FYI, text boxes will note some interesting questions for further discussion.

Notes for Week 4 of *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*

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1 The debate in context:

In the first four chapters of *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*[1], our attention is directed towards disputes concerning "Knowledge and Skepticism". Though the debaters of these chapters (Dretske/Hawthorne, Conee/Cohen, Vogel/Fumerton, and BonJour/Devitt) appear to have specifically directed focuses, it is clear that they are concerned with the same kinds of underlying issues. It will be useful to point to some of the common themes.

In Ch.1 ("Is Knowledge Closed under Known Entailment?"), we are introduced to a trilemma (p.3):

A: We know lots of ordinary things about the worlds ("I have hands", "John ate all of the cookies", etc.).
B: There is no way of knowing the *heavyweight* implications of our knowledge of ordinary things ("There is a physical world/physical objects", "There are other minds", "The past is real").
C: Closure (If S knows that p, and knows that p implies q, then S is in a position to know that q).

Dretske and Hawthorne respond to this trilemma in different ways. According to Dretske, our knowledge of the world implies heavyweight propositions. Since there is no way of knowing such propositions, we ought to reject closure (C). He thinks that this is the position with the smallest costs. Hawthorne argues that Dretske's examples are not counterexamples to closure and that we ought to maintain C and reject B. Conee, Cohen, Vogel and Fumerton also take positions on how to respond to the trilemma:

Positions	Proponents
accept A & B, reject C	Dretske: intuitively A and B are true, so we should reject C.

Is this a fair portrayal of Fumerton's position?

accept A & C, reject B	Hawthorne: we know that A and C are true, so we can infer that B is false. Vogel: C is true; A and B are competitors, but via IBE, we can infer that B is false.

[1] *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*. Mathias Steup and Ernest Sosa (eds.). USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005.

	(Dretske calls this position "verbal hocus pocus")
accept B & C, reject A	Fumerton: rejects A unless there is *a priori* knowledge of high probability relations; if not, skepticism succeeds (it's not clear that there is such *a priori* knowledge).
accept A, B & C	Cohen: contextualism- we can accept A, B & C and preserve skeptical and anti-skeptical intuitions by appealing to shifting standards in knowledge ascriptions. Conee: we can accept A, B & C without a problem. This isn't a paradox, but just a case in which our evidence is impoverished. We should just reserve judgement.

In Ch. 2 ("Is Knowledge Contextual?"), we are introduced to more specific version of the above trilemma (p.5)[2]. This version appeals to the following skeptical scenario: you may be bodiless -and hence, handless- brain in a vat who has been electrochemically stimulated (by some super computer, say) to have precisely the same sensory experiences as you would have if you were embodied and having accurate sensory, or veridical, perceptions of the world (henceforth, a BIV). This an updated version of Descartes' Evil Genius/Deceiver argument of the First Meditation; both claim that you might be the victim of massive sensory deprivation.

A': I know that I have hands.
B': I do not know that I am not a BIV
C': I know that I have hands → I know that I am not a BIV

Cohen assumes that closure is true and will not reject C'. He thinks A' and B' are both plausible but recognizes that (according to the current standards of truth for knowledge assertions) they cannot both be true. Cohen's solution is contextualism. The idea is that sometimes two assertions seem to be inconsistent when actually they are not (think of indexicals). Knowledge is like this. In other words, A' and B' are really not inconsistent.

The truth of a knowledge assertion depends on:

(a) the standards of knowledge in place in the context an assertion is made (low standards: drinks at Beckett's; high standards: an epistemology seminar in which relevant skeptical alternatives are made salient);
(b) the subject to whom the knowledge is attributed (does she meet these standards?)

For S, in a low standards context, A' is true and B' is false.
For S, in a high standards context, A' is false and B' is true.

The contextualist approach seems to be an antiskeptical resolution of the paradox because it preserves the truth of everyday knowledge ascriptions (relative to the everyday contexts in which they are made) and explains the appeal of skepticism. It preserves both our skeptical and non-skeptical intuitions.

This solution, however, is not without criticism. Some of it comes from Conee (for more on this, see Michael's notes – week three). You might also worry that the contextualist approach concedes too much to the skeptic and you might worry about whether scepticism can be properly refuted at all. Ch.3 ("Can Skepticism be Refuted?") covers this ground.

2 Can Skepticism Be Refuted? - Background Distinctions and Assumptions:

[2] Even with this more specific version of the trilemma, the positions would remain the same as in the above table.

Distinctions:

- Domestic Skepticism vs. Exotic Skepticism (Vogel)

  The domestic skeptic claims that we lack knowledge of the world that we think we have, but he doesn't contest epistemic principles (such as the underdetermination principle). The exotic skeptic claims that we lack knowledge of the world that we think we have *and* contests epistemic principles (such as inductive inferences, IBE, etc.)
- Local Skepticism vs. Global Skepticism (Fumerton)

  Local skeptics are skeptics about particular kinds of truths: about the external world, the past, the future, other minds, theoretical entities posited by physics, etc. The global skeptic claims that we do not know anything and we cannot even know that we do not know anything. We have no justified beliefs and we are not even justified in believing that we have no justified beliefs. Domestic skepticism is an instance of local skepticism. Exotic skepticism may even be an instance of local skepticism (given that the exotic skeptic can be skeptical of knowledge of the external world and some epistemic principles, but need not be a global skeptic who is skeptical of *all* knowledge).
- Internalism vs. Externalism (SEP)

  Internalists claim that S either does or can have a form of *access* to the basis for their knowledge or justified belief. S either is or can be aware of this basis. Externalists, in contrast, deny that S always can have this kind of access to the basis for their knowledge and justified belief. As we will see, internalists (like Fumerton) will have a difficult time refuting skeptisicm.[3]
- Ruling out error vs. Ruling out alternatives to p

  These are positions on what is required for knowledge. Some say that if "S knows p" is in question, then all S has to do is rule out the alternatives that are incompatible with p (so if S knows that the table is red, he needs to rule out the possibility that the table is white with a red light shining on it). You can rule out alternatives to p without being aware that you are (Dretske). A much stronger requirement on knowledge is the requirement that S must rule out *any possibility of error*. Error is an epistemic notion and so ruling out error is a second-order requirement on knowledge. Ruling out error involves knowing that you know; having internal access to the fact. This is more of an internalist requirement motivated by the Cartesian project and it's not obvious (especially to an externalist) that we should have such high standards for knowledge. (When we come to epistemic merit, we will see that there is no concern with a second-order judgement like ruling out the possibility of error. For Vogel, epistemic merit reduces to explanatory goodness and for Fumerton, it reduces to the awareness of a probability relation).
- Fallibilism vs. Infallibilism

  Fallibilism is the view that for S to know p, S must satisfy an evidential or reliability condition. It is possible, however, that S could satisfy this condition while p is false (S could be wrong). So, on this view the knowledge-giving reasons (the evidence) *need not* be entailing reasons (they could just make the hypothesis likely). Infallibilism is the view for S to know p, S must satisfy some evidential or reliability condition, such that it is *not possible* for S to satisfy the condition while p is false. On this view, the knowledge-giving reasons (the evidence) *must* be entailing reasons. Beliefs must be warranted and certain. If we are infallibilist about knowledge then we might never be able to refute skepticism.[4]

[3] We will return to this debate again in Ch.9 "Is Justification Internal?"

[4] It is worth noting that there has been some interesting work being done on Infallibilism and Gettier cases; see "Infallibilism and Gettier's Legacy": http://www.ac.wwu.edu/~howardd/infallibilismandgettier%27slegacy.pdf.

Assumptions:

- Both Vogel and Fumerton agree that the type of scepticism at issue is a local, domestic skepticism, specifically, skepticism about the external world (not skepticism about other, as Dretske calls them, heavyweight implications of our knowledge of ordinary things, such as "There are other minds" and "The past is real").

- Both Vogel and Fumerton agree that the skeptical hypothesis at issue is that you might be a BIV. This hypothesis competes with what Vogel will call the "Real World Hypothesis". The skeptic argues that your evidence is not sufficient for making a justified choice between the following propositions: (a) I have hands; (b) I am a BIV. The hypothesis is designed so the evidence is compatible. Both Vogel and Fumerton agree that this appears initially just as a case in which the evidence underdetermines the choice.

- For methodological reasons, I will take **evidentialism** (a theory of justification) to be a guiding principle for both Vogel and Fumerton. According to evidentialism, whether a belief is justified depends on S's evidence. S's belief is justified to the degree it fits S's evidence. The question that Vogel and Fumerton will ask is how strongly the evidence supports the hypotheses in question (and issues about total vs. partial evidence will become particularly important). Vogel is concerned with the kind of explanation that is given by the hypotheses for certain states of affairs and how well the explanation explains the evidence. For Fumerton, the issue is with a "making probable" relation and with what the total evidence makes probable.

- Both Vogel and Fumerton agree that skepticism about knowledge of the external world cannot be avoided if we are to understand knowledge as requiring justification so strong that it eliminates the possibility or error. Both Vogel and Fumerton will be concerned with finding justification that *makes likely* for us, the truth of what we believe. It is important here to note that Vogel and Fumerton will be concerned with something that is supposed to *make probable* the truth of our beliefs. For Vogel, the "something" will be your awareness of the best explanation of the data. For Fumerton, the "something" will be your awareness of a probability relation. They are not concerned with something that will *make certain* the truth of our beliefs. This makes both Vogel and Fumerton fallibilists about knowledge.

- Vogel assumes that closure is true: If S knows that p, and knows that p implies q, then S is in a position to know that q. (Fumerton thinks closure is true, but for justification).

3 Vogel's Refutation of Skepticism:

Vogel is concerned with the BIV skeptical hypothesis. The skeptic argues that your evidence is not sufficient for making a justified choice between the following propositions: (a) I have hands; (b) I am a BIV. The evidence is compatible. According to Vogel, this is just a case in which the evidence underdetermines the choice.

He introduces the Underdetermination Principle (UP):

> If q is a competitor to p, then S can know p only if p has more epistemic merit for S than q

Vogel's endorsement of UP and his instantiation of it below supports my claim that he is an evidentialist. It is not clear exactly what epistemic merit amounts to because Vogel does not say much about the factors

that add to or subtract from epistemic merit. It will become clear, however, that evidence is a crucial factor.

Vogel reconstructs the BIV Argument to include the underdermination language:

(1) In order to know any mundane proposition, p about the world that I ordinarily believe ("I have hands"), my belief that p must not be underdetermined. (This is an application of UP: p must have more epistemic merit than a competing claim q – "I am a BIV").

(2) My belief that p is underdetermined (i.e. p and q have equal epistemic merit).

Therefore,

(3) I do not know that p.

Are there any compelling arguments for either of these positions?

Is belief that p underdetermined? Here are some positions that have been taken on the question:

(a) Yes. We have no basis whatsoever for rejecting the skeptical hypothesis.
(b) Yes, but, while no particular evidence counts against the skeptical hypothesis, epistemic rationality permits (or requires) us to reject it. As Wittgenstein said "a reasonable man does not have such doubts. (Note that this is a rejection of evidentialism - perhaps for pragmatic reasons).
c) No. According to methodological conservatism (the doctrine that we are entitled to maintain beliefs that we already have, all things being equal), our former beliefs have more epistemic merit. We can maintain p and reject the skeptical hypothesis.
(d) No. Experience provides immediate justification for the acceptance of mundane propositions. So if for S, it appears that F, then S is justified in believing that F. This view is called "dogmaticism" and it will be defended by Pryor in Ch.7, "Is there Immediate Justification?"
(e) No. Skeptical arguments are dialectically or pragmatically self-refuting or logically inconsistent.

Vogel thinks that (a)-(e) are untenable and I agree. Vogel's alternative position appeals to a further epistemic principle, Inference to the Best Explanation (IBE)

> When one is choosing between competing candidates for two beliefs A & B, one has good reason to accept A over B, if A provides a better explanation of a relevant body of facts than B does. In other words, if hypothesis A explains the relevant data better than hypothesis B, then we have reason to prefer A to B.

Are there other concerns witl IBE that we should be thinking about?

Some initials concerns that I will return to:

- IBE is a kind of reasoning that reveals that your *total evidence* has more power to discriminate than you thought. In the IBE principle, as he states it, Vogel only appeals to "a relevant body of facts" and "relevant data", in other words, *partial evidence*. One could object, however, that to adjudicate between two hypotheses, he will *have* to take into account total evidence not partial evidence.

- It is not clear what is supposed to count toward "explanatory goodness". How are we to decide whether A provides a "better explanation" than B? Is explanatory goodness purely epistemic? Does it predict the truth of a hypothesis? Or, does it relate to an *intrinsic property* of the explanation (such as simplicity)?

- It is not clear how goodness could be assessed or compared. Suppose hypothesis A explains some of the data (one empirical phenomenon, for example) really well. But hypothesis B has a simpler

explanation of some other empirical phenomenon. What kinds of explanations get more weight? Do we adjudicate between explanations based on pragmatic grounds?

- It is not even clear what an explanation is. This is a huge question.

Some of these concerns will be elaborated on to "level" Vogel's alternative account. First, let us see how he uses IBE to "refute skepticism".
The two hypotheses we are adjudicating between are the "Real World Hypothesis" (RWH) in which you are an ordinary perceiver and the "Isomorphic Skeptical Hypothesis" (ISH)[5] in which you are a BIV[6].

RWH + ISH + IBE:

> When one is choosing between RWH & ISH, one has good reason to accept RWH over ISH, if RWH provides a better explanation of a relevant body of facts than ISH does. In other words, if RWH explains the relevant data better than ISH, then we have reason to prefer RWH to ISH.

Vogel considers our perceptual evidence first. RWH and ISH will have competing accounts of what is going on when you pet a cat:

H: the event of your hand moving
H*: the computer file that stands for H
V: the visual experience as of your hand moving.
C: the event of a cat purring
C*: the computer file that stands for C
P: the auditory experience of a cat purring.

According to RWH:	H causes V; V causes C; C causes P
According to ISH:	H* causes V; V activates C*; C* causes P

There seems to be no difference between RWH and ISH in terms of explanatory success as they have similar causal-explanatory structures.

The skeptical hypothesis banks of the idea that our experience could be caused by radically different kinds of things than we think. Although ISH provides a similar causal-explanatory structure as RWH, it makes reference to objects and properties other than the ones that we take to be real. ISH replaces genuine shapes with pseudo shapes, and genuine locations with pseudo locations to explain the disposition of matter in space.

Vogel thinks that "explanatory considerations" will do the antiskeptical work[7]. According to Vogel, ISH lacks simplicity – it offers us a more complex explanation of the relevant data but does not deepen our

[5] Just a pedantic point: Two structures are isomorphic when there is an isomorphism (understood as a one-to-one mapping between objects, which shows a relationship between two properties or operations) between them. Homeomorphisms are kinds of isomorphisms and they are the mappings which preserve all the topological properties of a given space. Spaces are homeomorphic if there is a homeomorphism between them. Vogel would have been more accurate the call the hypothesis the "Homeomorphic Skeptical Hypothesis".
[6] Vogel rules out the "Minimal Skeptical Hypothesis" as a competitor. According to MSH, your experiences are caused in a delusionary manner. According to Vogel, this hypothesis has very little explanatory power.
[7] See pg. 77 of *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology.* The argument is a little more complicated, but I don't think it matters for our purposes.

understanding about space and necessary truths about objects and locations in space. ISH will have to add to its explanation to match the structure of the RWH causal-explanation. Vogel has doubts that the ISH explanation can adequately match up in the right ways with the RWH explanation.

So, it seems that any way you look at it, RWH offers us a simpler, more economical explanation of the relevant data. Therefore, we should prefer RWH to ISH and we should reject (2), that my belief that p is underdetermined. (This amounts to the rejection of B and B' above).

Is this a fair reconstruction of Vogel's argument?

Vogel's argument can be reconstructed (roughly) as follows:

1. Either RWH or ISH.
2. If one hypothesis explains the relevant data better than the other, then we have reason to prefer it. (IBE)
3. RWH explains the relevant data better than ISH.
4. Therefore, we have reason to favour RWH (RWH has more epistemic merit).
5. If ISH is a competitor to RWH, then S can know RWH only if RWH has more epistemic merit for S than ISH. (UP)
5. Therefore, our choice between RWH and ISH is not underdetermined.
6. Therefore, (2) of Deceiver Argument is false.
7. Therefore, skepticism may be refuted.

4 Objections to Vogel's refutation

Vogel notes some criticisms of IBE:

- Simplicity is not a guide to truth.
- IBE is tantamount to wishful thinking that the world be nice and neat.

Vogel replies by noting that IBE is no more suspect that other kinds of inductive confirmation. This reply, however, is pretty unhelpful. We might feel inclined to just reject these other kinds of inductive inference rather than accept IBE.

Vogel then says that either you choose not to be skeptical of IBE and then be in a position to reject external world skepticism or you can be skeptical about IBE and accept external world scepticism (and skepticism about induction). Vogel thinks the latter kind of skepticism is "exotic" any may be ignored. This is a little too quick. In the objections that I will present below, I argue that even if you are not skeptical about IBE, you still will not be in a position to reject external world skepticism.

Fumerton's Objections:

Objection 1: Berkeley's idealism (i.e. the view that God causes our experiences) was simpler than the competing view (i.e. the view that physical objects cause our experiences). Berkeley's system posited two kinds of things (minds and ideas/sensations), while the materialism posited three (minds, ideas/sensations, and material things). So, based on Vogel's strategy, we ought to endorse Berkeley's idealism. This is related to the first criticism of IBE. It appears that simplicity is not a guide to truth.

Objection 2: It is not obvious that we should endorse IBE. The skeptic has every right to question the probability principles to which the non-skeptic appeals. We are not given a strong enough reason not to flirt with exotic skepticism.

The Explanation/Epistemic Probability Objection

According to Vogel, whatever hypothesis (RWH or ISH) explains the relevant data better will have more "epistemic merit". He says that RWH has more epistemic merit insofar as it is able to give a better explanation of objects in space. It seems that the explanation is better because it is simpler.

There are two issues here:

i) It is not obvious that simpler theories are more likely to be true.

ii) It seems like the issue of simplicity is orthogonal to the issue of whether the evidence supports the hypothesis

The first issue was brought out by Fumerton's criticism of Vogel (the Berkeley objection). The second issue seems like the more interesting one. It seems as though Vogel's point that RWH provides a simpler, more pragmatic explanation of objects in space cross cuts the question about evidential support. Simplicity seems to be *a priori* and intrinsic property of an explanation (of the explanans) that makes it more probable. It does not seem to be an epistemic merit that suggests that the theory is more likely to be true. If this is the case, then the evidence we get from the data is irrelevant. It is the *a priori* probability doing the work and not the evidence.

Perhaps Vogel thinks that there is some connection between explanatory merit and epistemic merit. It is not clear that there is any reason to think that there is such a tight connection between the two. There seems to be a big gap between being a better explanation and epistemically making truth of a hypothesis more probable. Vogel is concerned with what the evidence explains, but you might think he should be concerned with what the evidence predicts.

Is there a connection between explanatory merit and epistemic merit?

If Vogel is claiming that simplicity is what gives an explanation epistemic merit then it seems like he is talking past the skeptic. It does not seem like the evidence is doing any of the work. But the skeptic is concerned with the evidence, not will the *a priori* probability suggested by the simplicity of the competing hypotheses. There is a difference between *a priori* plausibility of evidence and evidence making a difference (making the truth more probable). The skeptic is on about the latter.

Even if Vogel can show that the simplicity of an explanation is tightly connected to epistemic merit (where epistemic merit involves making the truth of the hypothesis probable), we could argue that the hypothesis is supported only by partial evidence. We need to be concerned with whether the *total evidence* supports the hypothesis (i.e. whether the hypothesis provides a better explanation for the total evidence). There are at least three reasons why total evidence should be our concern.

The Total Evidence/Partial Evidence Objection:

There is a crucial difference between *partial evidence* and *total evidence*. Partial evidence would be data you get from some faculty or source (perception, for example), which is independent of (and perhaps ignores) the data that you get/could get from other faculties or sources (such as introspection, memory, reason, testimony, etc.). This distinction should be important for Vogel for at least two reasons:

1. It is a distinction that Vogel employs against Dretske to show that Dretske's cases are not counterexamples to closure.
2. It is a distinction that we can employ against Vogel to show that his refutation of skepticism is unsuccessful.

As Branden mentioned in week two, Vogel argues that Dretske's alleged counterexamples are not really counterexamples to closure.[8] While Vogel concedes that perceptual evidence (i.e. partial evidence) of the zebra at the zoo *alone* does not form the basis for knowledge that the animal is not a cleverly disguised mule, he claims that your total evidence must do so - if it forms the basis for knowledge that both p and (p → q). Vogel says,

> "Your belief that the animal at the zoo is a zebra is justified in part by your visual evidence, but it is *also* supported by the background information that counts against the animal's being a disguised mule." (p.15)

Vogel is claiming that although your belief is underdetermined by perceptual evidence, facts about your mental life can adjudicate (such as, the background information that you have about the nature and function of zoos). This is a fair objection on Vogel's part and I also think that it is fair for us to turn it back on him. To be consistent, Vogel needs to play by his own rules. (It's also worth noting that Vogel appeals to the notion of a total body of evidence when contesting Fumerton's Requirement).

Vogel's charge against Dretske is that you cannot appeal to partial evidence (just perceptual evidence) to show symmetry in the zoo cases. If partial evidence is not viable for showing symmetry, then it should not be viable for asymmetry either (the asymmetry Vogel tries to show exists between RWH and ISH with regards to explanatory power and epistemic merit).

What kind of phenomenon might the ISH give a better explanation of?

According to Vogel, whatever hypothesis (RWH or ISH) explains the relevant data better will have more "epistemic merit". He says that RWH has more epistemic merit insofar as it is able to give a better explanation of objects in space. We could object, however, that Vogel is only looking at the partial evidence. He focuses on the data that he takes to be "relevant", but it is not clear that we ought to ignore the rest of our evidence. , It could be the case that other parts of our evidence are supported by the ISH. Perhaps some other data is better explained by ISH. Although the RWH might do a better job at explaining objects in space, this is irrelevant. The explanandum (objects in space) is just *part* of the data, not the total data!

- At best, Vogel has shown that *part* of our evidence is supported by RWH.
- It certainly does not follow from the conclusion that *part* of our evidence is supported by RWH, that our *total evidence* favours RWH.

It is total evidence that needs to taken into account if we are going to make any traction in adjudicating between RWH and ISH.

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The fact that Vogel appeals to total evidence in his objection to Dretske is not the only reason we have for demanding that he appeal total evidence, rather than partial evidence, to adjudicate between RWH and ISH. There are two further reasons:

I. *IBE and Total Evidence:*
Vogel is appealing to a principle that is supposed to reveal something about our *total evidence*. IBE is a kind of reasoning that reveals that your total evidence has more power to discriminate than you thought. In the IBE principle, as he states it, Vogel only appeals to "a relevant body of facts" and "relevant data", in other words, to partial evidence. To properly adjudicate between two hypotheses, he will have to take into account total evidence, not just partial evidence.

II. *The Skeptic and Total Evidence:*

[8] In "Are There Counterexamples to the Closure Principle": http://www.fitelson.org/epistemology/vogel_closure.pdf

The skeptic is concerned with total evidence, not just partial evidence. Fumerton notes that one of the advantages of debating in terms of underdetermination is that you are meeting the skeptic on a level playing field. If Vogel, however, is to meet the skeptic on a level playing field, he will have to be concerned with total evidence, not just partial evidence. The skeptic argues that your *total* evidence is not sufficient for making a justified choice between the following propositions: (a) I have hands; (b) I am a BIV. The evidence is compatible. This is why we have a case in which the evidence underdetermines the choice. If Vogel could show that the total evidence does not underdetermine the choice, then *that* would be a refutation of skepticism. Showing that some bit of evidence does not underdetermine the choice will not do the work. If the total evidence underdetermines (i.e. supports RWH and ISH equally) then they have equal epistemic merit. If they have equal epistemic merit, then skepticism comes out on top.

A Methodological Objection:

It looks like the new challenge for Vogel, if he is to meet the skeptic on a level playing field, is to survey our total evidence when adjudicating between RWH and ISH. But it's not even clear what this means. What constitutes our total evidence? We could start by looking at the evidence given by sources that we usually consider to be reliable such as perception, introspection, memory, reason, testimony, etc. but it is not clear that this will exhaust the total evidence. How could you sort through the data from all of these sources? How could you ever assess your total evidence?

A further worry concerns how we are ought to adjudicate when different parts of our total evidence favour each of the competing hypotheses. This is an issue in science when adjudicating between theories. One of them may explain one empirical phenomenon. But then the alternative theory might explain another empirical phenomenon better. How are you supposed to choose? What is more important?

Vogel's seems to be motivated by an analogy with the scientific method. But it seems like this analogy breaks down. In the sciences, when adjudicating between theories, you will only be expected to look at partial evidence (some particular phenomenon). But as shown above, Vogel, if he is (a) going to be consistent; (b) properly appeal to IBE; and (c) properly answer the skeptic, he will have to appeal to total evidence. The scientific method does not aim to appeal to total evidence, so the analogy collapses.

4 Current prospects for refuting skepticism

If our challenge is to appeal to our total evidence to adjudicate between RWH and ISH, then it is certainly a very daunting task. It is going to be difficult to make an assessment in terms of total evidence because it is not clear what the total evidence will be. It seems clear that you can make local assessments with regards to some phenomenon but not a global assessment. Notice that this task is going to be difficult whether you are an internalist or an externalist. A special challenge for the internalist will have to do with access – knowing that you know – which is a stronger requirement. Both the internalist and externalist will face the methodological problems of figuring out how to compare, access, and add up the different local assessments of the evidence to yield a global assessment.

5 The Challenge of Refuting Skepticism (Fumerton):

Fumerton frames the skeptical challenge employing the concept of justification. As he understands it, if one can know without possessing the justification that guarantees the truth of what one believes, then we could easily substitute justification for knowledge.

Fumerton attempts to make clear what a skeptic might reasonably demand of a successful refutation of skepticism. To figure out whether a hypothesis of common sense satisfies the requirements of the underdetermination principle (which Fumerton reframes in terms of justification: If q is a competitor to p, then there is justification for S to believe p only if p has more epistemic merit for S than q), we need:

- A metaepistemological account of non-inferential justification (i.e. we need an internalist account of justification)
- A normative epistemological account of what we are non-inferentially justified in believing. If beliefs about the external world end up in the class of beliefs that are non-inferentially justified, and the skeptic's competitors to those beliefs do not, then the skeptic loses.

Inferential Internalism:

(i) We are acquainted with the contents of our thoughts, and thus have direct knowledge of them.
(ii) We are not acquainted with physical objects. Therefore, if we have knowledge of physical objects it must inferential.
(iii) If we can acquire knowledge of O (a typical proposition about an object) by inferring it from E (a body of evidence obtained through acquaintance), then E must make O probable and we must know/be aware that E makes O probable.

If you are concerned about (iii), Fumerton invites you to consider the following case: S knows C on the basis of E, but S doesn't know that E makes C probable. Is S justified in claiming C, even if you think E makes C probable? If your answer is no, then you accept (iii). But, according to Fumerton, if you accept (iii), there's a regress problem. How could we ever know a proposition to effect that E makes O probable? So our knowledge of probably cannot be inferential because then we probably could have knowledge of probability. This is just another way of saying that we need a foundationalist account.

According to Fumerton, the inferential internalist must employ a *Keynesian conception of probability* in which we can directly know that E makes O probable. According to Keynes (1883-1946), knowledge of probably can be understood on analogy to knowledge of entailments (like we know that $p \rightarrow p \vee q$). So if E does indeed make O probable, we can know directly that this is so. A historical point about Keynes is that he was an internalist who required awareness of the probability. Epistemic probability must be *a priori* and knowable.[9]

Fumerton's Requirement is a condition of what we take to be inferentially justified belief (FR):
If S's believing E justifies S's believing H, then S must have evidence for the proposition that E makes probable H.

Given the falsity of externalism, FR holds. Fumerton holds that FR leads to skepticism unless we have *a priori* non-inferential justification for judgments of the form "E makes probable H" (awareness of or acquaintance with *a priori* epistemic probability claims). Fumerton's talk about making probable is just a way of talking about evidential support. For Fumerton, epistemic merit reduces to a probabilistic relation (whereas, for Vogel, epistemic merit seemed to reduce to the properties of an explanation). Fumerton agrees with Vogel that the issue is best determined in terms of underdetermination, but disagrees with regards to epistemic probability and the need for access to that probability as a requirement for acquiring ideal justification. Fumerton seems to think you need access to the probability relation (note the

[9] Williamson, I believe, will disagree with this. He rejects the internalist requirement and avoids the regress. It is not clear, however, that he is then addressing skepticism

internalist requirement). Fumerton admits that with these requirements in places, skepticism looms "ominously".

According to the inferential internalist, I cannot know directly that I am not a BIV. To know that I am not a BIV, then there must be a body of evidence that makes my not being a BIV probable for me that it must be possible for me to know directly that it makes it probable for me. Thus, it is not easy for the inferential internalist to avoid skepticim.

6 Concerns with Fumerton's probability relation:

- It is not clear what kind of probability relation we are talking about, if any.

- According to Fumerton, we cannot block skepticism unless we have *a priori* knowledge of high probability relations. But, Fumerton never says how we would have *a priori* knowledge of high probability relations. It is not even clear *that* we can have *a priori* knowledge of probability relations.

- Fumerton seems to think that closure needs to hold for justification. But if closure holds for justification, then this is a problem for the preface paradox. Suppose that I am the author of a book and I believe each of the assertions in the book. But I also take myself to be fallible (I can make mistakes, I can be wrong). So perhaps I believe that conjunction of my assertions to be false. I believe and disbelieve the conjunction of all the assertions in my book. If closure holds for justification, then in the preface I will not be justified in believing each of my assertions. There is an issue with lotteries too. Suppose there are a million tickets in a lottery and only one winner. While holding my ticket, I utter "This is a losing ticket". The probability of the sentence being false is very high. But if closure holds for justification and we cannot have *a priori* knowledge of high probability relations then I cannot be justified in saying "This is a losing ticket". Either you have to reject closure for justification or you have to separate knowledge and justification.

- As Branden argued in week two (see handout), even if there is a probability relation, one could argue that there is more than just the *conditional probability*. We need a necessary condition (*a priori*) of probabilistic relevance. So it looks like there are even further requirements on the probability relation: (a) it must be more than just a conditional requirement; (b) you need to be aware of it.

7 Things to think about:

The first three chapters of the text have given us a whole lot to think about (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Knowledge; what is knowledge? Is knowledge justified true belief?
- Gettier problems; how do we deal with them?
- Infallibilism/Fallibilism; what are the conditions we ought to require for knowledge?
- Justification; what is it? Does it require evidence? Does it require that we rule out alternatives? Does it require that we rule out any possibility of error?
- Internalism/Externalism; can we accept internalism without conceding skepticism?
- Foundationalism; should we look for *a priori* principles?
- Sources of knowledge and justification; what are they?

- The limits of knowledge and justification; Skepticism (local, global, domestic, exotic)
- Accepting or rejecting closure; for knowledge? For justification?
- Contextualism; are there shifting standards for knowledge attributions?
- Explanations; how do we evaluate them? Do they relate to epistemic merit?
- Epistemic principles; do we have reason to accept UP, IBE, etc?
- Evidentialism; is total evidence at issue or just partial evidence?

Next week, in Ch. 4 we address the question "Is there *a priori* Knowledge?"...