of inductive processes that yielded knowledge to induce the justification of induction.
- Goodman's New Riddle of Induction
- *Premise circularity vs. Rule circularity*
- **Abduction**: A type of inference in which *explanatory considerations are assigned special status*. (eg. Roommate already had breakfast)



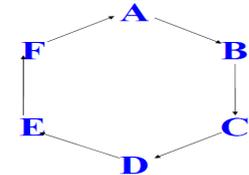
Skeptic Position: The Regress Argument

- P1:** If there is a justification of our beliefs, then it leads to the infinite or ends at an unjustified belief or runs in a circle or there are self-justified beliefs.
- P2:** The infinite reasoning cannot be a proper justification of our beliefs.
- P3:** The circular reasoning cannot be a proper justification of our beliefs.
- P4:** Appealing to unjustified belief cannot be proper justification.
- P5:** There are no self-justified beliefs.
- C:** *None of our beliefs are justified.*



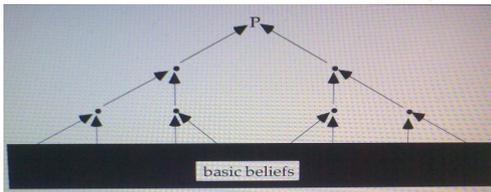
Summary: Foundationalism

Deny: P3: “The circular reasoning cannot be a proper justification of our beliefs” → **Circular Reasoning is Uninformative**



$(A \rightarrow B) \ \& \ (B \rightarrow C) \ \& \ (C \rightarrow D) \ \& \ (D \rightarrow E) \ \& \ (E \rightarrow F) \ \& \ (F \rightarrow A) \equiv A \rightarrow A$

Deny P5: “There are no self-justified beliefs” → there must be basic beliefs



*Our beliefs about our present sensory states are **INFALLIBLE** they cannot be proved wrong. „it seems...”*

P1.1: Now '0' seems to me a circle.

P2.1: If something seems to me circle, it is a circle

C: '0' is circle.

P1.1 is false → *Illucid dreams: 'p' - “I'm awake”* - This is proposition 'p' about my own mental state, and if I'm really awake I believe that I'm awake. But it is possible that I'm mistaken → **Being self-presenting doesn't mean that the belief is justified.**

↑ **Halucination** ↑

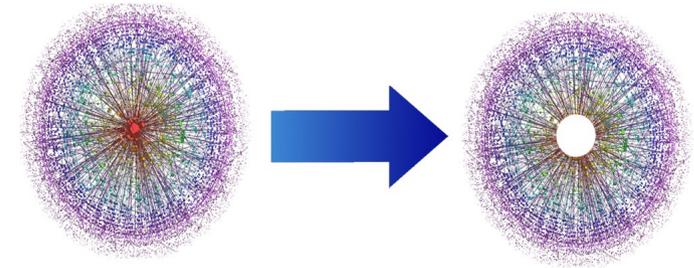
P2.1 is false → There are possible cases when I have *misperception*. *If one may misperceive something, then she mistakenly infer from the (mis)perception to its real features.* → **Being self-presenting does not entail certainty.**

↑ **Illusion** ↑



Coherentist Theory of Epistemic Justification

The central idea of coherentism is that the justification (justifiedness) of a belief depends on its coherence with other beliefs.



- **Belief p is justified if belongs to coherent system of beliefs**
 - Coherentist denies P4 (circular reasoning) & P3 (infinite reasoning).
 - Holistic coherence theories investigate the relationship between a certain belief and all other beliefs.
 - **Holistic justification:**
- A justified belief is more like *answering a question in the light of a whole set of relevant information* than like deducing a theorem by successive inferential steps from a set of axioms (basic beliefs).

Problems with the Coherentist Theory of Epistemic Justification



Department of Philosophy and History of Science

- Logical consistency is not *sufficient* for justification
- The Lottery Paradox
- The Preface Paradox
- Isolation Objection or Input Problem



Phenomenology vs. Idealism



Leonard Team

Suppose Leonard is a phenomenologist

- ***What similarities can you mention***
- ***What differences can you mention***

- ***As a phenomenologist, how could you criticize Sheldon?***
- ***How would you reply to Sheldon's criticism?***



Sheldon Team

Suppose Sheldon is an idealist

- ***What similarities can you mention***
- ***What differences can you mention***

- ***As an idealist, how could you criticize Leonard?***
- ***How would you reply to Leonard's criticism?***



Task

You see the following at a concert. You hear violin playing from the loudspeakers. Could 'That guy is playing the violin.' be granted the role of knowledge? Why? Why not?





Idealism vs. Sense Data Theory with Foundational



Leonard Team

Suppose Leonard is an idealist

How would he translate the previous problem of foundationalism

P1.1 is false → Illucid dreams: 'p' - "I'm awake" - This is proposition 'p' about my own mental state, and if I'm really awake I believe that I'm awake. But it is possible that I'm mistaken → **Being self-presenting doesn't mean that the belief is justified.**



Sheldon Team

P2.1 is false → There are possible cases when I have **misperception**. If one may misperceive something, then she mistakenly infer from the (mis)perception to its real features. → **Being self-presenting does not entail certainty.**

Suppose Sheldon is a Sense Data Theorist

How would he translate the previous problem of foundationalism



Theories of experience: Coherentism vs. Foundationalism



Leonard Team

Suppose Leonard wants to be a coherentist

- What theory of experience (Naïve Realism, SDT, Idealism, Disjunctivism, Phenomenology) is worth to possess if he wants to be a coherentist.

- Argue for his choice!

- Explain why he should be a ...!



Sheldon Team

Suppose Sheldon wants to be a foundationalist

- What theory of experience (Naïve Realism, SDT, Idealism, Disjunctivism, Phenomenology) is worth to possess if he wants to be a coherentist.

- Argue for his choice!

- Explain why he should be a ...!

What would be the easiest method for me to 'know' the following statements?



Department of Philosophy and History of Science



- Steve plays cards with his buddies every Thursday evening.
- My phone is in my coatpocket at the office.
- Neuron firings transmit electrons from one cell to an other.
- Water freezes at 0°C
- Goku defeats Freeza by attaining the Super saiyan form.

Theories of Explanation



Department of Philosophy and History of Science



Which theories explain the following phenomena the best?

- The lightbulb is out. It has to be switched for a new one.
- Have you seen that? Julie can't be together with that guy. That would be insane!
- The discovery of Neptune

The orbit of Uranus was discovered to be out of sync as predicted by Newton's theory of gravity. This might lead us to the conclusion that Newton's theory was false. Two astronomers suggested that Newton's theory was not false, there had to be something modifying the orbit of Uranus, and later Neptune was discovered.