

The Priority of Self-Knowledge (II)

PHIL 971 Kant Seminar

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1 *Burge on Entitlement*

- Warrant is an ‘epistemic good’ (505), or a “right to rely on cognition as cognition” (Burge (2013), 1) with two ‘subspecies’ — viz., entitlement and justification^{1,2}

Entitlement: An epistemically ‘externalist’ form of warrant which is not conceptually accessible on reflection by the warranted individual—the subject need not even have the conceptual repertoire necessary to think the propositional content that formulates the warrant (Burge (2003), 504)

Justification: An epistemically ‘internalist’ form of warrant by *reasons*, which is (i) conceptual; (ii) propositional; (iii) conceptually accessible on reflection to the warranted individual (Burge (2003), 505)

2 *Entitlement and Access*

- Does Burge have an access requirement on entitlement?
 - what notion of ‘access’?
 - * Bonjour’s “within the ken” of the epistemic subject (cf. Bonjour (1985))
 - * Alston’s notion of being based on an adequate ground³
 - * Supervenience of justification on facts which one is “in a position to know by reflection alone” (Pryor (2001), 104) vs. one always has access (in the position to know sense) to whether one is justified (Pryor (2001), 105)
 - Pryor explains that by the term ‘reflection’ he means ‘a priori reasoning, introspective awareness of one’s own mental states, and one’s memory of knowledge acquired in these ways’ (ibid.).
 - * Strong supervenience of the justificatory status of a person’s doxastic attitudes on the person’s mental states, events, and conditions (Conee (2007), 55).

2.1 *Casullo vs. Silins on Varieties of Access*

- Casullo argues that Burge’s notion of ‘entitlement’ has an access requirement, albeit a weak one⁴

¹ [warrant can be] an *entitlement* that consists in a status of operating in an appropriate way in accord with norms of reason, even when these norms cannot be articulated by the individual who has that status. We have an entitlement to certain perceptual beliefs or to certain logical inferences even though we may lack reasons or justifications for them. (Burge 1996, 93)

² Although both [entitlement and justification] have positive force in rationally supporting a propositional attitude or cognitive practice, and in constituting an epistemic right to it, entitlements are epistemic rights or warrants that need not be understood by or even accessible to the subject (Burge 1993, 458)

³ Wherever it is clear that a belief is *based on* another belief or on an experience, the belief forming “process” or “mechanism” is *taking account* of that ground or features thereof, being *guided* by it, even if this does not involve the conscious utilisation of a belief in a support relation. (Alston (1988), 266)

⁴ An entitlement to believe that p is only moderately external: it involves access to the ground of the belief that p, but it does not involve access to the adequacy of one’s ground for that belief or the epistemic principle governing that ground. A justification to believe that p is moderately internal: it involves access to both the ground of the belief that p and the epistemic principle governing that ground. (Casullo (2007), 278)

- Silins's argues an opposing position, according to which Burgean entitlement does not require the satisfaction of any access requirement whatsoever.⁵

⁵ Entitlements should be defined as warrants that one can have without satisfying any of the Access conditions 1–4. (Silins (2012), 248)

SILINS ON ACCESS:

- Silins describes four increasingly demanding notions of access:
 - (Access₁): One has conceptual access on reflection to a state which provides one with warrant.
 - (Access₂): One has conceptual access on reflection (1) to a state which provides one with warrant, and (2) to the fact that it provides one with warrant.
 - (Access₃): One has conceptual access on reflection (1) to a state which provides one with warrant, and (2) to the fact that it provides one with warrant, and (3) to some or all of the features of the state which make it provide one with warrant.
 - (Access₄): One has conceptual access on reflection (1) to a state which provides one with warrant, and (2) to the fact that it provides one with warrant, and (3) to some or all of the features of the state which make it provide one with warrant, (4) the fact that those features make the state provide one with warrant.

CASULLO ON ACCESS:

- Casullo distinguishes between three forms of relevant access:
 - (I₁) The ground of S's belief that p is accessible
 - (I₂) The adequacy of the ground of S's belief that p is accessible
 - (I₃) The epistemic principle governing the ground of S's belief that p is accessible
- In contrast to Silins, Casullo argues that conceptual access to one's ground is necessary for entitlement⁶

⁶ the conceptualization of perceptual representations is an essential feature of perceptual entitlement and...the ground of such an entitlement is conceptually accessible. Therefore, an entitlement is a warrant that satisfies (I₁), but not (I₂) or (I₃). (Casullo (2007), 278)

EVALUATING THE DISPUTE:

- Burge's discussion of conceptualization as "part of normal conversion of perceptual representations into propositional representations" (Burge (2003), 541) might make it seem as if the arrival at a perceptually entitled belief depends on going through a process of 'normal' conversion of percepts into propositionally structured concepts, which itself suggests conceptual access to the ground of the entitlement—viz. the percept
 - This may confuse the *ground* of the entitlement with the *content* to which one is entitled
 - Conceptual access to the *content* of entitled belief typically depends on conceptualization of the percept or state via "normal conversion"⁷

⁷ Conceptualization is part of normal conversion of perceptual representations into propositional representations. . . . Through conceptualization the simplest sorts of perceptual beliefs are formed—beliefs that make reference to the same objects, properties, and relations that the perceptual system represents (Burge 2003, 541-2)

- Conceptual access to the *entitlement* for the positive epistemic attitude towards the relevant content would seem to require conceptualization of the conditions of entitlement—viz. necessary conditions for individuating representational types and reliability of those types
- Plausibly, children and animals lack conceptual access to conditions of entitlement⁸

3 *Entitlement & Self-Knowledge*

- If we are to count as critical reasoners then we must be entitled to judgments we make concerning ourselves⁹

Critical Reasoning: Reasoning that recognizes and employs reasons *as* reasons in the appraisal and modification of one's doxastic and conative attitudes¹⁰

- Three stages of Burge's argument¹¹
 1. We have an epistemic entitlement to judgments about our thoughts, reasons, or reasoning
 2. Critical reasoning requires that we (typically) *know* our own thoughts
 3. Our knowledge of our own thoughts is (necessarily) non-observational

3.1 *The Epistemic Entitlement to Reflect (pp. 101-2)*

1. Evaluation of reasons requires the capacity to make judgments about one's attitudes & inferences—i.e. to reflect
2. If one were not epistemically entitled to reflect then reflection would never be in a position to rationalize our reasoning processes
3. But reflection *is* in a position to rationalize our reasoning
4. ∴ One is entitled to reflect (or: one is entitled in the judgments one makes in the course of reflection)

3.2 *Critical Reasoning & Knowledge (pp. 102-4)*

1. If reflective judgments were not normally true (and thus cases of knowledge) reflection could not make a rational contribution to the process of reasoning
 2. But reflection *does* make a rational contribution to reasoning
 3. ∴ One is not simply entitled in reflective judgment, one also typically knows what one reflectively judges
- Critical reflection cannot admit of “brute error”; errors in critical reasoning always involve some malfunction or rational deficiency (104)¹²

⁸ In critical reasoners, these [epistemic] norms become objects of reflection. But to be applicable to mental states of non-critical reasoners, many such norms need not be conceptually accessible to reflection. In young children and higher subhuman animals, they are not conceptualized. Such children and animals cannot think about them. They lack the concepts epistemic, warrant, entitlement, reason, reliable, competence, entails, perception, and perceptual state. It is doubtful that all mature human adults have all these concepts. Thus for many beings with warranted beliefs, fulfillment of the relevant norms is constitutive of an individual's having epistemic entitlements—having epistemic warrants that need not be conceptually accessible to the warranted individual. (Burge 2003, 521)

⁹ To be capable of critical reasoning, and to be subject to certain rational norms necessarily associated with such reasoning, some mental acts and states must be knowledgeably reviewable. The specific character of this knowledgeable reviewability requires that it be associated with an epistemic entitlement that is distinctive. The entitlement must be stronger than that involved in perceptual judgments. There must be a non-contingent, rational relation, of a sort to be explained, between relevant first-person judgments and their subject matter or truth. (Burge 1996, 98)

¹⁰ Critical reasoning is reasoning that involves an ability to recognize and effectively employ reasonable criticism or support for reasons and reasoning. It is reasoning guided by an appreciation, use, and assessment of reasons and reasoning as such. As a critical reasoner, one not only reasons. One recognizes reasons as reasons. One evaluates, checks, weighs, criticizes, supplements one's reasons and reasoning. (Burge 1996, 98)

¹¹ Why must we be normally knowledgeable about our thoughts when we reflect upon them? I will answer this question in three stages. First, I want to show that to evaluate reasons critically, one must have an epistemic entitlement to one's judgments about one's thoughts, reasons, and reasoning. Second, I want to support the stronger thesis that critical reasoning requires that one know one's thoughts, reasons, and reasoning. Third, I will try to show that this knowledge must take a distinctive, non-observational form. (Burge 1996, 101)

¹² A brute error is an error that indicates no rational failure and no malfunction in the mistaken individual. Brute perceptual errors commonly result from misleading natural conditions or look-alike substitutes. (Burge 1996, 103)

3.3 Self-Knowledge is Non-Observational (pp. 104-14)

- Two negative points
 1. Self-observation does not account for *cogito*-like thought, i.e. self-verifying thought (105)
 2. There is no distinctive cognitive phenomenology, so there is nothing plausibly sensory with respect to the apprehension of one's thoughts and attitudes (105)
- What is fundamental to the observation model?
 - Not phenomenology
 - Warrant depends on pattern of veridical but contingent or brute relations¹³
- 1. If the self-observation model were correct then “disassociation” between critical reason and its subject matter would be possible
- 2. But the disassociation of critical reason and its subject matter is not compatible with being a critical reasoner¹⁴
- 3. ∴ The self-observation model is incorrect—i.e. there must be a non-observational form of self-knowledge
- Q: Why can't critical reasoners be subject to disassociation (i.e. what justifies (2))?

THE POINT OF VIEW ARGUMENT: (pp. 110-14)¹⁵

1. If the observational model of self-knowledge were correct then it would not (normally) immediately follow from an exercise of critical reasoning that one maintains or alters one's lower order attitudes
2. But since reasoning (in rational beings) takes place within a single point of view, all reasons must (normally) transmit across that POV
3. ∴ It (normally) *does* immediately follow from an exercise of critical reasoning that one thereby maintains or alters one's attitudes
4. ∴ The observational model of self-knowledge must be false

1 st Order	2 nd Order
1. I believe that p	A. I believe that I believe that p
2. I believe that $p \rightarrow z$	B. I believe that I believe that $p \rightarrow z$
3. I believe that q (on the basis of p)	C. I believe that I should believe that z (not q)

- On Burge's view, the process of critical reasoning in (A)-(C) should, of itself, produce a revision one's lower-order attitudes (i.e. (3))¹⁶

¹³ The model need not claim any phenomenological presentation in self-knowledge, though waiving such a claim weakens the analogy to observation. The fundamental claim is that one's epistemic warrant for self-knowledge always rests partly on the existence of a pattern of veridical, but brute, contingent, non-rational relations—which are plausibly always causal relations—between the subject matter (the attitudes under review) and the judgments about the attitudes. (Burge 1996, 105)

¹⁴ general application of the [self-observation] model is incompatible with the function of knowledge of one's own attitudes in critical reasoning. The main idea is that such application would entail a dissociation between cognitive review and the thoughts reviewed that is incompatible with norms of epistemic reasonability that are basic to all critical inquiry, including empirical, mathematical, philosophical, and practical inquiry. (Burge 1996, 108)

¹⁵ The reviewing of reasons that is integral to critical reasoning includes the review and the reviewed attitudes in a single point of view. The simple observational model treats the review and the system being reviewed as dissociated in a way incompatible with the norms of critical reasoning. It makes the reviewed system an object of investigation, but not part of the investigation's point of view. So the model fails to account for the norms of critical reasoning. (Burge 1996, 110-11)

¹⁶ It would be reasonable for the person from the point of view of the review that a change in the reviewed material be made. But this reason would not necessarily transfer to within the point of view of the attitudes under review, even though that is a point of view of the same person. Its transferring would depend on brute, contingent, non-rational relations between the two points of view. In critical reasoning, however, the connection is rationally immediate and necessary. (Burge 1996, 110)

- The observational model appeals to some further set of considerations in order to explain whether the subject should revise (3) on the basis of (A)-(C)
- Hence the observational view “disassociates” the reviewing and reviewed points of view, creating a “gap” between reasons at each level, and bifurcating our responsibility to be sensitive to such reasons¹⁷

4 Gertler's Defense of Empiricism

4.1 Gertler's Reconstruction of the Agentalist Challenge:

1. As rational agents, we are obligated to satisfy certain rational norms.
2. Satisfying some of those rational norms requires reasoning critically about one's attitudes.
- *3. One cannot reason critically about one's attitudes unless one can know one's attitudes non-empirically.
- *4. We can satisfy our obligations, as rational agents, only if we can know our attitudes non-empirically. (from 1–3*)
5. “S is obligated to A” implies “S can A”.
- *6. As rational agents, we can know our attitudes non-empirically. (from 4* & 5)

- Gertler contests (3*): “empirical” knowledge of one's attitudes is compatible with critical reasoning/reflection on those attitudes¹⁸

The agential position: S occupies the agential position on ϕ -ing, relative to reasons R to ϕ =df. S can ϕ directly on the basis of R

- Gertler holds that one can occupy the “agential position” relative to some attitude (and so engage in critical reasoning concerning it), while having come to *know* of the attitude via empirical means¹⁹
- Is Gertler correct that we can cleanly separate knowledge of one's attitudes from the exertion of agency over those attitudes?

References & Further Reading

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¹⁷ the simple observational model implies that in carrying out reviews of one's reasoning, one is epistemically responsible not primarily for the thoughts being reviewed but primarily for the review. The model implies that we are in reviewing our reasons only derivatively responsible for objects of review, as one might be responsible for the actions of one's child or dog-but fully and primarily responsible only where one's knowledge and control contingently matched what one is justified in believing about them. (Bure 1996, 111)

¹⁸ one may occupy the agential position on preserving or revising an attitude, relative to appropriate reasons, even if one's knowledge of that attitude is purely empirical. (Gertler 2016, 16)

¹⁹ Given my proposal, we can say (with the agentalist) that only the deliberative juror engages in critical self-reflection. On my analysis, this is because only the deliberative juror occupies the agential position on revising that belief, relative to appropriate reasons. But this difference emerges only after each juror recognizes that she has the belief in question. It does not imply that there is any difference between the jurors, as to how self-knowledge of the initial belief is achieved. (Gertler 2016, 17)

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