

TURTLE EPISTEMOLOGY

The scene is a limitless flat plain: so flat that a straight line has only one parallel traversing any point not on it. I am perched, a bit uncomfortably, upon the carapace of the Tortoise – Bergmann Tortoise, to make a formal introduction – though I affectionately call him “Bertle.” I’m lost in thought. Starting me from my reverie, Bertle remarks, in a challenging sort of voice, “Can you prove Euclid’s Proposition 32?” “Why, yes,” say I, after taking a moment to image a triangle and mentally construct the relevant angles. “Do you want me to give you the proof?” “Presently,” quoth Bertle, “but first, I should like to know whether you can *prove* that you can prove P – as I shall henceforth call Proposition 32. Just so I can be sure you won’t be wasting my time.” Feeling a bit uneasy, but still game, I reply: “Of course I can prove that: just let me go ahead and prove P for you.” “All in good time, my friend” – so Bertle – “but in order that you may satisfy me that you really have that proof, I would first like to see your proof (if you have one) that you can prove yourself to have the moxie to give a proof of the claim that you’re able to prove P.”

I pause to indulge in a bit of head-scratching. What exactly is Bertle seeking? What sort of information is it that I should essay to give him, prior to and apart from actually and demonstrably constructing a proof for P, that will somehow provide him with a missing credential? What sort of credential is there, over and above my *actually producing a proof that P*, that Bertle could legitimately demand and, absent which, my intended response to his first challenge will fall flat upon its face? It’s not as if Bertle could be fishing for lemmas: he hasn’t challenged me to demonstrate the validity of any of the inferences required by my proof, for I

haven't offered him my proof yet. Fortunately, I have read my Lewis Carroll, and am onto Bertle's game, even if it's not the same game as the one the Tortoise uses to stump Achilles. "Too clever by half," I declare – and proceed to give Euclid's proof of Proposition 32, fold my arms, and ease myself off Bertle's capricious carapace.

Now, I know that, unfortunately, my friend Bertle will not be satisfied with this preemptory response on my part. He will be thinking that I haven't appreciated – to say nothing of having provided an adequate reply to – the difficulty he meant to raise by way of his questions. Well, perhaps there's something more that can be said by way of allaying Bertle's unease; perhaps I owe him something by way of an explanation of why I think his demands are misguided. But rather than address his concerns directly, I intend here to attend to a related matter, and to worries raised by a cousin of Bertle's.

Strong-awareness internalism (the phrase was coined by Mike Bergmann) is a view according to which, in order to be properly justified in believing that P, and have reasons R that are good reasons for believing that P, I must be aware of those reasons and that they *are* good reasons, by way of being aware of the evidential or support-relation between R and P, and I must further believe P because of R and my awareness of that support-relation. Awareness of each of these things is necessary, according to Bergmann, if we are to respect the fundamental motivation for internalism, the requirement that an agent S has (doxastic) justification for P only when she can support her belief that P by appealing to things that P has going for it, things she recognizes to be (sufficient) evidence for P. Bergmann (2006: 12) captures this intuition in the *Subject's Perspective Objection* (SPO) that articulates internalism's basic disagreement with externalism:

(SPO) If the subject holding a belief isn't aware of what that belief has going for it, then she isn't aware of how its status is any different from a stray hunch or an arbitrary conviction. From that we may conclude that from her perspective it is an accident that her belief is true. And that implies that it isn't a justified belief.

In his (2006), Bergmann takes aim at Lawrence Bonjour's strong-awareness internalism (SAI), and at mine. Bonjour rejects the regress that allegedly threatens SAI; and the fable in my opening salvo might suggest that I reject the regress, too. But I accept the regress – in a sense (which is why Bergmann chose my view to represent the other SAI option). What I reject is that establishing the truth of all of the members of the regress – supposing I can do this – puts me in any better position, epistemically, with respect to justifying a belief that P, than establishing only the first member of the regress.¹ (Similarly, I can prove to Bertle that I can prove Proposition 32 by, in fact, proving it. And, in so doing, I shall have given proof also of the claim that I can give proof to the claim that I can prove having a proof of Proposition 32. And so on. There's nothing *else* that I need to do to accomplish all these tasks.²) But what is the regress that allegedly threatens SAI?

In earlier work, I described the cognitive relation in which one stands to that which is given to one as a relation that makes the content of the given 'transparent' to one, and does so in a way that, by its very nature, involves that very transparency being (transparently) given to one in the act of (direct) awareness. It is on this basis that I affirmed both the K/K and J/J

¹ Crisp (2010) and Rogers and Matheson (2011) have both defended internalism against Bergmann's challenge. I believe my defense here is more straightforward, and penetrates more nearly to the heart of the matter, viz., the nature of transparency itself.

² For this reason, my position is closer to that of Lawrence Bonjour than Bergmann seems to represent it as being: see Bergmann (2006: 36 – 37) on Bonjour's denial of a regress.

theses (with respect to knowledge of the given).³ These claims, however, commit me to a regress that Bergmann thinks is fatal to the view. That is because, on my view, the claim

(P*) It is given (i.e., transparent) to me that P

entails⁴

(P**) It is transparent to me that (P*)

– which, in turn, entails

(P***) It is transparent to me that (P**) – i.e., that it's transparent to me that it's transparent to me that (P*);

and so on. Not only do these entailments hold but, as Bergmann puts it,

...for my... belief that P to be justified, it must be the case not only that P is transparent to me but also that I am able, on reflection alone, to justifiably believe that P*. ...Likewise, Fales thinks that in order for me to justifiably believe P*, it must be the case not only that P* is transparent to me, but also that I am able, on reflection alone, to justifiably *believe* that P**. ...Thus, for my belief that P to be justified, I must be able to justifiably believe an infinite number of propositions of ever-increasing complexity.⁵

Now this way of putting the matter makes it seem as if the regress is vicious in no fewer than three ways. For one, Bergmann seems to be suggesting that the truth of p can't be given to me – and I can't have non-inferential justification for believing it – *until* I've first given a justification for P*; and that I can't have *that* justification unless I've *first* produced a justification for P**, and so forth – so that justification of any member of the series awaits prior justification of each

³ Fales (1996). I take it that what is given to one can be a fact (as the fact that $2 + 2 = 4$) or (among other things) a sense experience. The contents of a sense experience is a state of affairs – objects having properties and standing in relations – that has a propositional structure and that can, by my lights, justify properly basic propositions. Non-basic propositions are justified for a subject S if S legitimately infers them from propositions that are properly basic for her, and she is aware of the inferences and their legitimacy. S knows that p just in case S's justification for p guarantees the truth of p, and S is aware of this. (For more on knowledge, see below.) As Fales (1996) was devoted to the given and its relation to properly basic beliefs, I had rather little to say about the justification of inferential beliefs, and a good deal to say about cognitive grasp of self-evident a priori truths and about the justification-relation between sensory experiences and non-inferential empirical beliefs. But I take it that, to be justified in holding an inferential belief, one must be at least potentially able to cite in its support more basic beliefs, and to understand how these support the belief in question.

⁴ This is not a formal entailment, of course. But I do think the relation is one of metaphysical necessity. It is in the nature of transparency that (P^n) makes-true (P^{n+1}) .

⁵ Michael Bergmann, *Justification without Awareness*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006: 39).

of the (infinitely many) higher-order propositions in the series.⁶ To concede this would, of course, be fatal to my view.

But then, it is not only clear that P^* , P^{**} , ... P^n express different propositions, but also that, beyond the first few members in the series, these propositions exhibit a degree of complexity that makes distinctly entertaining each of them impossible (the second source of viciousness) – to say nothing of entertaining the entire infinite series, or assessing their truth-values *seriatim* (viciousness of the third sort). But these alleged difficulties rest on the mistake of seeing what knowledge requires from the wrong perspective: it's as if, in order to affirm P^* , one must come to know the truth of each of the P^n , so that knowledge of P^* "hangs in the balance" until one can establish the truth of each of the other (conceptually impenetrable) members of the series. Not so: it's true enough that the truth of the other members of the series is a necessary condition of the truth of P^* ; but it doesn't follow that P^* is true "*only because*" each of the higher-order starred P 's is true: quite the reverse.

The term 'transparent' is used here in a somewhat metaphorical sense, but it will help to explain my point to consider an analogy in which the term is used in its literal sense. Suppose I see Bertle who, as it happens, has come a-tap-tap-tapping on my windowpane. So long (I'm speaking quite ordinarily now) as the windowpane is perfectly transparent and distortion-free, Bertle will appear to me as he actually is. Suppose someone were to ask me to reflect upon what I'd see (how things would look) if I were to view my present view through a second glass pane – one equally transparent and distortion-free. It's clear that things would look the same. Bertle would look the same, and I'd not be in a position to glean any more information regarding his appearance from viewing him through two panes of glass instead of one. This would remain so if a third pane of glass were interposed, and so on. While this crude analogy clearly has its limitations, my intention is just to emphasize that higher iterations of the 'is transparent' operator in the P^* -series do not do additional cognitive work not already achieved by the first member of the series.

⁶ Similarly, when Rogers and Matheson (2011: 75) say that each of the members of the series is "relevant to the truth or justification" of the object-level belief that P , they say something true but I think misleading. It is indeed relevant, for if P^n were false, then P^* would be false, or at least certainly unjustified in the relevant way. But that doesn't mean that knowing that P is true requires turning my mind to P^n , for every (or any) value of n and inquiring whether *it's* true (see further below).

In order more fully to explain why and in what sense I accept the various regresses that attend my conception of SAI (the transparency regress for the given, and the J/J and K/K theses), I want to pursue what will initially appear to be something of a digression. As I understand him, Descartes was an exemplar of the SAI position in epistemology. I want to examine Descartes' procedure in introducing the foundations of knowledge in the *Meditations*, and in particular how (as I see it) he approaches the question of foundations and why he escapes the Cartesian Circle. (I shall not, however, be attempting a scholarly defense of this way of reading Descartes. That would be a much larger project. So the lessons I draw from the *Meditations* should be construed as arguably Cartesian, even if perhaps not entirely in accord with Descartes' intentions.)

The first matter of importance is how Descartes induces in his readers the proper relationship to those propositions that can be considered to be known. Notably, he does not begin by attempting to formulate some set of general conditions or criteria by means of which a proposition can be identified as known. Rather, he presents us with an example, and does so in such a way that we can recognize directly that the proposition is one that we must affirm as true.⁷ Only then – in the Third Meditation – does he reflect upon *what it is* about the relationship in which we stand to the target proposition in virtue of which it is known, with the aim of finding some generalizable features of that relationship that can be applied to other cases, and that will permit theorizing about the nature of knowledge itself.

Why does Descartes proceed in this way – which, I suggest, is quite deliberate? Couldn't he have just instead gone about undertaking some a priori analysis of the conditions of knowledge that would lead straightaway to a general theory-cum-criteria for knowledge? It seems to me that Descartes understood that this strategy would, in the end, be ineffective. For any such analysis would require an investigation that itself presupposed a fairly high order of reasoning, and presupposed our ability to recognize that reasoning as sound. Once we entertain global doubts about the possibility of knowledge, it is hard to see how such theorizing

⁷ It is unclear whether Descartes takes the proposition 'I exist' to be self-evident. As noted below, he engages in some reasoning, by way of orienting us so as to secure our recognition that we can't be deceived concerning the truth of that proposition. But this does not entail that the proposition in question is not, once properly apprehended, self-evident.

would assuage our concerns. To be sure, Descartes does engage in some reasoning in order to bring us face-to-face with the proposition 'I exist' in such a way as to see that it is ineluctably true. But he avoids presenting this (quite elementary) reasoning as an argument to the *conclusion* that he exists, and it is quite plausible to construe the preliminaries as a kind of stage-setting that puts him (and us) into a position directly to apprehend the proposition's truth-value. In so doing he avoids, I shall argue, developing his conception of knowledge in such a way as to present a target that is vulnerable to the sorts of objection raised by Bergmann (and earlier by the early Bonjour) against SAI. Had he proceeded by way of proposing, and arguing for, general criteria that a non-inferential belief must satisfy to qualify as knowledge, then, indeed, he would have invited that kind of challenge.

But does he not invite it nonetheless? After all, he examines his specimen bit of knowledge, notes that it is "clear and distinct," and then roundly declares, without much further ado, that clearness and distinctness are the marks of the known. Why can't a Bonjour/Bergmann-style challenge be mounted here – a challenge that invites a regress by asking for some justification for the criteria of clearness and distinctness? Indeed, Descartes seems *almost immediately to offer such a challenge himself* – and to do so with such incisiveness that he is often considered not to have escaped the difficulty. But I think he does, in fact (or can, in fact⁸) escape the Cartesian Circle.

Before coming to that, we should note how remarkably 'thin' Descartes' characterizations of his criteria of clearness and distinctness are in content. One might have expected Descartes to provide as rich a description of these characteristics of the known as possible. Yet all he says is that clarity is a matter of the content of an idea not being hidden or obscure (it corresponds roughly to my notion of transparency), and that distinctness is a matter of the content of an idea being sufficiently precise or articulated that one cannot confuse or conflate that idea with another (i.e., one can without fail distinguish their objects). One has the feeling – or at least I have the feeling – that this is not terribly illuminating.

⁸ I introduce the more cautious 'can' because the question turns on contentious matters of interpretation. I shall offer what I think is the way Descartes *should* have escaped the circle – which is the way I believe he *did in fact* do so.

But that is unavoidable. For it is in the nature of the cognitive relation by virtue of which a proposition is given to us as true that a proper grasp of this relation cannot be achieved by way of description. That is because the relation is primitive and simple. Like the nature of a phenomenal color, it must be experienced to be understood. It is, similarly, like the causal relation, of which we would lack a fundamental comprehension were it not for our experience of pushes and pulls. One can describe such things, and one can offer philosophically interesting theories about them, but there is no substitute for direct experience as a means of grasping what they are. They are primitive (or, if they are not, their few simple components are so, and can only be captured by direct acquaintance).

Thus, for example, the cognitive certainty conferred by “clearness and distinctness,” or what I call transparency, must be distinguished from mere psychological certainty – the sort of certainty felt by someone who knows that Jesus loves her, the sort felt by a confident wrestler who strides out onto the mat certain that he’ll win the match, or the sort felt by the paranoid firmly convinced that cyber-fairies are waging war upon his medulla oblongata. The kind of certainty we have of the truth of ‘ $2 + 2 = 4$ ’ is markedly different from any of these, but an understanding of that difference can only be achieved by way of properly apprehending the truth of ‘ $2 + 2 = 4$.’ It cannot be achieved by way merely of discourse about it. It is precisely because of this, I believe, that Descartes undertakes to put us in this relation to a given proposition before engaging in more general reflection about its nature.

Two remarks are in order. First, our grasp of such a thing as phenomenal color, causal relations, or the cognitive relation established in the truth of a proposition’s being given to one can be implicit or explicit. Ordinarily, we acquire our familiarity with these things unreflectively and by way of focusing our attention on something else: the identification of a colored object, the consequences of a push or pull, the truth of a proposition (rather than the cognitive relation that assures that truth). But one can – as reflective philosophers characteristically do – turn one’s attention to these elements of experience themselves, so as to consider discursively both their intrinsic character and their systematic import. But such reflective consideration is not necessary for us to stand in, e.g., the cognitive relation of givenness or direct acquaintance.

Second, Descartes insists that a clear and distinct idea of x need not be a “complete” idea of x – an idea that includes all of x ’s characteristics, or even all of its essential characteristics. For a partial idea can be clear as far as it goes, and distinct inasmuch as its content suffices to differentiate x from anything that is not x . Such an idea can also be *adequate* for a certain purpose – e.g. establishing the validity of certain entailments – so long as its clear content is sufficiently rich to serve that purpose. Thus, for example, our ideas of God or of infinity need not be complete in order for us to be able to reason about them. But by the same token, an incomplete idea may lack something critical to judging the truth of certain propositions in which that idea figures, even if a clear complete idea would suffice to establish the truth (or falsity) of those propositions.

Now with this conception of clearness and distinctness in hand, what can be said by way of providing Descartes with an escape from the Cartesian Circle? The Circle, we all remember, looms when Descartes, hard upon having introduced the criterion of clearness and distinctness, expresses a concern over how he can know that this criterion will serve as a *general* guarantor of the truth of ideas that possess it. And because the criterion serves to judge both the truth of ultimate premises and the validity of inferences from those premises, it appears that any defense Descartes could hope to offer will suffer from a double whammy. But the way in which Descartes presents the difficulty also suggests a solution.

The solution depends upon the observation that propositions and beliefs, like particulars, can be grasped as objects of thought in different ways. And some of these are, as we might figuratively say, more “direct,” or revealing of content, than others. Clearly, we can identify a proposition “by description,” as: ‘what Jeremy just learned that has upset him,’ ‘proposition 32 in Euclid’s *Elements*,’ and the like. Or, we can identify a proposition by entertaining, or being presented with, its content. But such presentation comes in many different guises, from those that are entirely opaque (as when a proposition is expressed in a language I do not understand) to those that are luminously clear. Consider, for example, the proposition expressed by (T^7) : ‘It is true⁽⁷⁾ that snow is white,’ where ‘It is true⁽ⁿ⁾ that p ’ denotes ‘It is true that it’s true that it’s true that... p ’ – the ‘it’s true that’ operator being iterated n times. It is, in one way, clear to me which proposition is expressed by (T^7) . Because I

understand 'snow is white,' 'true,' '7', and the form of (T⁷), I can specify its truth conditions, formally distinguish it from (T)-like propositions for $n \neq 7$, enumerate many of the propositions it entails and is entailed by, and the like. At the same time, there is a sense in which the content of (T⁷) is obscure to me, because of its complexity. If I "spell it out," and then compare it to its spelled-out neighbors (T⁶) and (T⁸), I shall have a difficult time fixing upon the distinctive content of (T⁷).

Now when Descartes raises a doubt about the adequacy of the criterion of clearness and distinctness as a universal guarantor of truth, he is considering the clear and distinct (C&D) propositions *as a class*, identified simply as those propositions that have the property of being C & D – and wondering, abstractly as it were, whether an evil demon might be able to deceive him concerning the infallibility of that criterion. In so doing, he does not have before his mind any *particular* example of a C & D proposition – unless, perhaps, he there and then grasps, with sufficient clearness and distinctness, the relations of clearness and distinctness themselves. By contrast, when he holds before his mind, in the properly attentive way, some particular such proposition, e.g., that $2 + 3 = 5$, then he "let(s) (him)self break out into such words as these" – that deception respecting *that* proposition is impossible. So the project of establishing the epistemic *bona fides* or clearness and distinctness is not, as I see it, mandated by some doubt that Descartes has about whether there are ever any propositions that are for him epistemically certain. His problem is just that, when even such a proposition as that comes to be contemplated or entertained in such a manner that its content is not immediately given in the requisite truth-certifying way, the door to doubt is cracked open. And, so thought will not be paralyzed the minute it ceases to entertain in that way some proposition required for discursive reasoning, Descartes seeks to establish a general rubric under which such propositions can enter the permanent storehouse of knowledge. It is therefore not a circular or question-begging form of argument for Descartes to embark upon this project by appealing to particular premises that he takes to be clear and distinct.⁹

Now the way in which Descartes approaches the task of acquainting his readers with the cognitive relation between a thinker and those propositions for which truth is guaranteed by

⁹ Even if most of the premises to which he appeals are – quite embarrassingly – far from being, in fact, clear and distinct.

standing in that relation can shed light upon the difficulty alleged by Bergmann for SAI. According to that objection, SAI is committed to the view that agents who are cognitively related to a proposition must also be similarly related to each of an infinite hierarchy of propositions of ever-increasing complexity; and it seems entirely implausible that an agent – a human agent, at least – could be in such a way cognitively related to even a single proposition in such an infinite series, beyond perhaps the first three or four simplest ones – to say nothing of all the propositions in the series. This problem arises whether the series is the P*-series associated with a proposition's truth being transparent to one, with the K/K series associated with S's knowing that P, or with the J/J series associated with S's being justified in believing that P. But on the other hand, if there is a good reply to the challenge posed for one of these regresses on behalf of SAI, it is plausible to expect that there will be, *mutatis mutandis*, and equally good reply to the other challenges.

Now the reason I hold the infinite regress of the P*-series not to be vicious is two-fold. We must readily concede, of course, that for even modest values of n , no one will be able to entertain the propositional content of P^n in such a "clear and distinct" way as to grasp the difference in propositional content between it and its neighbors P^{n-1} and P^{n+1} (similarly for members of the J-series and the K-series). We will similarly concede that one cannot have a conceptual grasp of any proposition in the P*-series (similarly, in the J- or K-series) without having a conceptual grasp of what it is for the truth of a proposition to be given (justified, known). Yet in spite of this, we *do* have a conceptual grasp of the propositions in the P*, J, and K series that is sufficient to defuse Bergmann's objection, provided we have a sufficient conceptual grasp of givenness, justification, and knowledge, respectively. I am going to argue, furthermore, that we have a sufficient *implicit* conceptual grasp of these notions for the purpose at hand (in a sense to be specified), simply in virtue of there being a proposition whose truth is given to us, or justified for us, or known by us.

My strategy will by now perhaps be apparent. Bergmann seems to demand of SAI that, in order for a defender of the view to be successful, he must be able to achieve a "clear and distinct" cognitive grasp of the distinctive content of each of the propositions in the P*, J, and K hierarchies; and because of the similarity of form of the members of a given series, that would

seem to require a clear and *complete* grasp of those contents. That is a demand we should (and can) reject. All we require, as Descartes saw in a different context, is a cognitive grasp that is *adequate* for the purposes at hand. And all *that* requires – so I claim – is an understanding of the concepts essential to comprehending the target proposition p , and the concepts of givenness, justification, and knowledge, respectively – together with an understanding of the way in which each member of the regress is generated from the preceding member. This is, then, a case in which prescinding from the full, detailed content of each of the propositions in a hierarchy is actually illuminating rather than obfuscating.

So, in particular, I claim (1996: 163) that

the transparency (and truth-value) of the proposition that P^* is transparent to me is not distinguishable from the transparency of P itself, in spite of the greater formal complexity of P^{**} .

There is nothing in the content of either P^* or P^{**} that involves any information not already contained in the original act of intuiting the content and truth-value of P .

To which Bergmann (2006: 40 – 41) replies:

But those claims are merely asserted, not defended. And they seem very implausible. It's difficult to take seriously his [i.e., my] claim that the transparency of P (e.g. $1 + 1 = 2$) is indistinguishable from the transparency of, for example, P^{**} . It is one thing to see infallibly and clearly what would make P true and that its truth-maker exists. And it is another thing to see infallibly and clearly what would make it true that *it is transparent to me that it is transparent to me that P* and that its truth-maker exists. Likewise, it is difficult to take seriously his [my] claim that P^{**} or P^{***} involves no information not already contained in intuiting the truth-value and content of P or P^* .

To respond to these points in order:

- 1) In one sense, I did not attempt to defend the claims in question. I did not, for instance, attempt to deduce them from some analysis of transparency. But that is because transparency is primitive. The only way to grasp the truth of these claims is, as I think Descartes would have affirmed, to put oneself into the proper relation to some proposition P , and then to apprehend the character of that relation.
- 2) I do not deny, of course, that each of the propositions P , P^* , P^{**} , etc. differs in content from the others; nor do I deny that grasping, *fully and completely*, the content of each of them is distinct from so grasping the content of the others. Moreover, there is a significant difference between the conceptual resources needed to grasp P and those needed to grasp each of its successors in the series. For the latter, but not the former,

requires not only the conceptual resources necessary to understand P, but also the concept of a proposition's *being transparent to one*.

- 3) Nevertheless, I claim that all these conceptual resources are implicit in, and available to one who has, the experience of standing in the right grasping-relation to a proposition and to its truth-conditions. Consider, in particular, the relation between grasping P in this way and grasping P* in this way. What I'm claiming is that the conceptual resources to grasp P* are *implicit in* my cognitive state or experience of standing in the *is transparent* relation to P. Clearly, that state involves the conceptual resources to grasp P itself. But that state also involves an instance of the *is transparent to* relation – viz., the instance relating me to P. Now, it is often claimed that the formation of a property concept requires, at a minimum, the experience of multiple instances of that property, and the recognition of a similarity relation between those instances. I deny this; indeed, I find the account incoherent. *First*, because recognition of a similarity between X and Y presupposes a grasp of the nature or “whatness” of X (and of Y), and it is this more primitive cognitive act that constitutes the formation of a concept (and explains the capacity for re-cognition). *Second*, because it is incoherent to give an account of our formation of the concept of *similarity* in this way. For one must already have, and know how to apply, that concept in order to judge that two instances of similarity are similar. Thus, having a one-time experience of, say, the color maroon is sufficient to provide a normal rational agent with the resources to form the concept *maroon*; what is further required is attending to, or noticing this feature of an experience and remembering it. So it is with transparency: once a proposition is presented to me in this way, and I notice and remember that feature of my cognitive act, I have done what is sufficient for concept-formation.¹⁰ So, I claim, the conceptual resources needed to understand P* and its successors are available to anyone who grasps P itself in the proper way.
- 4) Thus there is no distinction between *attending to* (even for the first time) the givenness of a proposition and having, at least implicitly, acquired the concept of transparency. (And, conversely, it is I believe impossible to acquire a proper grasp of transparency in

¹⁰ I should say something similar about acquisition of the concepts of knowledge and justification, although here the accounts will be more complex.

any other way.) But, more than this, the attended-to transparency is itself *given* to one, as an essential feature of the way in which P itself (and its truth-value) is given. Were *that* not so, one would be in the dark respecting the cognitively essential feature of the situation that is precisely what underwrites one's right to be sure that P is true. And so it follows that the state of affairs that makes P* true is given to one in the circumstance in which P is given to one.

- 5) Thus, when I claimed that the transparency of P* is not distinguishable from the transparency of P itself, what I meant (but perhaps could have expressed more clearly) is that (a) the transparency-relation (the universal, not the instance) that relates me to the two propositions is the same relation, but also – and more strongly – (b) that the transparency of a particular P* on a particular occasion is implicit in the transparency of P itself on that occasion. Suppose P is properly basic for me since I know it to express some fact with which I'm directly acquainted. What is the relation between seeing that P and seeing that it is transparent that P? Well, if first is true, the second is; and I can see that because, in being directly acquainted with the fact that P, I'm directly aware of being aware of this fact. That's what awareness is *like*.
- 6) But all this, even if true, certainly won't be enough to pacify Bergmann. For surely, as he presses the objection, there is *something* wrong – even difficult to take seriously – about the suggestion that a proposition involving multiple iterations of 'it is transparent that' is transparent to one in the way in which P itself, or even P*, is. That seems right *even if* what I've just said shows (as I claimed) that "There is nothing in the content of either P* or P** that involves any information not already contained in the original act of intuiting the content and truth-value of P." And surely, this judgment of Bergmann's has to be honored. But it is not that difficult to honor. I have already indicated how to do so. Higher-order members of the P*-series are indeed too complex to be clearly and distinctly grasped – and there is an infinity of them. But what we *need* to grasp, clearly and distinctly, about each of them is just this: that their truth-maker is the relation in which I stand to P when I grasp *that* proposition clearly and distinctly (more precisely, it is the state of affairs of my grasping that proposition clearly and distinctly, or

transparently). In this way, the truth-maker for the P*-series is precisely analogous to the truth-maker that guarantees the truth of the T-series. It is trueⁿ that P just in case – and just because – P itself is true. It is not as if there is an infinity of distinct and independent states of affairs required as truth-makers here.¹¹

- 7) Bergmann's error here is to suppose that, in order for one to see infallibly and clearly that P** is true and that its truth-maker exists, one must first grasp the content of P** clearly *and completely*, and then grasp, clearly and completely, the obtaining of a truth-maker whose form is: *that it is transparent to me that it is transparent to me that P*. But I deny this: what one must see infallibly and clearly is that P** is a member of the P*-series; and one must grasp the givenness relation itself, with sufficient clarity to see that the truth-maker for each member of the P*-series is just the state of affairs of one's transparently seeing that P is true – i.e., just the truth-maker for P* itself. And it is quite sufficient, for the purpose of relevant identification and individuation, that one denote any given member of the P-series by way of a numeral; e.g. as Pⁿ.

Summing up, then, I should say that it is enough, for properly basic knowledge of P, that P's truth be given to one. One need not engage in any reflection upon the members of the P*-series – let alone judge them to be true – to be in the state of knowing that P. While knowledge that P does not depend upon the making of such judgments, it is nonetheless true that the truth of each member of the P*-series is a necessary condition of one's non-inferentially knowing that P; and knowledge of the truth of every member of the P*-series is, in the sense explained above, available upon reflection *to* anyone who knows that P by way of P's truth being given to them.¹²

¹¹ I assume that no one will suppose that distinct propositions require distinct truth-makers. By my lights, 'A & B' and ' $\sim(\sim A \vee \sim B)$ ' express distinct propositions, but ones that have the same truth-maker; so too 'The cat is on the mat' and 'The mat is under the cat.'

¹² When I speak of mere availability here, I have in mind something like, or analogous to, unnoticed presence to consciousness. Such unnoticed, or unattended to presences, can play important cognitive roles. Consider, for example the ways in which we visually apprehend objects in our surroundings. Most objects are "given to" us in experience as three-dimensional (two-dimensional retinal images notwithstanding). This achievement of our visual system depends critically, *inter alia*, upon ordinarily unnoticed features of the visual field: highlights, reflections, shading, and perspectival cues. All of these are *visually present*, even though (ordinarily) not the focus of attention. It is a large component of training in the graphic arts precisely *to* take notice of these features.

SAI, then, accepts certain infinite regresses, but can show that these regresses are both harmless and inessential to basic acts of knowing or being justified in believing. Nonetheless, many philosophers may object that SAI sets the bar for knowledge (and justification) too high. Non-philosophers, even children and, arguably, many animals, possess knowledge; but, it will be urged, they do *not* have “available to” them P*-, K-, or J-series knowledge (or justification). For they do not have (and are incapable of) the kind of reflection and conceptual sophistication required to acquire the notions of givenness, knowledge, and justification, to say nothing of being incapable of understanding the form and logical relations between members of these series. This objection has some merit. I should make three (very brief) replies.

First, the truth-conditions for ability-attributions are a murky matter. (Do I have the ability to speak Spanish? Well, no: but also yes, in a sense – I do have the ability to take Spanish lessons, the ability to learn Spanish if I do so, and the ability to speak Spanish once I’ve learned the language.) Even if we confine attention to what someone has the ability to do “now” – i.e., right away, barring distractions and the like but without further training, maturation, etc. – it is often quite unclear what sorts of conceptual abilities children (and animals) have. But set that aside.

Second, I incline toward the Cartesian (and uncharitable, if you will) view that knowledge and justification in the strict (and philosophically most interesting) sense is not available to small children and animals. They have *something like* knowledge and justification – indeed, since there are contents given in experience to every conscious being, I should say that they are in possession of the “core” upon which knowledge and justification are founded.

For this reason, I am, thirdly, sympathetic to something like Sosa’s distinction between animal knowledge and reflective knowledge. But that is a topic I won’t enter into here.

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