

KBNS Self-Knowledge Seminar 6/4/18

**Attending:** Paul Conlan, Giovanni Merlo, Giacomo Melis, Xintong Wei, Peter Sullivan, Sam Symons, Indrek Lobus, Carrie Ichikawa Jenkins, Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa, Crispin Wright, Josh Thorpe

**Presenting:** Peter Sullivan

**Topic:** Summing up session on Immediacy and self-knowledge

## 1. On fact-awareness and McDowell

**Giovanni** asked two questions. Firstly, why exactly 'fact-awareness' is a less mysterious stopping point (in the justification architecture) than the judgment allegedly based on it? Secondly, what exactly is the relation between the 'fact awareness' and the judgment based on it? Last week Peter has some misgivings about taking that awareness to explain the judgment, Peter prefers to see the judgment as expressing that awareness. Reading McDowell makes me re-think the relation between the awareness and the corresponding judgment. On McDowell's view, minimally, it is our decision to judge the awareness as it is, e.g., whether the experience is presented as it is, which allows a gap between the awareness and judgment.

To Giovanni's second question, **Peter** responded that there is indeed a gap: in the case of perception, one might accept the appearance at its face value but one might not do that if one has good reasons to doubt it. So things can appear to be so and so and we have an idea of circumstances under which you would not take it to be so and so, but in the absence of those circumstances, you would take appearance at its face value. But this gap is different from the sort of gap Alston is concerned with in terms of object awareness. Encountering something and being able to make judgments about that thing, is a gap of a very different sort that the gap between appearances and accepting the appearances.

Regarding Giovanni's first question, **Peter** drew our attention to what's *the justified*, whether it is in the mind or outside the mind. Peter thinks that something in the mind cannot be justified by something outside the mind and vice versa. The cup on the table justifies that there is a cup on the table, but it cannot justify your belief that there is a cup on the table. **Giacomo** questioned that: what about when you are looking at the cup? **Peter** responded that my belief that there is cup is justified in the 'taking in' of the fact. The perceptual experience on which I base my belief is a good one and not a bad one. What is justified is the state of belief rather than the content of the belief. What you think the justifiers are depends on what you think what the justified things are. **Crispin** suggested the distinction between propositional and doxastic justification. The brute fact (about external world) itself cannot give one doxastic justification. Take a perceptual case. Suppose that what justifies the subject's belief is some mental state. If we work on this model (the justifiers are internal mental states for both perception and self-knowledge), can we still find a disanalogy between perception and self-knowledge? The occurrence of pain and my judgment of pain is exactly what on the McDowell's view a perceptual case is. On McDowell's view, the state of experience is in its nature already conceptualized. Justification arises from the transition from seeming p to believing p, where seeming p is independent but fully conceptualized state. **Peter** added that pain itself, although a mental phenomenal, plays the same role as a cup plays in the perceptual case.

**Giovanni** summarized that appealing to ‘fact awareness’ may be a promising way to capture the immediacy or groundlessness of self-knowledge. We have concluded that the Alston’s proposal wouldn’t work, because we cannot classify the set of self-justified beliefs by content. The upshot is that we need to appeal to the ‘ways’ in which we form those beliefs, e.g., the connection with the experience the beliefs are about. But why do these connections have to be the disjunctivist ones? Why couldn’t it be, for instance, an ‘attending to’ relation?

## 2. On Sosa’s challenge & rich vs minimal notion of acquaintance

**Peter** questioned Sosa’s conclusion that appealing to sensitivity or some other counterfactual constraint to draw the distinction between epistemically effective and ineffective features would leave no role to play for acquaintance (see the end of P.4 of the handout). **Carrie** agreed, she thinks that the fact that some counterfactual connection is required doesn’t negate that the direct experiential component plays a role in grounding the belief in question. **Peter** expanded on Carrie’s thought and said that if we have a minimal notion of acquaintance, e.g., to be acquainted with F is to have an experience with feature F, it doesn’t seem implausible for Sosa to argue that competence or reliability is required in discerning F-ness. However, in perceptual case, the role played by experience doesn’t disappear when we add the reliability requirement. I don’t see why we should give up acquaintance theory. **Jonathan** responded that Sosa is attacking the standard motivation for acquaintance theory. It is coherent to suppose both acquaintance and competence or reliability have important roles to play. However, once we see that acquaintance theory is insufficient to account for some cases—that you still need to evoke externalist notions, the motivation for acquaintance.

**Giovanni** wondered about the speckled hen case. One necessary condition for the possession of recognitional concepts is the competence to apply the concept in question. This puts another option on the table to explain the speckled hen case, namely, one doesn’t have the relevant recognitional concept. My experience of the speckled hen is full-fledged, however, I don’t have the right kind of concept because it is a concept that I’m not good at applying and not competent with. The acquaintance theory could say that concept possession is presupposed and concepts require competence. **Peter** responded that what is crucial seems to be how we understand ‘mere acquaintance’ is (as on the top of p.4 on the handout). On this minimal notion of acquaintance, you could be acquainted with a phenomenal feature F without possessing the relevant concept. Acquaintance merely provides the access to the thing of which I make judgment of. Acquaintance is being assigned with the role ‘seeing’ not ‘seeing that so and so’.

**Crispin** pointed out even if we suppose that there is some counterfactual connection between the character of the experience and the propositional content of the judgment’, such connection need not be externalist in nature. It is externalist only if the grounding of such counterfactual connection involves external facts. In the case in hand, the grounding would be experience. So Sosa’s point doesn’t go through. In reaction to this thought, **Giovanni** mentioned a paper by Getler (?), in which she discusses the question of explanatory priority: does acquaintance ground the sensitivity condition or whether the sensitivity condition is independent of acquaintance.

### 3. On Chalmers

In reaction to Chalmers' comment that 'I cannot go wrong in the ...cardinality that I attribute to the [phenomenal array]', **Crispin** wondered about what 'cardinality' means here. **Giovanni** suggested that cardinality property may be captured by 'this is thus.' **Crispin** argued that if so, one can go wrong with attributing cardinality to the phenomenal array because I can go wrong with demonstrative judgments because I can make incoherent demonstrative judgments. **Peter** suggested that the cardinality property of the phenomenal array of dots cannot be 'the perceived array has whatever dots it has' but 'the perceived array has this many dots'. What makes 'this many' a cardinality property? One can characterize a kind of belief in such a way that beliefs of such a kind would be infallible. But Chalmers does not admit that there are such beliefs. There is a clear difference between experiencing phenomenal yellowness and experiencing a particle accelerator. Our concept of yellowness stands much closer to the experience of phenomenal yellowness than our concept of particle accelerator stands to the experience of seeing a particle accelerator. There is more to the concept of particle accelerator than a perceptual encounter of it could give us. Peter is not entirely unsympathetic to Chalmers' project but Peter thinks given the minimal notion of acquaintance Chalmers endorses in the paper, all the work is done by the cognitive background.