

Knowledge for Nothing

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Let *Entitlement Epistemology* be the theory of knowledge which says that *entitlement*—a special kind of unearned warrant to accept or believe—can help us successfully address a range of sceptical arguments.¹ Prominent versions of this theory urge that epistemology should not be concerned with knowledge (and similar externalist states) but rather with justification, warrant, and entitlement (at least insofar as these are conceived of as internalist states). Knowledge does not come first, half-way, or even last in epistemological theorising—rather, it ought to come *nowhere*.²

The goal in what follows is two-fold: Firstly, to assess whether this extreme internalist version of Entitlement Epistemology is at all sustainable. (We shall find that it is not.) Secondly, to articulate a version of Entitlement Epistemology which arguably does much better. On the view to be explored, knowledge does not drop out of the epistemological picture: if we allow that there can be warrant for nothing, then there can be knowledge for nothing too.

Here is a way of thinking about the news in what follows: any form of Entitlement Epistemology must take entitlement to be a purely internal matter—determined by the internal states of the subject. How, then, can there be knowledge for nothing? How can an entitlement

¹ The particular focus here is on the version of Entitlement Epistemology developed by Wright (1985, 1991, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2014) as it is specifically conceived to address scepticism. Other—variously different—conceptions of entitlement are given by Burge (1993, 2003), Davies (1998, 2000, 2004), Graham (2012), Peacocke (2004), and, to some extent, Dretske (2000).

² Wright (2017) draws the conclusion that making sense of the so-called variability data for “knows”—whereby “S knows that *p*” may differ in assertibility across contexts which merely differ in respect of what is at stake for the subject and /or attributor of knowledge—in the end may call for a kind of deflationism about knowledge which, Wright thinks, enforces an alternative route to a Knowledge-Nowhere conception of epistemology. The problem with such a proposal is that there is also, arguably, a set of variability data for “justified in asserting /believing”. If so, by parity of Wright’s reasoning, that would call for a kind of deflationism with respect to justification which would then enforce a *Justification-Nowhere* view of epistemology too. But that upshot is incompatible with Wright’s (1991) avowal of the Russellian Retreat whereby we should ditch knowledge but nonetheless keep justification in our epistemological theorising.

story work for knowledge? In what follows, I outline an entitlement story for knowledge—but only via piggybacking on an internalist story about entitlement. Crudely, the view on offer is: knowledge for nothing = (internalist) entitlement plus Minimal Externalism, where this latter view says that in order to know (some external matter) then the external world must cooperate more than by making the proposition believed true. Truth comes for free. The additional external cooperation needed in order to know comes for free. Entitlement comes for free. So, there can be knowledge for nothing. Entitlements should not be thought of as external conditions on warrant or knowledge—otherwise entitlement would just be a story about how much the external world has to cooperate in order to know. We already have that broad story from Minimal Externalism (which in turn just reveals the basic lesson of the Gettier debate). So, when you hear an epistemologist giving an entitlement story for knowledge, be bold and ask them the question: are entitlements determined just by internal matters? If they answer *no*, they are simply confused. If they answer *yes*, then offer them the knowledge-for-nothing story given here.

1. Entitlement Epistemology: The Thumbnail Version.

In brief, the central components of Entitlement Epistemology—in the internalist form considered here—are as follows:

- (1) *The Russellian Retreat*: Cartesian Scepticism concerning knowledge is correct: knowledge of (external matters) is impossible. Nonetheless, our ordinary beliefs remain (in some sense) warranted.
- (2) *Knowledge-Nowhere Epistemology*: Epistemology should not be concerned with knowledge (and similar externalist states) but rather with justification, warrant, and entitlement (at least insofar as these are conceived of as internalist states).³
- (3) *Endogenous Scepticism Remains*: A form of scepticism nonetheless remains in place which purports to show that even *internalist* justification is impossible.⁴
- (4) *Diagnosis*: Endogenous Scepticism gets a grip because it is easy to overlook the possibility of *entitlement*—a special kind of unearned warrant to believe, a kind of “warrant for nothing”.⁵

³ Contrast: the *Knowledge-First Epistemology* of Williamson (2000) whereby knowledge is the most central, basic notion of epistemological theory.

⁴ Wright (2004) dubs this I-II-III Scepticism.

⁵ Entitlements can be defeated in the sense that a subject is entitled to believe that *p* only if the subject is not justified in believing that not-*p*.

- (5) *Internalism*: Entitlements are internal in the sense that whether or not a subject is entitled to believe some proposition is determined solely by what is going on inside the subject; only a suitably internalist theory can address Endogenous Scepticism.
- (6) *Warrant is Disjunctive*: a warrant is evidential (a justification) or non-evidential (an entitlement).⁶
- (7) *Justification is Conservative*: Whether or not we are justified in believing some ordinary proposition concerning the external world depends upon collateral/background information.
- (8) *(Non-standard) Foundationalism*: Non-basic beliefs (e.g. my belief that I am sitting by the fire) admit of justification; basic, so-called “cornerstone” beliefs (e.g. my belief that there is a material world) cannot be justified—but merely admit of entitlement (and so remain warranted).⁷
- (9) *Warrant is, but Justification is not, closed*: If one is justified (and so warranted) in believing A, and one knows that B follows from A, then it follows that one is entitled to believe B, but it does not follow that one is justified in believing B.
- (10) *Begging the Question*: Entitlement Epistemology yields a diagnosis as to why Moore's Proof of an External World is unpersuasive and, more generally, provides a general account of what it is for an argument to beg the question.⁸

Let's take these features in turn, beginning with Cartesian Scepticism.

2. Cartesian Scepticism concerning knowledge.

A generic formulation of Cartesian Scepticism concerning knowledge (hereafter: “Cartesian Scepticism”) runs as follows: Let the *non-sceptical case* be the case where appearances concerning external matters are veridical (and thus my beliefs concerning such matters are true). Let the *sceptical case* be the case where these appearances are not veridical (and thus my beliefs concerning such matters are false). Furthermore, suppose that the sceptical case and the non-sceptical case are phenomenally alike: what appears to be thus and so in one case appears to be

⁶ Here, for the purposes of assessing Entitlement Epistemology, an internalist notion of evidence is being assumed whereby, roughly, a subject's evidence is determined by their internal states (see below).

⁷ Burge (2003), like Wright, takes it that basic beliefs merely admit of entitlement, not justification. However, Burge and Wright differ as to which beliefs count as basic. Furthermore, Wright takes entitlements to be internal, while Burge (*ibid.*, pp. 504-5) does not. This makes the two views very different.

⁸ A further feature of Entitlement Epistemology—in Wright's hands—is that it is inspired by Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (see esp. Wright 1985, but also his 2004, pp. 188-90). This aspect of the view will not be considered here. Another aspect of Wright's view which will not be considered is that entitlements, for Wright, come in four main forms: *strategic* entitlements (pp. 178-188) which, at best, provide a response to what Wright dubs methodological scepticism; *entitlements of rational deliberation* (2004, pp. 197-200); *entitlements of substance* (2004, pp. 200-203); and *entitlements of cognitive project* which, he thinks, are fit to address what I dub Endogenous Scepticism—see below (2004, pp.188-197).

thus and so in the other. Thus, I cannot discriminate, on the basis of how things appear, the sceptical case from the non-sceptical case—at least in respect of obtaining.⁹ So, the sceptical thought goes, I cannot know that the sceptical case fails to obtain. But in order to know any ordinary proposition concerning external matters e.g., to know that I am sitting by the fire, requires that I *do* know that the sceptical case fails to obtain. Thus, I cannot have such ordinary knowledge. Moreover, without such knowledge, I should not only not assert ordinary, humdrum propositions, I should not believe them to be true.

3. *The Russellian Retreat and Knowledge-Nowhere Epistemology.*

The final stage of Cartesian Scepticism should always be included because it represents a point at which one might respond as follows: knowledge of ordinary propositions (e.g. that I have two hands, two legs, and two eyes) is indeed impossible, but we nonetheless remain warranted in believing such propositions to be true. Cartesian Scepticism is only truly troublesome if one ought to believe (or assert) some proposition only if one knows that proposition is true; that is, if knowledge is the norm of assertion and belief. The thought then goes that such a norm is far too strong and that something much weaker than knowledge—namely mere warrant—is the right norm.¹⁰

The most vocal articulation of such a concessive response to Cartesian Scepticism is given by Wright:

knowledge is not really the proper central concern of epistemologico-sceptical inquiry. [...] We can live with the concession that we do not, strictly, *know* some of the things we believed ourselves to know, provided we can retain the thought that we are fully [warranted] in accepting them. That concession is what we might call the Russellian Retreat. For Russell (1912, Chs I and II) proposed that such is exactly the message which philosophical epistemology generally has for us: we must content ourselves with probability, defeasibility and inconclusive justifications where standardly we had wanted to claim more (Wright 1991, p. 88).¹¹

⁹ We can, of course, discriminate them in thought since we know that they have different properties: in the sceptical case my beliefs concerning external matters are all false, in the non-sceptical case my beliefs are mostly true.

¹⁰ See Williamson (2000, ch.11), DeRose (2002), Hawthorne (2004). Sutton (2005) defends a knowledge norm for belief; see also Williamson (2000, pp. 255-6). Lackey (2007) defends a justification norm for assertion.

¹¹ I have changed “justified” to “warranted” to keep terminology uniform throughout.

Thus, The Russellian Retreat not only replaces the knowledge norm with some weaker norm, but seeks to eliminate knowledge from epistemological theorising entirely.¹² Call this view: *Knowledge-Nowhere Epistemology*.

4. Cartesian Scepticism concerning warrant.

For the Russellian Retreat—and Knowledge-Nowhere Epistemology—to be at all workable, the fall-back must be to a conception of warrant weak enough to avoid a reformulation of Cartesian Scepticism. One such reformulation runs: since the sceptical case and the non-sceptical case are phenomenally alike then we cannot discriminate between them on the basis of appearances—at least in respect of obtaining. But if we cannot tell them apart on that basis (in respect of the property of obtaining) then there is simply no way we can warrantably or justifiably believe that: one of the cases has the property of obtaining and the other lacks this property. So, the sceptical thought goes, one cannot warrantably/justifiably believe that the sceptical case fails to obtain. Consequently, one cannot warrantably/justifiably believe any ordinary proposition concerning external matters. So, not only is knowledge (of external matters) unobtainable, but warrant and justification too. Upshot: the Russellian Retreat is misguided since it cannot retreat far enough to avoid all toxic forms of Cartesian Scepticism.

Or so it would seem. As it turns out, when Cartesian Scepticism is advanced against warrant (or justification) the argument fails because it deploys an illicit notion of indiscriminability—illicit, because it depends upon a principle which ought to be rejected by those who advocate an internalist notion of justification/warrant. To see why that is so, we first need to unpick the notion of indiscriminability employed in the Cartesian argument against warrant employed above.

5. Two accounts of indiscriminability.

The epistemic notion of indiscriminability employed in standard Cartesian Scepticism is roughly as follows:

¹² Littlejohn (2013) considers (and rejects) a much more inclusive conception of the Russellian Retreat whereby one retreats if one drops externalist norms (of belief) in favour of internalist norms.

(KI) Case x is indiscriminable from case y , for a subject S , in respect of the property of obtaining, if and only if S is not in a position to know that: one of these cases obtains and the other does not.¹³

In contrast, the notion of indiscriminability employed in the reformulated argument is roughly as follows:

(WI) Case x is indiscriminable from case y , for a subject S , in respect of the property of obtaining, if and only if S is not in a position to warrantably believe that: one of these cases obtains and the other does not.¹⁴

6. How should we respond to Cartesian Scepticism directed at justification or at warrant?

It is a platitude that discriminable cases are (qualitatively) different and numerically distinct.¹⁵ Here the idea is that in order to tell cases apart they must, of course, differ in respect of at least one (relevant) property (and as a result be numerically distinct). Any respectable account of discriminability and indiscriminability should respect this platitude. On the epistemic conception of indiscriminability embedded in KI that is done so via the factivity of “being in a position to know”: when a subject is in a position to know that p then p .¹⁶ So, e.g., when a subject is in a position to know both that the non-sceptical case obtains and that the sceptical

¹³ Read “ x is indiscriminable from y for a subject S ” as saying that S is not in a position to discriminate x from y . That ensures that the modality—whatever it is exactly—on either side of the biconditional is the same. Note also that if one is in a position to know that the non-sceptical case obtains then, since these cases are known to be incompatible, via the closure of being in a position to know (which is surely valid in such a case), one is thus in a position to know that the sceptical case fails to obtain. Likewise, for being in a position to know that the sceptical case obtains one is thereby in a position to know that the non-sceptical case fails to obtain. In other words, if one is in a position to know that either case obtains, then given KI, one is in a position to discriminate them (in respect of obtaining).

¹⁴ Williamson (1990/2013) defends the view that x and y are indiscriminable (under a mode of presentation) if and only if one cannot activate the knowledge that they are numerically distinct (under that mode of presentation). This captures a version of what may be termed *numerical* indiscriminability. The account here, apart from using “warrant to believe” rather than “knows”, is rather concerned with *qualitative* indiscriminability. For simplicity, I have omitted relativisation to modes of presentation and I have also omitted relativisation to methods/bases, important as that is for properly understanding the nature of the indiscriminability relation.

¹⁵ Cf. Williamson (1990/2013, p. 1).

¹⁶ On the factivity of being in a position to know see Williamson (2000, p. 95).

case fails to obtain then, given this factivity property, the non-sceptical case obtains and the sceptical case fails to obtain. So, these cases are qualitatively different.¹⁷

If WI is to embed a respectable notion of discriminability/indiscriminability then it, too, must respect the platitude that discriminable cases are (qualitatively) different and numerically distinct. In order to do that then “being in a position to warrantedly believe” must also be factive: when a subject is in a position to warrantedly believe that p then p . So, e.g., when a subject is in a position to warrantedly believe that the non-sceptical case obtains and that the sceptical fails to obtain then the non-sceptical case obtains and the sceptical case fails to obtain. So, likewise, these cases are qualitatively different.

How does this help respond to Cartesian Scepticism (concerning external matters) targeted at justification or warrant? On the one hand, if one thinks that a subject is warranted/justified in believing that the sceptical case does not obtain, *and* such a notion of warrant/justification is an internalist notion, then “being in a position to warrantedly/justifiedly believe that” cannot be a factive notion. Factive notions of warrant/justification are externalist in the sense that whether a subject is warranted/justified in believing that p will, in part, depend on the world. So, the reformulated argument fails to show that internalist warrant (or justification) is impossible since it relies on a conception of indiscriminability, which in turn relies on a principle, which is rejected on an internalist conception of warrant/justification.

On the other hand, if one thinks that it is possible to gain externalist warrant or justification to believe that the sceptical case does not obtain then one must address Cartesian Scepticism against justification/warrant in the same way one addresses Cartesian Scepticism concerning knowledge. In other words, we must first work out what notion of warrant/justification is being employed—internal or external—before we can deploy the right kind of anti-sceptical strategy against this form of Cartesian Scepticism.

The point being made here is important and has to, to my mind at least, not been taken on board in the sceptical debate. There are plenty of epistemologists who blithely take it that a subject, who is in the sceptical case, is nonetheless warranted/justified in believing ordinary propositions.¹⁸ However, these epistemologists simply omit to address the form of Cartesian Scepticism targeted against internalist warrant/justification, let alone put their finger on where this form of Scepticism goes wrong.¹⁹ As we have just seen such forms of scepticism employ a conception of indiscriminability which embeds an externalist notion of warrant/justification—

¹⁷ Here I am using a generous conception of qualitative property.

¹⁸ See the discussion of the so-called New Evil Demon problem below.

¹⁹ Note that one cannot solve the Cartesian paradox in hand by simply offering up an internalist conception of justification (e.g. a phenomenalist one whereby S is (prima facie) justified in believing that p when and only when it seems to S that p) and then claiming that this just shows that Cartesian Scepticism targeted against internalist warrant is misguided. Rather, that just makes the Cartesian proof *more* paradoxical. A proper solution must locate exactly where the proof goes wrong.

as such, the argument, when properly understood, fails to show that internalist justification/warrant is impossible. This provides an entirely effective, non-specific, minimal treatment of Cartesian Scepticism targeted at against internal justification—a kind of philosophical aspirin.²⁰ Nothing more is needed—no complex, expensive, or fancily-packaged theory of justification is called for.²¹

7. Internalism about warrant and Internalism-Everywhere Epistemology.

The Russellian Retreat thus requires something like the following conception of warrant:

Internalism about Warrant:

- (1) If two possible subjects are internally alike then they are alike in terms of the degree to which they are warranted in believing some proposition (and so it follows that one subject is warranted in believing that some proposition if and only if the other is).²²
- (2) If a subject is warranted in believing that p then they are warranted in believing (via reflection) that they are warranted in believing that p .²³

Correspondingly, we have:

Externalism about Warrant: Internalism about Warrant is false. Either (1) is false or (2) is false (or both are false).²⁴

²⁰ Of course, one might have a theory of justification which simply does not allow for an (interesting) internalist conception of justification (e.g. Williamson 2000, Littlejohn 2013). Fine. The form of the treatment here is: if one does accept that an envatted subject is justified in their beliefs concerning external matters then one should address Cartesian Scepticism targeted at internalist justification via the minimalist treatment given in the main text.

²¹ See my *Knowledge: In Sickness and in Health* for a more thorough discussion including an assessment as to whether this minimal treatment can also in some way be extended to address Cartesian Scepticism targeted against external justification or knowledge.

²² For our purposes—of addressing scepticism—internal likeness can be taken to be physical likeness within the skin (aliqueness in terms of intrinsic physical properties within the skin), rather than phenomenal likeness or mental likeness. For a principle of Internalism (with respect to doxastic justification) given in terms of mental likeness, see Conee and Feldman (2001, p. 234).

²³ I have added in this second clause because the form of Entitlement Epistemology sponsored by Wright is such that whether or not one is warranted in believing some proposition is a reflectively accessible matter—one is in a position find out whether or not one is entitled to believe some proposition.

²⁴ Under certain assumptions, (2) entails (1) but we need not pursue that here.

The Retreat then becomes: knowledge and *externalist* warrant are impossible; we are, nonetheless, *internally* warranted in believing ordinary propositions. In the wake of this Retreat, is not simply Knowledge-Nowhere Epistemology but:

Internalism-Everywhere Epistemology: Epistemologico-sceptical inquiry should only concern itself with internalistically determined (and reflectively accessible) states.²⁵

The Russellian Retreat, so conceived, faces a number of immediate problems.

Firstly, if ordinary knowledge is impossible then ordinary speakers are systematically in error in ascribing knowledge to themselves and others. But what plausible account can be given of such error?²⁶ Secondly, what reasons are there to prefer some warrant norm of belief or assertion over the knowledge norm? (As we shall see below, these problems are related.) Thirdly, if the Russellian Retreat is to be taken at all seriously then one must first establish that all responses to Cartesian Scepticism are unworkable. While some pessimism with respect to establishing an acceptable response to Cartesian Scepticism is justified—given the lack of consensus in this long debate—it remains overly jaundiced to think that all possible responses are to be found wanting. What, for instance, of the many externalist responses to Cartesian Scepticism?

8. *Externalist responses to Cartesian Scepticism concerning knowledge.*

Externalist responses to Cartesian Scepticism (concerning knowledge) represent a broad family of views.²⁷ Nonetheless, the shared feature of such views is that, in one way or another, they posit some important external difference between the sceptical case and the non-sceptical case

²⁵ In what follows, I often simply speak of Knowledge-Nowhere epistemology but intend that to subsume Internalism-Everywhere epistemology too.

²⁶ No such error-theory is forthcoming in Wright (1991). In (2004, fn. 24, p. 207), Wright briefly floats (but falls short of endorsing) the possibility that a response to Scepticism must in the end involve some kind of conceptual revision whereby our old concepts (of knowledge and justification) are to be revised (or replaced) in order to properly address Scepticism. This option sits very unhappily with the Wittgenstein inspired basis for Entitlement Epistemology given that philosophy “leaves everything as it is” for Wittgenstein. Moreover, it is hard to find anything like The Russellian Retreat in Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*.

²⁷ The most prominent forms include: Relevant Alternative Theories (Dretske 1970, Goldman 1986), Sensitivity Theories (Nozick 1981), Safety Theories (Sosa 1999), Disjunctivist Theories (McDowell 1982, 1994), and Primitivist Theories (Williamson 2000). Pritchard’s elegant defence of Epistemological Disjunctivism counts as offering an externalist response, in the sense given in the main text, despite having a (certain kind of) reflective accessibility requirement on one’s reasons to believe (see Pritchard 2012).

which is, allegedly, enough to secure that the subject has knowledge (of ordinary external matters) in the non-sceptical case (but lacks such knowledge in the sceptical case).²⁸

Should Cartesian Scepticism (targeted at knowledge) be addressed by some substantial and specific form of Externalism (concerning knowledge)? Furthermore, can we then combine such Externalism with an Entitlement story which is then used to address most forms of Scepticism which target internalist justification?²⁹ Whether the various combinations would make for happy marriages is beyond the scope of this essay.³⁰ Fortunately, for our immediate purposes, there is a non-specific and lightweight version of externalism (concerning knowledge) which can be readily combined with Entitlement Epistemology namely *Minimalism*.

9. *Minimalism about knowledge.*

What may be termed *Minimalism about Knowledge* subsumes a neutral and non-specific kind of externalism (concerning knowledge).³¹ This lightweight form of externalism says in effect that whether or not a subject knows some proposition (concerning external matters) does not simply depend on the internal (intrinsic physical) states of the subject plus the truth of the proposition believed but also depends on some additional external factor. What this factor consists in, the theory is silent on—we simply know that it has to be present in order to have knowledge of some (ordinary) external matter. All other more substantial and specific externalist theories entail this minimal kind of externalism (though not vice versa). With such a lightweight view in hand it proves possible to address all relevant forms of Cartesian Scepticism but without the untoward side-effects of the more specific, substantial forms of externalism.³² Furthermore, it does better than (nearly all of) these specific theories when it comes to a range of strengthened sceptical paradoxes, paradoxes which re-use the conceptual repertoire and claims of some substantial externalist theory to construct stronger sceptical arguments.³³ Since such a minimal

²⁸ Cf. Dretske (2003).

²⁹ Given the discussion in §6, an entitlement story is not needed to address Cartesian Scepticism targeted at (internalist) justification.

³⁰ On a McDowell (1982) and Pritchard view (2012), the subject in the sceptical case lacks reasons to believe ordinary propositions. That is hard (though not impossible) to square with Entitlement Epistemology as outlined here as the subject is justified in believing such ordinary propositions according to an entitlement story.

³¹ It also subsumes a neutral and non-specific form of internalism concerning knowledge.

³² Recall the shared feature of all externalist responses to scepticism mentioned in the previous section. A minimal kind of externalist solution also posits some external difference between the non-sceptical case and the sceptical case which is enough to secure that the subject has knowledge in the non-sceptical case. However, unlike substantial, specific externalist theories the theory is silent on what this external difference consists in (as well as taking no stand as to whether the subject's evidence is better in the non-sceptical case).

³³ See my *Knowledge: In Sickness and in Health*, for the full elaboration and defence of this lightweight view.

treatment is available to (nearly) all partisans, including those tempted by The Russellian Retreat, then the upshot is that The Russellian Retreat is far too premature. So, this minimal treatment works happily alongside an internalist form of Entitlement Epistemology.

10. *Type I and Type II Entitlement Epistemology.*

Given the possibility of a minimalist response to scepticism, we can draw a distinction between two very different versions of Entitlement Epistemology:

	Type I Entitlement Epistemology	Type II Entitlement Epistemology
Cartesian Scepticism concerning Knowledge	Concede that Cartesian Scepticism shows that knowledge is impossible.	Invoke Minimalism (or perhaps some substantial conception of knowledge) to address Cartesian Scepticism.
Knowledge Norm on Assertion and belief.	NO	That depends on whether one allows for both internalist and externalist norms on assertion/belief (see below).
The Russellian Retreat	YES	NO
Knowledge Nowhere Epistemology	YES	NO
Cartesian Scepticism directed at internalist justification.	Reject the conception of indiscriminability used in the argument on the grounds that it depends upon an externalist conception of justification/warrant.	Reject the conception of indiscriminability used in the argument on the grounds that it depends upon an externalist conception of justification/warrant.
Cartesian Scepticism directed at externalist justification.	Concede that such scepticism shows that externalist justification is impossible	Invoke Minimalism (or perhaps some substantial conception of knowledge/justification) to address such Scepticism.
Internal Norm(s) on Assertion and Belief	YES	That depends on whether one allows for both internalist and externalist norms on assertion/belief (see below).
New Evil Demon Problem	Address with Entitlement (see below).	Address with Entitlement (see below).
Endogenous Scepticism (in the guise of I-II-III Scepticism).	Address with Entitlement (see below).	Address with Entitlement (see below).

Which version does better? This is the main question in what follows.

11. *The New Evil Demon Problem.*

The New Evil Demon Problem was originally posed as a problem for reliabilist theories of justification under which the reliability of a belief-forming method is taken to be (partly) determined by the environment in which the method is employed.³⁴ In such theories, the

³⁴ See Cohen and Lehrer (1983), Cohen (1984).

subject in the sceptical case is not warranted in believing an ordinary proposition because their method of belief formation does not yield true beliefs (concerning external matters) in such a case. The (internalist) thought then goes that this is implausible—for the subject is, at least in some sense, forming their belief in the right kind of way such that they are warranted in believing ordinary propositions to be true. If this is a genuine problem then it is a problem for any externalist account of justification or warrant and not simply for reliabilist conceptions (which utilise an externalist account of reliability).³⁵

Given the Russellian Retreat, Type I Entitlement Epistemology looks well-placed to address the New Evil Demon Problem: while we cannot know that the sceptical case fails to obtain, on such a view, we are nonetheless (internally) warranted in believing that such a case fails to obtain. However, while the Russellian Retreat seems sufficient to vindicate the (internalist) intuitions at work in the New Evil Demon Problem, it is not necessary. Type II Entitlement Epistemology is able to vindicate these intuitions also—it just doesn't do so via The Russellian Retreat.

12. Norm Internalism and Norm Externalism.

How do Type I and Type II Entitlement Epistemology stand on the norms governing assertion and belief? Type I Entitlement Epistemology, given its commitment to Internalism-Everywhere Epistemology, entails:

Norm Internalism: All the norms governing assertion and belief (and cognate states/ actions) are internal, i.e. specified in terms of conditions which are internalistically determined (and reflectively accessible to the subject).

Type II Entitlement Epistemology does not entail Norm Internalism but is compatible with it. That's because Norm Internalism is not required to address the New Evil Demon Problem. For example, one might posit a hybrid view whereby assertion (or belief) is governed by both a primary norm such as the knowledge norm, and a secondary norm such as an (internalist) justification norm. So, at least on one dimension of evaluation, the subject in the sceptical case can still correctly believe or assert that they, e.g., are sitting by the fire—since they at least satisfy the secondary (internalist) norm of belief/ assertion.³⁶ Such a hybrid view is thus committed to:

³⁵ See Wedgwood (2002). An internalist account of reliability is Goldman's normal worlds reliabilism whereby the subject in the sceptical case is using a (normal worlds) reliable method of belief formation and so counts as having a justified belief—in an internalist sense of justification. See Goldman (1986), cf. Graham (2012).

³⁶ Cf. DeRose (2002) on primary and secondary propriety.

Weak Norm Externalism: Not all the norms governing assertion and belief (and cognate states/actions) are internal norms.

Type II, but not Type I, Entitlement Epistemology is compatible with Weak Norm Externalism. A stronger form of Norm Externalism runs as follows:

Strong Norm Externalism: None of the norms governing assertion and belief (and cognate states/actions) are internal norms.

Such a view is committed to denying that the subject in the sceptical case satisfies the norm of belief—at best such subject's beliefs are excusable but not normatively correct in believing, e.g., that they are sitting by the fire.³⁷ Type I and Type II Entitlement Epistemology are both incompatible with Strong Norm Externalism.

Why bother with all this taxonomy? Because it is important to recognise that a swing to Internalism in Epistemology—via Entitlement, via vindicating the internalist intuitions in The New Evil Demon Problem, via Norm Internalism—need not be in any way motivated by The Russellian Retreat (and Internalism-Everywhere Epistemology). Indeed, we shall see that such a swing to Internalism not only need not but *cannot* be motivated by The Russellian Retreat—on pain of incoherence.

Let's first see how Entitlement Epistemology addresses (a form of) *Endogenous Scepticism*.

13. *Endogenous versus Exogenous Scepticism.*

Endogenous Scepticism targets whether our ordinary beliefs (concerning either the external world or the internal world of our own minds) have the right kind of *internal* pedigree. It purports to show that our beliefs (concerning internal or external matters) cannot possess certain important *internal* properties (such as bearing the right relations to other beliefs, being (internally) well-founded, and so on) and so cannot count as being internally justified. If knowledge requires (internal) justification then Endogenous scepticism can, in turn, be used to argue that knowledge (concerning internal or external matters) is impossible. One form of Endogenous Scepticism is I-II-III Scepticism, of which more below.³⁸

In contrast, *Exogenous Scepticism* (such as Cartesian Scepticism about knowledge of external matters) targets whether our beliefs have the right kind of external pedigree. Such scepticism purports to show that even if a subject is functioning normally on the inside, and

³⁷ Cf. Williamson (2000, pp. 255-6).

³⁸ Another form is Cartesian Scepticism concerning internal matters.

forming their beliefs in the right kind of way—from an internal perspective at least—they nonetheless cannot obtain knowledge (or external justification) of external matters. Thus, while both forms of Scepticism can be used to target knowledge, they do so via very different routes.

The distinction is crucial because it is not uncommon to think that Cartesian Scepticism is *exclusively* a form of Endogenous Scepticism—that Cartesian Sceptical arguments should be interpreted as solely targeting internal justification, and, in turn, knowledge (at least if knowledge is taken to require internal justification). The thought then goes that to properly address Cartesian Scepticism concerning knowledge we merely have to secure that a subject is internally justified in holding the beliefs that they do. That's highly misguided. As we have seen, Cartesian Scepticism can be seen as targeting knowledge (or external justification) or it can be seen as targeting internal justification. These are two different kinds of Cartesian Scepticism which, as we saw above, which receive very different treatments.

Let's now turn to a prominent form of Endogenous Scepticism: I-II-III Scepticism.

14. Cornerstone propositions and beliefs.

Consider the propositions: *I am not dreaming*, *There is a material world*, *The world did not come into existence five minutes ago*, *My experiences are currently veridical*. Following Wright, call these: *cornerstone propositions*. Call beliefs having these propositional contents: *cornerstone beliefs*.³⁹ Wright characterises cornerstone propositions thus:

Call a proposition a cornerstone for a given region of thought just in case it would follow from a lack of warrant for it that one could not rationally claim warrant for any belief in the region (2004, pp.167-8).

The rough idea is that cornerstone beliefs, as the name suggests, are more fundamental than non-cornerstone beliefs in the sense that if you lose a warrant for a cornerstone then you lose the warrant for a plethora of less fundamental beliefs the warrant for which, in one way or another, depends upon having a warrant for the cornerstone; but not vice versa.

³⁹ Wright (2004) invokes the attitudes of "acceptance" and "trust" rather than belief on the grounds that (i) belief is a cognitive achievement but accepting a cornerstone proposition is no kind of cognitive achievement. (ii) The norms of belief are evidential norms and since there can be no evidence for cornerstone propositions then the idea that belief is the right attitude to take to cornerstone propositions is misplaced. With respect to the first worry, we readily ascribe beliefs in cornerstone propositions to subjects who have not even (actively) considered the proposition concerned. A sufficiently rich taxonomy of belief should make room for *background* or *standing* beliefs – beliefs that a subject has in their belief box even though they may not have made the corresponding judgment. So, some beliefs involve no kind of cognitive achievement. With respect to the second worry, the glib answer is: simply allow that the norm of belief is a warrant norm and not a justification norm. See §18. (Alas, there is not space to consider these issues more fully.)

A further important feature of cornerstone beliefs is that whether or not a particular belief is a cornerstone belief is determined by what is going on internally and, moreover, that the subject is in principle able to reflectively access that a belief is a cornerstone when it is one.⁴⁰

15. I-II-III arguments.

How do we *acquire* the warrant to believe cornerstone propositions? Do we simply *see* there is a material world and on that basis come to (warrantedly) believe that there is a material world? Surely not—plausibly, that there is a material world is not the kind of thing we see or perceive.⁴¹ Likewise for all other cornerstone propositions. One alternative suggestion is that we acquire the warrant to believe cornerstone propositions via *inference* as follows:

- (I): My experience is such that it appears (to me) that the liquid in my glass is red.
- (II): The liquid in my glass is red.
- (III): My experience (as of a glass containing red liquid) is veridical.⁴²

Given (I), I am licensed to form the belief that the liquid in my glass is red by employing the following rule of inference:

It appears (to me) that A (Appearance-Elimination Rule: A-EI).⁴³
 A

Given the conditional *If the liquid in my glass is red and my experience is such that it appears that the liquid is red then my experience is veridical*, and modus ponens, then I am then licensed to believe (III).⁴⁴

16. Begging the question and diachronic transmission of warrant failure.

⁴⁰ The method of “reflective access” need not be taken to be perfectly reliable.

⁴¹ See Dretske (2005) for a nice discussion on this.

⁴² Here, for convenience, I restrict the I-II-III template to cases involving phenomenal evidence.

⁴³ Do subjects use the inference rule A-EI in forming their belief that the liquid in the glass is red? We certainly don't seem to run through such an inference in ordinary cases of perception. The skeletal answer is to distinguish two kinds of inferentialist projects: *the naturalistic project*, which endeavours to specify the methods via which we may or typically do acquire our beliefs via inference; and *the reconstructive project* which endeavours to reconstruct a pattern of inferences which an evaluator can cite as an answer to the question: is the subject warranted in believing that *p*? If the appropriate pattern of inferences cannot be cited then the subject is not warranted in believing the target proposition.

⁴⁴ Here the conjunction of (I) and (II) entail (III). In other versions of the template, (II) alone entails (III).

I-II-III arguments are fishy. Why exactly? Quick answer: they beg the question.⁴⁵ Wright says that an argument begs the question when it exhibits what he calls a “transmission of warrant failure”: The warrant for (II) fails to be transmitted to the conclusion (III).

There are two broad types of transmission failure: diachronic and synchronic.⁴⁶ In most what of follows, we shall focus on the former. Specifically, whether a subject is able to *acquire* a warrant to believe a Type III proposition via a sequence of inferential steps—temporally conceived—from a Type II proposition:⁴⁷

[A]n *evidential justification* for the cornerstone—the type III proposition—cannot be acquired: the claim is that in order to arrive at such a justification, one would first have to accomplish a process of justification (for a type II proposition) which would presuppose it." (Wright 2004, p. 174)

In more detail, the only way in which we can be warranted in believing (II) is to derive (II) from premise (I) via the rule of A-EI. By hypothesis, we are warranted in believing premise (I); but we are only warranted in employing the rule of A-EI if we are already warranted in believing (III). So, if there is warrant to believe (III), then we can use the warrant to believe (I) and the rule of A-EI to acquire a warrant to believe (II). Given this warrant to believe (II), and the warrant to believe the conditional *If (I) and (II) then (III)*, we can, it seems, then acquire a warrant to believe (III) via modus ponens.

But wait! We cannot acquire a warrant to believe (III) in this way because in order to acquire a warrant to believe (II), we already presupposed that there is a warrant to believe (III) in order to legitimately apply the rule of A-EI to premise (I).

17. One kind of Endogenous Scepticism: I-II-III Scepticism.

Moreover, it looks like we cannot acquire a warrant to believe cornerstone propositions *in any other way*. If so, then a kind of Endogenous Scepticism—I-II-III Scepticism—results as follows:

(1) A Type II proposition can only be justified on the evidence of Type I propositions. (This is roughly the idea that the evidence of our senses is phenomenal evidence.)

⁴⁵ Even if one thinks that I-II-III arguments do not beg the question, one still has to provide an explanation of just why these arguments initially *seem* fishy (see Pryor 2004).

⁴⁶ These are often run together in the literature.

⁴⁷ See §30 for a discussion of synchronic transmission failure.

(2) However, the evidence provided by Type I propositions for Type II propositions is “information-dependent”, requiring collateral warrant for a Type III proposition. (Specifically, one can use (I) to justify (II) only if one can legitimately use the rule of A-El—but one can only do this if one has a prior warrant to believe (III)). (Conservativeness)

(3) But, as we have seen, one then cannot *acquire* the warrant to believe Type III propositions via inference from a Type II proposition (plus a Type I proposition)—for, given Conservativeness, to be warranted in believing a Type II proposition requires us to already have a warrant for the relevant Type III proposition. (Transmission failure / Begging the Question.)

(4) Type III propositions cannot be warranted in any other way.

(5) So, one cannot be warranted in believing Type III propositions *tout court*.

(6) So, given (1) and (2), one cannot be warranted in believing a Type II proposition *tout court*.

18. Two Externalist Responses.

One response to Endogenous Scepticism in this form is to reject:

Internalist Conservativeness: A Type I proposition justifies a Type II proposition only if one is warranted in believing the relevant Type III proposition,

in favour of:

Externalist Conservativeness: A Type I proposition justifies a Type II proposition only if the relevant Type III proposition is true.

When the world cooperates (e.g. appearances *are* veridical), then we can apply the A-El rule to the warranted premise (my experience is such that it appears to me that the liquid is red) to acquire a warrant to believe a Type II proposition (the liquid is red). However, Externalist Conservativeness violates Internalism about Warrant. Thus, this response is not available to any version of Entitlement Epistemology which seeks to vindicate the (internalist) intuitions in The New Evil Demon Problem.

An alternative externalist gambit is to reject the phenomenal conception of evidence, and thus premise (1) in the proof. But again, insofar as one wishes to properly vindicate New Evil Demon intuitions, one cannot adopt such a response since, again, this violates Internalism about Warrant.

In sum, *if* one wishes to vindicate the intuition that an envatted subject has justified beliefs about the external world then this form of Endogenous Scepticism is very troublesome. Indeed, this is one of the most important points which emerges from a consideration of the I-II-

II argument above: once one seeks to vindicate a sufficient array of internalist intuitions then one must address two very different kinds of Scepticism concerning external matters: Exogenous Scepticism (in the guise of Cartesian Scepticism concerning external matters) and Endogenous Scepticism (in the guise of I-II-III Scepticism).

The (non-sceptical) options available to the Internalist concerning warrant are: either reject Conservativeness (of any form) but nonetheless preserve internalism about warrant.⁴⁸ Or, reject the claim that Type III propositions cannot be warranted in any other way. Alas, there is not space to consider the first option. The second option will be the sole focus in what follows.

19. Warrant for nothing: entitlement.

Entitlement Epistemology, broadly conceived, is the view that:

there is a type of rational warrant which one does not have to do *any specific evidential work to earn*: better, a type of rational warrant whose possession does not require the existence of evidence—in the broadest sense, encompassing both apriori and empirical considerations—for the truth of the warranted proposition. Call it entitlement (Wright 2004, p.174).⁴⁹

On this conception, warrant is disjunctive: a warrant to believe is either a justification to believe (which depends upon evidence, internalistically conceived, such as how things appear) or an entitlement (which is non-evidential, and indeed involves no kind of investigation or cognitive achievement). With that picture in hand, Wright then offers the following diagnosis as to just why Endogenous/I-II-III Scepticism gets a grip:

[O]ne can treat the skeptical arguments as involving a mistaken conflation of evidential justification and warrant—as overlooking the possibility of rational entitlement (Wright 2004, p. 207).

Thus, not only is premise (4) in the sceptical argument rejected—and so, there is, after all, an alternative way in which Type III propositions get to be warranted—there is also an account to be had as to why premise (4) strikes us as true, despite being false: the sceptic has conflated warrant with justification and so overlooked the possibility of warrant without evidence—warrant for free.

One immediate upshot is that warrant is, but justification is not, closed over known entailment: One can be justified (and so warranted) in believing that, e.g., I have a glass in my

⁴⁸ See Pryor (2004).

⁴⁹ Whether our cornerstone beliefs really do admit of such entitlement lies beyond the scope of the present essay. Recall that our goal here is just to establish the conditional: if there is warrant for nothing, then there can be knowledge for nothing too.

hand and, additionally, know that if that is so then there is a material world, and yet not be justified in believing that there is a material world—because there is no evidence one can cite which yields grounds to believe this cornerstone proposition. However, one nonetheless remains entitled, and so warranted, in believing that there is a material world.⁵⁰

20. *The Norm of Belief.*

What is the norm of belief given the possibility of entitlement? Consider the following candidates:

- (K) S's belief that p is correct if and only if S knows that p .
- (W) S's belief that p is correct if and only if S is warranted in believing that p
- (WK) S's belief that p is correct if and only if S is warranted in believing that they know that p .

Here, again, warrant is disjunctive: either a justification or an entitlement. Suppose, for simplicity, there is only one standard of correctness for belief—and so just a single norm. Thus, Entitlement Epistemology, when combined with The Russellian Retreat, must reject K and choose between W and WK. It is here that Type I and Type II Entitlement Epistemology must differ.

As we have seen above, Type I Entitlement Epistemology endorses The Russellian Retreat. The first element of The Retreat is the concession that Cartesian Scepticism provides a sound proof that knowledge is impossible. This proof thus provides a justification—and so a warrant—to believe that knowledge is impossible. So, in particular, I have a warrant to believe that I cannot, and so do not, know that I am sitting by the fire. This entails that I lack a warrant to believe that I know that I am sitting by the fire. Which, given WK, entails that it is incorrect to believe that that I am sitting by the fire. However, that just contradicts the second element of The Russellian Retreat which is that it *is* correct to believe ordinary humdrum propositions. Type I Entitlement Epistemology is thus incompatible with the WK-norm. Type II Entitlement Epistemology is compatible with such a norm because Type II Entitlement Epistemology does not entail (the first component of) The Russellian Retreat.

⁵⁰ Additionally, relative to a fixed evidential context, entitlement and justification are exclusive: if S is entitled to believe that p then S is not justified in believing that p . Moreover, relative to a fixed evidential context: If S is entitled to believe that p then S is not justified in believing that not- p . For some problems for Entitlement Epistemology surrounding these, and other, principles, see McGlynn (2014) on the so-called Epistemic Alchemy Problem.

Does that make Type II Entitlement Epistemology more attractive than Type I? Arguably, it does because WK is a pretty plausible norm for anyone with broad internalist leanings.⁵¹ Furthermore, such a norm can be invoked to explain why it is illegitimate to believe the following proposition: *p* but I do not know that *p*. In more detail, suppose that my belief that *p* but I do not know that *p* is legitimate and so my beliefs in each of the conjuncts is likewise legitimate. Given WK, and the fact that it is legitimate to believe the second conjunct, then I am warranted in believing that I know that I do not know that *p*. Given the closure of warrant, and the factivity of knowledge, it follows that I am warranted in believing that I do not know that *p*. Given WK, and the fact that it is legitimate to believe the first conjunct, then I am warranted in believing that I know that *p*. However, one cannot both be warranted in believing that I do not know *p* and warranted in believing that I know that *p*.⁵² So, it is not legitimate to believe that: *p* but I do not know that *p*. Upshot: Type II Entitlement Epistemology can accommodate the data in hand. However, Type I Entitlement Epistemology cannot since it cannot utilise the WK norm. Bad news for the latter view.⁵³

21. Higher-order cornerstone propositions.

Consider the proposition: *I know that there is a material world*. This is, what may be termed, a higher-order cornerstone proposition. To doubt it would commit one to doubting a whole raft of other propositions—such as the proposition that *I know that* I am sitting by the fire, the proposition that *I know that* I have a glass in my hand, and so on. Since this proposition counts as being a cornerstone then I am entitled to believe it. So, I am warranted in believing that I know that there is a material world. However, if the proof given by Cartesian Scepticism is sound then I am justified, and so warranted, in believing that I do not know that there is a material world. But I cannot be warranted in believing a proposition and warranted in believing its negation—on any sensible conception of warrant.

This is arguably a more telling objection against Type I Entitlement Epistemology than the one advanced in the previous section. That's because while there may be some wriggle room

⁵¹ And provides a viable rival to a knowledge norm of assertion/belief.

⁵² Here the thought is that even though warrant to believe is not factive—The T axiom fails in a modal logic for the operator “S is warranted in believing that”—it should at least be such that one cannot be warranted in believing a proposition and warranted in believing its negation such that the D axiom of modal logic does hold for such an operator.

⁵³ WK can also explain why it seems illegitimate to believe: *p* but I am not warranted in believing that I know that *p*. One cannot use W or K to explain this datum.

when specifying the norms for belief, there does not seem to be much scope to deny that there are higher-order cornerstone propositions of the type just identified.⁵⁴

22. *The Meta-Russellian Retreat.*

A related—but distinct—problem goes as follows: If first-order knowledge that p is impossible then second-order knowledge that p is impossible too. So, if it is impossible to know that there is a material world then it is impossible to know that I know that there is a material world. The first-order Russellian Retreat grants that first-order knowledge that there is a material world is indeed impossible but alleges that we still are warranted in believing that there is a material world. What may be termed *The Meta-Russellian Retreat* grants that it is impossible to know that I know that there is material world, but alleges that one is nonetheless warranted in believing that one knows that there is a material world. So, given this second-order Retreat, one is not only warranted in believing that there is a material world but warranted in believing that one knows that there is a material world. As we have seen above, this latter warrant is incompatible with conceding that Cartesian Scepticism is sound since doing so entails that one is warranted in believing that one does not know that there is a material world. But that cannot be so—given that one cannot be warranted in believing a proposition and warranted in believing its negation.

The problem in hand depends on whether the second-order Retreat is just as well-motivated as the first-order Retreat. There are two reasons to think so. Firstly, the first-order Russellian Retreat entails the second-order Russellian Retreat given WK (and the triviality that if first-order knowledge that p is impossible then second-order knowledge that p is impossible too). The second (and dialectically better) route does not go via WK but via Cartesian Meta-Scepticism—which is just Cartesian Scepticism at second-order (see the next section). The thought then is that there are no grounds to think that Cartesian Meta-Scepticism is relevantly different from first-order Cartesian Scepticism. So, if The First-Order Russellian Retreat is called for then so is the Second-Order Retreat and thus The Russellian Retreat is untenable.

The upshot is that Type I Entitlement Epistemology should be rejected. Does this mean that Type II Entitlement Epistemology is the only remaining, viable version of the view?

23. *Type III Entitlement Epistemology and Meta-Scepticism.*

⁵⁴ Indeed, Type I Entitlement Epistemology must reject: if S is warranted in believing that p then S is warranted in believing that they know that p .

Wright's work in epistemology is most famous for two things: The Russellian Retreat and the introduction of entitlement to address Endogenous Scepticism (concerning external matters) in the guise of the I-II-III Scepticism given above. As we have just seen, for various related reasons, The Russellian Retreat and Entitlement Epistemology are (straightforwardly) incompatible. Should we thus reject Type I Entitlement Epistemology in favour of Type II? Or are there intermediate options?

Interestingly enough, in his 2004 paper, Wright not only omits to reiterate his commitment to The Russellian Retreat, he (quietly) drops the idea altogether. He now sees the target of sceptical arguments not as being first-order, but rather second-order, knowledge:

[S]cepticism demands the surrender of higher-order knowledge—the claim to know that we know. But entitlement, in the best case, promises to save the warrantability nevertheless of the first order claim to know (Wright 2004, p. 208).⁵⁵

Does Wright now defend a third way between Type I and Type II Entitlement Epistemology?

There is certainly a third form of Entitlement Epistemology in the offing: The Cartesian Sceptical argument—in §2—can be addressed by Minimalist Externalism (or perhaps via some more substantial externalist theory of knowledge). Upshot: knowledge is possible after all, and thus there is no call for a *first-order* Russellian Retreat. However, externalism, in both lightweight (non-specific) and heavyweight (specific) forms, (allegedly) runs afoul of Meta-Scepticism.

In its *generic* form, Meta-Scepticism says that one cannot establish—via reflection—that the conditions for first-order knowing are met. Upshot: one cannot know (via reflection) that one knows that *p*—*even when one does know that p*.⁵⁶ What may be termed *Cartesian Meta-Scepticism* is motivated via the claim that one is unable to discriminate the knowing state from the non-knowing state using the evidence gained via reflection. This form of Scepticism is typically taken to elude an externalist solution (specific or non-specific) because it does not seem that there is any way in which the evidence gained via reflection—a method which, it would seem, is constitutively directed inwards towards internal states—could allow a subject to discriminate knowing from not-knowing.⁵⁷

Type III Entitlement Epistemology is then the view that one should adopt the Meta-Russellian Retreat but not the first-order Russellian Retreat. Moreover, that one should do so on

⁵⁵ Thus, Wright would seem to accept that *I know such an such cornerstone proposition to be true* is itself a cornerstone. So, the argument used in §21 against the first-order Russellian Retreat would, after all, be accepted by Wright.

⁵⁶ See Stroud (1989) and Fumerton (1990, 1995) for articulations of Meta-Scepticism.

⁵⁷ In *Knowledge: In Sickness and in Health*, I give several versions of the challenge and argue that a (reasonably) minimal form of externalism can successfully address each of them.

the grounds that while (Minimal) Externalism is able to address Cartesian Scepticism, it cannot address Cartesian Meta-Scepticism.

24. Type IV Entitlement Epistemology.

Has Wright shifted ground to such a form of Entitlement Epistemology? As it turns out: No. Wright (in his 2004 at least), rather, seems to hold that there is no such thing as Exogenous Scepticism in the first place:

[W]hat is put in doubt by sceptical argument is—of course—not our *possession* of any knowledge or justified belief—not if knowledgeability, or justification, are conceived as constituted in aspects of the external situation in which we come to a belief. (How indeed could armchair ruminations show anything about that?) (2004, p. 210).

In other words, the existence of an external state such as knowledge cannot be brought into doubt by internal armchair reasoning. If that is so, then (Minimal) Externalism (with respect to knowledge and justification) has absolutely nothing to offer in the way of a solution to (first-order) Cartesian Scepticism—simply because there is no exogenous version of scepticism which (Minimal) Externalism is required to address. On such a view, even though knowledge at the first-order is taken to be possible, the spirit of Knowledge-Nowhere Epistemology and Internalism-Everywhere Epistemology remain intact since knowledge would be largely peripheral to epistemologico-sceptical inquiry.

Wright (in his 2004 paper) thus appears to be advancing the following constellation of doctrines: There is no such thing as Exogenous Scepticism concerning knowledge and (externalist) justification. Nonetheless, there is a form of Scepticism—Endogenous/I-II-III Scepticism—which shows us that there is no justification to believe cornerstone propositions. Furthermore, while this form of Scepticism does not threaten first-order knowledge (of cornerstones), it does show that second-order (reflective) knowledge (of cornerstones) is impossible. Though Wright does not elaborate on this latter point, presumably the thought is that first-order knowledge of cornerstone propositions does not require that one is justified in believing the cornerstone to be true. However, second-order (reflective) knowledge of a cornerstone proposition *does* require that one be (first-order) justified in believing this cornerstone to be true. Finally, not only is one warranted in believing a cornerstone proposition to be true, one is warranted in believing that one *knows* that it is true. Thus, a kind of Russellian

Retreat is indeed called for, but only at second-order, and only because of Endogenous Scepticism. Call such a constellation of views, Type IV Entitlement Epistemology.⁵⁸

25. Actualist Scepticism and Possibilist Scepticism.

That there is no such thing as Exogenous Scepticism is a very bold claim to make. Is it correct? No. To see why, we must distinguish:

Possibilist Scepticism: Knowledge (of external matters) is not possible and so not actual.

Actualist Scepticism: Knowledge (of external matters) is possible but not actual.

Cartesian Scepticism (concerning both knowledge and other external states) is a form of Possibilist Scepticism because the Cartesian sceptic offers what purports to be a sound, apriori proof of the impossibility of knowledge which proceeds via the claim, roughly, that what is phenomenally available to us is, of necessity, insufficient to discriminate the sceptical case from the non-sceptical case. That puts the actual existence of knowledge into doubt—despite involving only apriori ruminations—because apriori reasoning *can*, of course, establish that some states are impossible *and so not actual*. To answer such scepticism, one merely needs to show—from the philosophical armchair—that this purportedly sound proof can be faulted in some way.

Actualist Scepticism can *seem* like a genuine and indeed more robust kind of scepticism, one which is much more difficult to address, because it seems that to answer such scepticism one needs to show that knowledge is not merely possible but also actual. That is, it seems like a full-blown Moorean response to Actualist Scepticism is called for, one which endeavours to show that knowledge actually obtains. Indeed, such a strong Moorean response would then automatically defeat Possibilist Scepticism too, since if knowledge is actual, it is possible. But Actualist Scepticism cannot yield an apriori demonstration from the philosophical armchair that knowledge (of external matters) is possible but not actual. To do so would involve showing that some external, contingent feature of the the world—such as the external cooperation of the environment—fails to obtain. But that is just what apriori, philosophical proof, cannot establish.

⁵⁸ Two derivative features: (1) Closure for first-order knowledge is not under-threat—since, on the view in hand, Scepticism does not touch the possibility of first-order knowledge of cornerstones. However, closure for second-order knowledge is invalid, at least if one assumes that second-order knowledge of ordinary, non-cornerstone propositions is possible. (2) The KK principle (if one knows then one is in a position to know that one knows) is invalid.

So, Actualist Scepticism has no force whatsoever, and indeed a Moorean strategy to defeat scepticism is not called for.⁵⁹

So, while there is a form of scepticism which one can set aside from the outset—Actualist Scepticism—Wright is wrong to think that Cartesian Scepticism—as given in §2—is a form of Actualist Scepticism—it is a form of Possibilist Scepticism. The upshot of all this is that a pluralist strategy is called for: (Minimal) Externalism to address Exogenous Scepticism; (some kind of) Internalism to address Endogenous / I-II-III Scepticism.

26. A Uniform Solution?

One related (exegetical) issue remains: Entitlement Epistemology—as conceived in Wright (2004)—is advertised as offering a “uniform solution” to both regress/Humean scepticism *and* “Cartesian Scepticism”. But what is meant by “Cartesian Scepticism” here? The kind of Cartesian Scepticism put forth in §2? Patently not. It has just been argued that this form of Scepticism is to be addressed by (Minimal) Externalism. Wright characterises “Cartesian Scepticism” as proceeding as follows:

[I]t appears that my acquiring a warrant by empirical means for the proposition that I am not now dreaming requires that I *already have* a warrant for that same proposition. So, I cannot ever acquire such a warrant (for the first time). (Wright 2004, p. 169).

This is to allege that we cannot acquire a warrant that a Cartesian Sceptical hypothesis fails to obtain—on pain of circularity. But this form of argumentation *is not Cartesian at all* but broadly a form of Humean or regress scepticism!⁶⁰ Just because the upshot of a sceptical argument consists of the conclusion that one has no justification or warrant to believe that the sceptical case fails to obtain does not thereby entail that one is dealing with Cartesian Scepticism. Crucial fact: Cartesian Sceptical scenarios are necessary but not sufficient condition for a sceptical argument to count as Cartesian. Cartesian Scepticism proper is a form of Exogenous Scepticism: it does not target internalist justification but rather targets knowledge (or externalist

⁵⁹ This is one of the main themes of Greenough, *Knowledge: In Sickness and in Health*, where it is argued that (radical) Actualist Scepticism is self-undermining.

⁶⁰ See also Wright (1991) where the Proper Execution Principle—namely, “If the acquisition of warrant to believe a proposition depends on the proper execution of some procedure, then executing the procedure cannot give you any stronger warrant to believe the proposition in question than you have independently for believing that you have executed the procedure properly.”—is used to motivate what Wright calls “Cartesian Scepticism”. But the Proper Execution Principle plays no part in Cartesian Scepticism as originally given by Descartes and as given in §2. It is rather an (implicit) component of Regress Scepticism, which is a completely different pathology.

justification) via the claim that the sceptical case and the non-sceptical case are indiscriminable (on the basis of how things appear).⁶¹

The upshot is that the most prominent form of Entitlement Epistemology is mis-advertised: it cannot provide a uniform solution to two different kinds of Scepticism because it cannot address Cartesian Scepticism concerning knowledge (or indeed Cartesian Scepticism concerning internal justification).⁶² For the reasons mooted in the last two sections, the constellation of views which comprises Type IV Entitlement Epistemology is thus unsustainable.

Is Type III Entitlement Epistemology still in the running?

27. Type III and Type IV Entitlement Epistemology and the Meta-Meta Russellian Retreat.

As it turns out, *both* Type III and Type IV Entitlement Epistemology are in any case unsustainable simply in virtue of their commitment to the Meta-Russellian Retreat but not the first-order Russellian Retreat. The argument for this is simply a higher-order version of an argument we have encountered already: if second-order knowledge (of cornerstone propositions) is impossible, then third-order knowledge is impossible too. The second-order Russellian Retreat grants that second-order knowledge that there is a material world is indeed impossible but alleges that we still are warranted in believing that we know that there is a material world. What may be termed *The Meta-Meta-Russellian Retreat* grants that it is impossible to know that I know that I know that there is a material world, but alleges that one is nonetheless warranted in believing that one knows that one knows there is a material world. The challenge then goes: The third-order Russellian Retreat is just as well motivated as the second-order Russellian Retreat. So, one is not only warranted in believing that one knows there is a material world but warranted in believing that one knows that one knows that there is a material world. This latter warrant is incompatible with conceding that Meta-Scepticism (in a Cartesian form targeted against knowledge) is sound since doing so entails that one is warranted in believing that one does not know that one knows that there is a material world. But that cannot be so—at least if one plausibly assumes that one cannot be warranted in believing both a proposition and its negation.⁶³

⁶¹ Recall that Descartes alleged that one cannot discriminate dreaming from wakefulness by any certain signs. Some form of indiscriminability claim is essential to all forms of Cartesian Scepticism.

⁶² Nor can it address Cartesian Scepticism concerning internalist justification—see §6 above.

⁶³ Equally, one can argue from the assumption that *I know that I know that there is a material world* is a third-order cornerstone proposition.

So, both Type III and Type IV forms of Entitlement Epistemology cannot be sustained. Only Type II Entitlement Epistemology remains in the running. With knowledge firmly back in the epistemological frame, our key question then becomes: can one have knowledge of cornerstone propositions where this knowledge is, in the relevant sense, for free?

28. Knowledge for Nothing.

Say that two possible subjects are alike in respect of their entitlements such that what counts as a cornerstone proposition for one counts as a cornerstone proposition for the other; and so, the propositions that one subject is entitled to believe are just those that the other is entitled to believe. Is the following global supervenience principle valid?

S1: If (i) two possible subjects are alike in respect of their entitlements, (ii) both come to believe some cornerstone proposition p via a I-II-III argument, and (iii) p is true, then one subject knows that p if and only if the other does.

Arguably not. The external world needs to cooperate more than just by making the cornerstone proposition true in order for a subject to have knowledge. Why is that exactly? Because arguably cornerstone beliefs are just as Gettierizable as non-cornerstone beliefs.

Take the following Gettier case: suppose a subject truly believes (via a I-II-II argument) that *the world did not come into existence five minutes ago*. Since this is a kind of cornerstone proposition, the subject is entitled, and so warranted, in believing it to be true. Suppose further, however, that the proposition *the world did not come into existence five minutes ago* might easily have been false—perhaps an evil demon could easily have made this proposition false at the time the subject forms their belief. It follows that it is an easy possibility that their belief is false—and so their belief is unsafe. If safety is a condition on knowing then the subject does not know that the world did not come into existence five minutes ago despite having a warranted true belief.⁶⁴

Take the corresponding non-Gettier case: this case is exactly like the Gettier case just given except that the environment of subject is such that the proposition *the world did not come into existence five minutes ago* could not easily have been false (at the time the subject formed their belief) and so the subject's belief is safe. Indeed, in this non-Gettier case, the subject has knowledge. Since these two cases differ in respect of knowing that the world did not come into existence five minutes ago, but do not differ in respect of (i)-(iii) then, then S1 must be false.

⁶⁴ Safety was first proposed as a condition on knowledge by Luper-Foy (1987); see also Sosa (1999), Williamson (1994, 2000), Pritchard (2002, 2005). Failure of safety is, of course, just one way in which one can set up a Gettier case.

A more plausible principle is:

S2: If (i) two possible subjects are alike in respect of their entitlements, (ii) both come to believe some cornerstone proposition p via a I-II-III argument, (iii) p is true, and (iv) the external environment of each subject is alike, then one subject knows that p if and only if the other does.

Thus, if one of the subject fails to know some cornerstone p (and the other does not) then the subjects must differ in respect of one or more of (i)-(iv).⁶⁵

On this conception, all of the factors which determine that a subject knows are, in the relevant sense, *for free*. Beyond forming a belief via a I-II-II argument, the subject does not have to do any investigation or make any cognitive effort for these factors to obtain: truth is supplied for free by the environment; the additional external component which takes care of Gettier cases is also supplied for free by the environment; and the entitlement to believe is supplied merely in virtue of the belief being a cornerstone belief, so that comes for free too. The upshot is that just as there can be warrant for nothing, there can indeed be knowledge for nothing too.

29. A caveat.

It is important to recognise that while Type II epistemology vindicates that a subject is, as things stand, warranted in believing cornerstone propositions, it does not vindicate that a subject *actually* knows that cornerstone propositions are true. Rather, it merely has the result that knowledge of cornerstone propositions is *possible*. That's because the externalist component of Type II Epistemology is merely designed to treat Possibilist Scepticism, the type of Scepticism which says that knowledge (of external matters) is not possible. It is not designed to demonstrate that knowledge of cornerstones is *actual*, and so provide an answer to Actualist Scepticism. However, that does not matter because we saw above that Actualist Scepticism—the type of scepticism which says that knowledge is possible but not actual—can be set aside from the outset.

⁶⁵ Strictly speaking, we also need to factor in that both subjects do not differ as to whether or not they are justified in believing not- p given that a subject is entitled to believe that p only if they lack justification to believe that not- p . that may, in the end, entail that knowledge of cornerstones is not always to be had for nothing.

30. Synchronic Transmission Failure.

One final issue remains. Thus far, we have merely been concerned with *diachronic* versions of transmission of warrant failure whereby a subject is not able to *acquire* a warrant to believe a Type III proposition via a sequence of inferential steps—temporally conceived—from a Type II proposition.⁶⁶ However, one can present cases of transmission failure synchronically. On that score, consider the following two closure principles:

Closure for Warrant: If S is warranted in believing that p , and S knows that: p entails q , then S can acquire a warrant to believe that q (via competently deducing q from p).

Closure for Knowledge: If S knows that p , and S knows that: p entails q , then S can acquire the knowledge that q (via competently deducing q from p).

These can be converted into synchronic principles governing the transmission of warrant and knowledge, respectively, by simply indexing the closure principles to a basis of belief, as follows:

Transmission for Warrant: If S is warranted in believing, on basis B, that p , and S knows that: p entails q , then S is in a position to warrantably believe, *on just that basis*, that q .

Transmission for Knowledge: If S knows, on basis B, that p , and S knows that: p entails q , then S is in a position to know, *on just that basis*, that q .⁶⁷

Given these principles of transmission, let $p = I\text{ have two hands}$, $q = \text{There is a material world}$, and basis $B = \text{seeing}$. The thought then goes: while I can be warranted in believing, and indeed, know, on the basis of seeing, that I have two hands, I am not warranted in believing, nor do I know, *on just that basis*, that there is a material world. Here the master thought is: while I can see that I have two hands, I cannot see that there is a material world.⁶⁸ So, the thought goes, I cannot be warranted, or indeed, know, on the basis of seeing, that there is a material world.⁶⁹ This can be converted into a sceptical argument with the addition of a further premise: there is no other basis upon which one can be warranted, or know, that there is a material world. Type II Entitlement Epistemology is well placed to reject such a premise since there is such an

⁶⁶ This is the version which is most salient in Wright and Davies' work on entitlement.

⁶⁷ These indexed principles would need to take into account the role that inference plays in the final basis for believing q in order to be fully satisfying.

⁶⁸ See Dretske (2005).

⁶⁹ This inference is moot, however there is not space to take up this issue here.

alternative basis on such a view: one is entitled (and so warranted) to believe that there is a material world in virtue of the content of this belief being a cornerstone proposition. Thus, closure for both warrant and knowledge are preserved, while transmission for both warrant and knowledge are not preserved.⁷⁰

31. Concluding remarks.

Prominent versions of Entitlement Epistemology have been committed (either in spirit or in the letter) to a rabid form of Internalism whereby knowledge, and other externalist states, are to be eliminated from epistemologico-sceptical inquiry. These commitments to Knowledge-Nowhere (and Internalism-Everywhere Epistemology) have not only made Entitlement Epistemology hard to digest, but have made the view fundamentally unstable. The only version of Entitlement Epistemology which has any hope of success is the Type II version, the version whereby Exogenous Scepticism, and in particular Cartesian Scepticism and Cartesian Meta-Scepticism, are to be addressed via some suitable form of (Minimal) Externalism concerning knowledge, while Endogenous Scepticism—in the guise of I-II-III Scepticism—is to be addressed via the notion of Entitlement. Furthermore, with these observations in place, we have seen how if there can be warrant for nothing, then there can be knowledge for nothing too.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Dretske (2005) meanwhile does not reject this additional premise and that is why transmission and, in turn, closure (for knowledge) is invalid on Dretske's view.

⁷¹ Much earlier versions of these ideas were presented at the Arché Basic Knowledge conference *Contemporary Perspectives on Scepticism*, University of St Andrews, June 2009; at the workshop *Themes from Wright*, ANU, July 2009; and at the SEFA workshop on *The Philosophy of Crispin Wright*, March 2011. Thanks to the audiences on those occasions for lots of useful feedback. A more up to date version was presented at the St Andrews Philosophy Summer Reflectorium, May 2016. Many thanks to my colleagues for helpful questions. Thanks also go to: the editors, Annalisa Coliva, Stewart Cohen, Zoe Drayson, Filippo Ferrari, Katherine Hawley, Jesper Kallestrup, Giacomo Melis, Aidan McGlynn, Jonathan Schaffer, Susanna Schellenberg, Robbie Williams, and Crispin Wright. Particular thanks to Tim Kenyon and Sven Rosenkranz for very helpful written comments. Work on this article has received funding from the *Fallibility, Rational Belief and Knowledge Project*, University of Barcelona, (FFI2013-45968-P), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competition (MINECO).

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