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ANTI-INDIVIDUALISM AND KNOWLEDGE OF CONTENT

by

SUSANA NUCCETELLI

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
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Abstract

ANTI-INDIVIDUALISM AND KNOWLEDGE OF CONTENT

by

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The object of this dissertation is to determine whether the doctrines of anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge are compatible. The former is the thesis that some of an individual's propositional-attitude contents supervene on the individual's external relations with his physical and/or social environment. The latter includes the theses of privileged access and first-person authority, according to which self-ascriptive beliefs about one's own occurrent, conscious, mental states are directly justified and truth-warranted.

This dissertation considers how these doctrines can be supported, and finds them equally plausible. But some problems seem to arise for the attempt to hold both doctrines simultaneously. For, on the one hand, it appears that any such attempt entails that one could know specific empirical propositions a priori. And on the other hand, given anti-individualism, one might have to investigate the environment

in order to know the contents of one's own thoughts.

If the arguments raising these problems are sound, then anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge would be incompatible. Yet, each seems initially plausible in its own right, and I do wish to hold them both. To resolve this paradox, I distinguish between two senses in which a proposition could be a priori, arguing that beliefs involving object-dependent propositions are **not a priori** in a strong sense. Once this is shown to be plausible, I maintain that there is no closure principle sanctioning the inference required by the incompatibilist's arguments. Finally, I consider why those arguments seemed at first plausible--thus dissolving the paradox and showing that anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge are compatible after all.

To Gary

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INTRODUCTION

1. Incompatibilism

Anti-individualism, or externalism, is the rejection of individualism--the doctrine about the individuation of mental properties favored by philosophers, at least since Descartes, which maintains that a strong local supervenience thesis holds for mental properties. Roughly, to say that mental properties supervene on internal properties of the individual, is to say that necessarily no two individuals could differ in their mental properties without differing in their internal properties.

Recently, however, several arguments denying this supervenience thesis have contributed to the plausibility of anti-individualism. According to anti-individualism, mental properties supervene on external properties of the individual. And if this is correct, then two individuals could differ in their mental properties, without differing in their internal properties.

But there may be epistemic problems for anti-individualism: Various "incompatibilist" arguments suggest that the anti-individualist cannot consistently maintain the

possibility of privileged self-knowledge.¹ If this is so, then since both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge seem equally plausible, we have at least a prima facie problem that needs to be resolved. Naturally, anti-individualists do not wish to abandon privileged self-knowledge, and they have made several attempts to show that the doctrines are compatible. Yet their attempts have so far been unsuccessful, as I shall show.² It appears that the compatibility problem remains unresolved. I believe, however, that there is a solution available to compatibilists. I shall suggest how the various incompatibilist arguments could be met, and thereby prove that there is no **special** epistemological problem for anti-individualism.

In Chapter One, I discuss how the theses of anti-individualism and self-knowledge could be more perspicuously construed, and how they could be supported. It will be seen that both doctrines are equally plausible. If they turn out to be incompatible, then, this would amount to a paradox in need of resolution.

I turn next to some attempts to show that the doctrines are incompatible. I distinguish two major problems, which I

¹ For instance, M. McKinsey (1991, 1994), J. Brown (1995), P. Boghossian (1989, 1994, 1997), and A. Brueckner (1990).

² As recent literature (Boghossian 1997, Brown 1995) suggests, incompatibilists have not been persuaded by anti-individualists' attempts (Brueckner 1992, Davies 1996a, Ebbs 1997) to show that their doctrine and self-knowledge are compatible.

call the "entailment," and the "content-skeptical" problems. Since the first of these has been regarded as the most pressing--sometimes, even as a reductio of the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge³--I consider it first.

2. The Entailment Problem

Anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge seem to generate an "entailment" problem: they cannot be consistently maintained together because they entail some unacceptable claims about the epistemic status of empirical propositions. Incompatibilists argue that any anti-individualist who holds some common intuitions about self-knowledge--say, Oscar--faces a problem because, first, inferences such as the following would be available to him:

- A
1. If I am thinking that water is wet, then E obtains.
 2. I am thinking that water is wet.
 3. Therefore,
E obtains.

(Where E is a proposition describing the empirical conditions entailed by Oscar's thought-contents--e.g., E is the proposition that water exists.)

Incompatibilists further maintain that Oscar would be in

³ See, for instance, P. Boghossian (1997), M. McKinsey (1991, 1994), and J. Brown (1995).

a position to have a priori knowledge of the premises of the above argument, for they take such knowledge to require no empirical investigation.⁴ On the one hand, Oscar could become acquainted with anti-individualist theory in some a priori way, and thus could know a priori that the implication in premise (1) obtains. On the other hand, given privileged access, Oscar could likewise know a priori whether or not he is entertaining a thought with a particular content--that is, he could know a priori whether premise (2) obtains. But this raises an entailment problem, because, from premises such as these, Oscar could come to know propositions about the external world by simple deduction--a process which, of course, would be "purely a priori" too. In short, those who attempt to hold **both** anti-individualism **and** privileged self-knowledge appear committed to inferences of this sort:

- B
1. Oscar knows a priori that if he is thinking that water is wet, then E obtains.
 2. Oscar knows a priori that he is thinking that water is wet.
- Therefore,
3. Oscar knows a priori that E obtains.

Incompatibilists have offered various reasons in support of this argument. They usually take the aprioricity of premise

⁴ For instance, Boghossian (1997: 161).

(2) to be evident, and focus on the other premise.⁵ One strategy to support premise (1) is to hold that the anti-individualistic implications from thought-contents to empirical conditions are **conceptual**--and since such implications are knowable a priori, it would then follow that Oscar could know the implication in premise (1) a priori. Burgeans⁶ may appear committed to such an interpretation of the entailment, for a **metaphysical** interpretation would trivialize their characteristic thesis, and it would therefore be unavailable to them. If this is correct, then Burgeans cannot consistently maintain both premises of argument (B) and the claim that proposition E can be known only a posteriori.⁷ Incompatibilists conclude that Burgean anti-individualism is inconsistent and incompatible with privileged self-knowledge.

A crucial argument for this conclusion is discussed in Chapter Two--viz., McKinsey's "trivialization" argument. I show that it is in fact a straw man, and maintain that the Burgean anti-individualist could insist that the metaphysical reading of the implication in premise (1) is available to him once his characteristic thesis is properly understood.

But some anti-individualists have further argued that, since such implications are **often** knowable only a posteriori,

⁵ According to Boghossian (1997: 166), for instance, the only "real question" concerns premise (1), since he takes the apriority of premise (2) to be evident.

⁶ See M. McKinsey (1991, 1994), and J. Brown (1995).

⁷ This objection is directed against Burge (1988).

the entailment problem is thus resolved. I call this maneuver "the metaphysical-interpretation strategy" and hold that it does not rid anti-individualism of the entailment problem. For what the anti-individualist who wishes to use this strategy needs to show is that the implication in premise (1) is in fact one of those metaphysical implications knowable only a posteriori. And this--I argue--he has not done. I examine Burge's (1988a) and Brueckner's (1992) attempts to solve the entailment problem with the metaphysical-interpretation strategy and show why they fail. I conclude that the entailment problem appears to arise even if the anti-individualist adopts the metaphysical interpretation of the implication in premise (1).

Chapter Three offers a closer look at the incompatibilist argument (B). First, I briefly discuss two assumptions required by this argument. One concerns the plausibility of the claim that self-knowledge is a priori and thus, premise (2). I grant this premise provisionally, because I think that the incompatibilist argument could be shown to be unsound for independent reasons (the problem of whether self-knowledge is a priori is treated at greater length in Chapter Four). The other assumption concerns the validity of the incompatibilist argument--that is, whether we can assume a plausible closure principle guaranteeing the transmission of the epistemic status of premises to conclusion. I maintain that, if the required principle merely sanctions the rule that **a priori**

knowledge is closed under known entailment, then such a principle would be comparatively weaker and less controversial than other closure principles and prima facie plausible.

Second, I ask whether the anti-individualist is in a position to accept the incompatibilist argument, and suggest that the empirical propositions Oscar could know a priori are so unsubstantial that the entailment problem fails to arise. Contra Brueckner (1992) and Peacocke (1996), I argue that this strategy is not available to the anti-individualist. My view is that the Burgean anti-individualist may not be committed to an empirical proposition E quite so substantial as some incompatibilists have thought (e.g., "water exists" or "the external world exists"),⁸ but that he is at least committed to something of this sort:

E Either (i) k exists, or (ii)
 Oscar is part of a community of
 speakers some of whom theorize
 about k.

(Where 'k' stands for a natural kind, such as water.) With the further assumption that no one could know a priori that either of (E)'s disjuncts obtains, it appears that, after all, there is an entailment problem facing anti-individualism--that is, provided the incompatibilist argument is sound.

Third, I consider whether the anti-individualist could undermine premise (1) of this argument by asking a crucial

⁸ As suggested by P. Boghossian (1997), and M. McKinsey (1994) respectively.

question: In which sense, if any, could Oscar know a priori that his thought-contents entail that some environmental conditions obtain? It may be that if Oscar does know anti-individualist theory, he could come to know the relevant entailments, and arguably, this knowledge would be a priori (Brown 1995). I maintain that the premises of this argument merely allow us to conclude that Oscar could **deduce** the anti-individualistic entailments (from his knowledge of both anti-individualist theory and his own mental contents)--and, naturally, that these entailments would be knowable a priori only if they were deduced from a priori premises. A charitable reading of the incompatibilist's argument, then, (under which it does not turn out to be an ignoratio elenchi) must construe it as holding that anti-individualist theory is also knowable a priori.

In light of this, I suggest a strategy to show the aprioricity of anti-individualism: Couldn't this theory be known entirely on the basis of standard thought experiments (philosophical arguments, etc.)? And don't these afford a priori knowledge? In short, incompatibilists should argue that Oscar could come to know anti-individualist theory through standard thought experiments, and that these thought experiments would allow him to know a priori that his having a thought with a certain content entails that some empirical conditions obtain.

There are two possible anti-individualist responses to

this strategy, which I also discuss: one would hold that standard thought experiments require a posteriori considerations (Brueckner 1992), the other, that they presuppose a background of empirical beliefs (Ebbs 1997). I ask whether anti-individualists could use any of these claims to argue that thought experiments afford only a posteriori knowledge of their theory, and conclude that such arguments require epistemic assumptions that are very implausible. Incompatibilists, then, appear to be in the clear: Oscar is in a position to know anti-individualist theory entirely a priori.

Yet does it follow from all this that Oscar would be able to **know a priori** that the implication in premise (1) obtains? I maintain that this requires some more arguing, for there is a further assumption that needs to be defended. If the anti-individualist can show that Oscar **couldn't** know a priori the antecedent of the implication, then the entailment problem would not arise, since premise (1) would be false (and the argument, unsound). To show this, I first consider what incompatibilists like Boghossian (1997) may have in mind when they construe premise (1) as the specific claim that Oscar's having the concept water entails that water exists. Assuming that incompatibilists wish to capture the general import of the anti-individualist thesis (which is not a particular thesis about the specific contents of individual minds), they should construe premise (1) as the claim that, given anti-

individualism, one could know a priori that having certain externally determined concepts entails some environmental conditions. A candidate for the implication in premise (1) is, for instance,

TE* If I have the natural-kind concept k, then the natural kind k exists.

But now anti-individualists could insist that the antecedent of (TE*) is knowable only a posteriori--since nobody can know a priori whether or not any of his concepts is a natural-kind concept!

Moreover, it seems that anti-individualists could certainly accommodate cases like the following: Imagine Oscar living on a planet that contains many liquids other than water, and suppose that Oscar has never been in contact with water, and that no one in his community has the concept "water". Oscar, nevertheless, theorizes about a colorless, odorless, drinkable liquid that he calls "water." He sincerely reports his mental states by uttering "There is water somewhere in this galaxy," "I hope it quenches thirst," and the like. He predicts that this liquid is a compound of other substances, such as oxygen and hydrogen, but wonders how many molecules of each would be required for water--that is, he is **agnostic** about the application conditions of the concept "water." (Yet, as the anti-individualist requires,⁹ he does

⁹ See T. Burge (1982a).

know enough to rule out other candidates for water--for instance, XYZ). In this way, anti-individualists could certainly argue that Oscar has thoughts involving the concept "water," even when *ex hypothesi* Oscar is not in an environment containing instances of water or part of a community that has the concept "water" (whether or not "water" is a natural-kind concept).

Yet maneuvers of this sort cannot solve the entailment problem--at least, not for those anti-individualists who take almost any concept to be individuated in terms of its referents. Call such anti-individualists "Burgeans." Suppose that instead of water-thoughts on a waterless planet, Oscar were to have thoughts involving a biological-kind concept--say, "dog"--on a dogless planet. Given the views Burgeans have about the individuation of concepts, if Oscar has been in contact neither with dogs nor other speakers having the concept "dog," he could not have dog-thoughts. It follows that if one knows Burgean theory, and one is thinking that dogs are carnivorous, one should be able to infer that dogs exist. But that is precisely the entailment problem incompatibilists have in mind. So, some anti-individualists cannot rid themselves of the entailment problem by appealing to theoretical and empty concepts. But before suggesting the strategy that I believe will solve their problem once and for all, I turn first to a related incompatibility problem.

3. The Content-Skeptical Problem

In Chapter Four I examine other incompatibilist attempts to show that anti-individualism is not compatible with privileged self-knowledge. According to the content-skeptic, one basic intuition about privileged self-knowledge is that one could know the contents of one's own thoughts without an investigation of one's environment. But anti-individualism entails that one could **not** know those contents unless one undertook an investigation of one's environment.

I first ask how the content-skeptic's claim could be more perspicuously construed and effectively supported. For the former, I suggest the thesis that

SK Given anti-individualism, one could not have justified beliefs about one's own thought-contents without an empirical investigation of the environment.

Since (SK)'s consequent is incompatible with common intuitions about privileged self-knowledge, it follows that if (SK) is well-supported, then anti-individualists do face an epistemic problem after all.

Next, I discuss a straightforward argument for (SK):

- A
1. If Oscar does not know that he is not living on Twin Earth, then he does not know that he is now thinking that water is wet.
 2. Oscar does not know that he is not living on Twin Earth.
- Therefore,
3. Oscar does not know that he is now thinking that water is wet.

The skeptic wants, of course, to block any anti-individualist attempt to reject (A), so he insists that one does know one's own thought-contents. According to the skeptic, anti-individualists will run head-on into a "simple-deduction problem," as this argument shows:

- B
1. If one knows (without investigating the environment) that one is thinking that water is wet, then one knows (without investigating the environment) that one is not living on twin-earth.
 2. One knows (without investigating the environment) that one is thinking that water is wet.
- Therefore,
3. One knows (without investigating the environment) that one is not living on twin earth.

But clearly (B) amounts to a new incompatibilist maneuver to raise the entailment problem! This has led anti-individualists to attempt other solutions to the skeptical

problem independent of arguments such as (B). I discuss the solutions proposed by T. Burge (1988a, 1996) and D. Davidson (1987, 1991) and show that the former offers only a solution that is itself skeptical about self-knowledge, while the latter begs the question against the skeptic.

My own reply to the skeptic is to show that (B)'s conclusion is not a consequence of the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and self-knowledge. For once the skeptic's claims about the epistemic status of the premises of this argument are properly construed, it becomes obvious that there is no plausible closure principle licensing his inference. If I am right, then such an attempt does not entail implausible claims about a priori knowledge of empirical propositions--hence, the entailment and the skeptical problems are both solved.

There is, however, still the paradox generated by the skeptic's argument (A). It seems valid, and its premises plausible--yet the negation of its conclusion seems equally plausible. Nevertheless, this paradox is duly resolved at the end of Chapter Four, and it becomes plain that anti-individualism and self-knowledge are compatible after all.

CHAPTER ONE

Anti-Individualism and Self-Knowledge

1. Are These Doctrines Compatible?

Incompatibilists argue that the doctrines of anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge cannot be consistently maintained together. For the attempt to hold both appears to entail that one could know a priori propositions that, on anyone's views, are knowable only a posteriori--and that would, of course, amount to a reductio.¹ Furthermore, if anti-individualism entailed that one could not have privileged access to the contents of one's own thoughts (i.e., that to know those contents required an investigation of one's environment), then anti-individualists would have to abandon privileged self-knowledge.² Call these, respectively, "the entailment problem" and "the skeptical problem," and the view that either of these problems arises, of course,

¹ Arguments to this effect are suggested by M. McKinsey (1991), J. Brown (1995), M. Davies (1996a), and P. Boghossian (1997). More on them in Chaps. 2 and 3.

² For A. Brueckner (1990, 1994a) and A. Bilgrami (1992b) this may follow from the anti-individualists' thesis. See my discussion in Chap. 4.

"incompatibilism."

Anti-individualists, naturally, have tried to respond to the incompatibilist's objections. For if the attempts to raise either problem were sound, they would show anti-individualism to be incompatible with some very plausible intuitions about privileged self-knowledge that, needless to say, they do wish to retain. Various incompatibilist attempts to raise such problems will be discussed presently, but first we shall have a closer look at the doctrines in apparent conflict. We shall consider the anti-individualist thesis, suggesting how it could be understood and supported. Then, we shall review common Cartesian intuitions about self-knowledge, proposing a minimal thesis of privileged self-knowledge that could nonetheless preserve the Cartesian insight into the special epistemic status of such knowledge.

2. The Supervenience of Content

Anti-individualists (or "externalists") and individualists (or "internalists") hold opposite theses about propositional attitudes with certain contents, such as the belief that water is wet, the fear that one has arthritis in one's thigh, or the hope that one could sit on a comfortable sofa. If propositional attitudes are taken to be, as usual, mental or intentional properties of individuals (or, alternatively, predicates that they instantiate), anti-individualists and their opponents could be seen to hold

opposite **supervenience** claims about those properties.³ Accordingly, we can take their respective claims to be as follows,

AS Some mental properties with propositional content do not supervene locally.

IS Mental properties with propositional content supervene locally.

To use a common metaphor, a property supervenes "locally" if it supervenes on properties "inside" the individual who has it--that is, if it supervenes on his internal or intrinsic properties. We could say, a la Putnam, that

InP₁ If a property is "local," "internal," or "intrinsic," then it **does not** presuppose the existence of anything other than the contingent object that has it.⁴

Naturally, properties that supervene on the internal properties of a certain individual would preserve across any other individual who is his exact internal replica. For

³ Here "property" is used in a broad sense, according to which any meaningful predicate expresses a property, and "content" refers to propositional-attitude content unless otherwise indicated. When, occasionally, anti-individualists and individualists are seen to hold theses about intentional states and events without further specifications, it is assumed that these refer to intentional-state and event **types**.

⁴ This is, of course, inspired by Putnam's discussion (1975: 220) of individualism, or as he calls it, "methodological solipsism."

instance, the property of having kidneys is internal in this sense: if an individual has it, any internal replica would also have it. To emphasize this, let's say that

InP₂ If a property is "local,"
"internal," or "intrinsic,"
then it preserves across
internal replicas.

We can now see what the thesis of local supervenience we have ascribed to individualists amounts to: since according to that thesis, all mental properties supervene locally, a fortiori mental properties with propositional content would also supervene locally--which amounts to the claim that

... an individual's intentional states and events (types and tokens) could not be different from what they are, given the individual's physical, chemical, neural, or functional histories, where these histories are specified non-intentionally and in a way that is independent of physical or social conditions outside the individual's body.⁵

Anti-individualists, of course, reject this claim, for they hold that some of the mental properties of an individual (e.g., those with certain propositional contents) do not supervene locally--or, equivalently, that they supervene on the individual's external or extrinsic properties. And these properties could, of course, be defined by contrast with

⁵ T. Burge (1986a: 4).

internal properties,⁶ as considered above. We would then have

EXP₁ If a property is "nonlocal,"
"external," or "extrinsic,"
then it **does** presuppose the
existence of something other
than the contingent object that
has it.

It follows from this definition that if a property of an object (or individual) is external, then the object has it **in virtue of** its relationships to other objects.⁷ For instance, the property of being west of Central Park is, of course, external in this sense: whether one has it depends on how one is geographically related to Central Park.

But consider again mental properties such as that of being the belief that water is wet or the fear that one has arthritis in one's thigh: In which sense do they supervene on the external properties of the individual who has them? Anti-individualists take them to supervene on some external properties of the individual who has them, in the sense that properties with such contents supervene **on relations** individuals have with their physical and/or social

⁶ Clearly, the complex problems involved in drawing a distinction between these properties fall beyond our present needs. For a discussion of such problems, see M. Davies (1996a).

⁷ Following some suggestions by Kim (1982), we may call this a "property rooted outside the object that has it," and define it as follows,
P is rooted outside the objects that have it = _{def} Necessarily, any object x has P only if some contingent object wholly distinct from x exists.

environments. That is, propositional attitudes with certain contents are taken to supervene on relations individuals have with things "outside" them--being thus "external" or "extrinsic." Naturally, the "inside/outside" distinction should be understood in a metaphorical sense, for a mental property could be literally "inside" the person, yet supervene on factors external to the person. As D. Davidson (1987) points out, to say that a condition of one's skin--say, a sunburn--supervenes on what caused it, does not entail that the condition is not "in" one's skin. For anti-individualists, of course, properties such as having the belief that water is wet or the fear that one has arthritis in one's thigh are like that of having a sunburn: although in some sense they are "in" the person, they supervene on his external properties.

Furthermore, external properties differ from internal properties in that an individual's external properties may **not** preserve across any other individuals who are internally identical to him. For instance, the external property of being west of Central Park does not preserve across internal duplicates: when I am at the Museum of Natural History, I have it, while my replica, who at that time is at the Metropolitan Museum, lacks it. Thus we could define external properties in the following alternative way,

Exp₂ A "nonlocal," "external," or
"extrinsic" property may not
preserve across internal
replicas.

Now the individualists' and anti-individualists' theses about the supervenience of mental properties with propositional content could be put in a more perspicuous way. The individualists's supervenience claim amounts to

I₁ Necessarily, **no** two individuals x (in any possible world) and y (in any possible world) could have the same internal properties but differ in their mental properties with propositional content (in their respective worlds).

Alternatively,

I₂ Indiscernibility with respect to internal properties entails indiscernibility with respect to propositional-attitude content.

Or, as the common 'supervenience' slogan has it,

I₃ No difference in propositional-attitude content without a difference in internal properties.⁸

Anti-individualists, of course, reject all these claims, holding that

⁸ If we assume that the individualist is also a physicalist, the internal properties (in the supervenience base) would, of course, be physical properties. More on this later.

A Necessarily, two individuals x (in any possible world) and y (in any possible world) could have the same internal properties, and mental properties with different propositional content (in their respective worlds).

The debate about the supervenience of mental properties with propositional content raises complex issues, of course. Some of these concern the notion of "supervenience" itself, which could be understood in various ways. One possibility is adopting Kim's "Strong Supervenience IV,"⁹ which seems adequate to capture the claims both parties in the debate wish to make. But even adopting this notion of supervenience, there will still be issues in need of clarification--for instance, it will be relevant to establish what kind of necessity is involved in their claims (more on this in Chapter Two).¹⁰ Other complex questions concern other related claims sometimes made by the parties in the debate, to which we turn.

⁹ J. Kim (1987: 81) defines this strong supervenience as follows: "A strongly supervenes on B just in case cross-world indiscernibility in B entails cross-world indiscernibility in A."

¹⁰ In addition, it would be relevant to determine the strength of the intended modal claim. M. Davies (1993), for instance, points out that theses of local supervenience could be of different strength, depending on how the notion of supervenience is cashed out. A weak thesis takes local supervenience to hold for a single individual or for internal duplicates in the actual world, or in two possible worlds one of which is the actual world. A stronger thesis takes it to hold for any internal duplicates in any possible world, none of which need be the actual world. I think the latter captures better the thesis anti-individualists wish to deny.

3. Other Anti-Individualist Claims

That the theses of the anti-individualist and his opponent could be construed in various ways is, of course, a commonplace in the literature.¹¹ Anti-individualists typically begin by rejecting a certain individualist claim and come thereby to define their own.¹² It should be clear, however, that all that is required to set out the individualist and anti-individualist positions is the acceptance or rejection of a thesis of local supervenience concerning mental properties with particular contents. But since both sides of this debate often go beyond supervenience claims, making upfront claims about dependency and philosophical explanation, let's consider briefly some other ways of representing their views.¹³

First, if we ignore dualism, we could take individualists to further claim that mental properties supervene **entirely** on factors "within" the **physical** individual--these being, for

¹¹ See T. Burge (1986a, 1986b), M. Davies (1993, 1996a), and C. Peacocke (1993).

¹² This attitude is, of course, familiar since Putnam's (1975) rejection of what he takes to be the received view in philosophical psychology, "methodological solipsism."

¹³ Sometimes Burge takes the debate to be about the "how kinds are correctly individuated, how their natures are fixed..." (1986a:3). "Individuation" is, of course, a term of art that I use in the following way: if the content of a propositional-attitude token is in part individuated by environmental factors (as anti-individualists maintain), then those factors in part determine the content **type** that this propositional attitude instantiates. That is, I take the "individuation relation" to be: For any token y , x individuates y if x determines y 's type.

example, some behavioral dispositions or, perhaps, brain states. (Naturally, this additional claim does not seem available to the individualist who is also a dualist, but in the present context we can ignore dualistic individualism.) Now individualism could be construed as the thesis that all mental properties **do** preserve across individuals who are physical, internal replicas--and a fortiori, that mental properties with any propositional content do as well.

But surely anti-individualists cannot accept this thesis, for they deny the thesis of local supervenience: They must hold that such properties **may not** preserve across replicas. We can now reformulate anti-individualism and individualism as theses about whether propositional-attitude content preserves across physical, internal replicas--respectively,

IP Mental properties with
 propositional content preserve
 across physical, internal
 replicas,

and

AP Some mental properties with
 certain propositional contents
 may not preserve across
 physical, internal replicas.

As with other anti-individualist claims, (AP) is the rejection of an individualist thesis--viz., (IP). To support it, anti-individualists invite us to check our intuitions with some thought experiments: e.g., what mental properties with particular propositional contents would some individuals who

are physical, internal replicas have if their physical and/or social environments, or their causal histories, were different in relevant ways? The anti-individualist intuition is that, given those environmental differences, one individual would have a mental property with a particular content--say, believing that water is wet--while the other would lack that property.

Furthermore, if this is correct, it seems that not only do some mental properties **not** preserve across individuals who are internal duplicates, but that

D Mental properties with certain propositional contents are in part determined and depend upon some physical and social factors in each individual's environment,

and

E The philosophical account of an individual's having (or lacking) any of these properties would have to consider some relevant physical and/or social factors in his environment.

That is, the disagreement between individualists and anti-individualists about supervenience theses is likely to carry over to a disagreement about the above dependency and

explanatory claims.¹⁴ We can take individualist and anti-individualist dependency claims about propositional-attitude content to be, respectively,

ID What mental properties with particular contents an individual has depends entirely upon and is determined by his physical, internal properties,

and

AD What mental properties with particular contents an individual has depends in part upon and is determined by his external properties.

If, on the other hand, the explanatory thesis were the focus of the dispute, then individualists and anti-individualists would be holding opposite views about whether the correct philosophical account of mental properties with propositional content must focus entirely on factors "inside" the individual who has them. Anti-individualists would, of course, be holding that such an account should **also** consider the factors "outside" the individual that in part determine his being in the state of having a mental property with a

¹⁴ Note that "to carry over" is not "to entail," for surely one could consistently hold **both** the (weaker) thesis that propositional-attitude content does not supervene locally **and** the thesis that the only properties that matter for psychological theory are those that supervene locally. For discussions of the relations between these, see T. Burge (1986a), C. Peacocke (1993), and M. Davies (1996a).

particular content.¹⁵ Their disagreement in this issue could be captured by the following claims,

IE The correct account of an individual's having mental properties with certain contents must consider only the individual's physical, internal properties,

and

AE The correct account of an individual's having mental properties with certain contents must consider external properties of that individual.

Finally, let's consider some consequences of the claims anti-individualists wish to deny. According to the thesis of local supervenience, two individuals could not differ in their mental properties without some difference in their internal properties. Imagine a scenario in which one individual has some mental property B while the other lacks it: the individualist would infer that the internal properties of these individuals are different. Now imagine two individuals, one of which instantiates mental property B while the other instantiates a different mental property C: the individualist would likewise infer here that the internal properties of the individuals are different. Both examples would be equally

¹⁵ For Burge, the individualist explanatory thesis is "... that an individual's being in any given intentional state (or being the subject of such an event) can be explicated by reference to states and events of the individual that are specifiable without using intentional vocabulary and without presupposing anything about the individual subject's social or physical environments..." (1986a: 4).

entailed by the thesis of local supervenience.¹⁶ But this is, of course, in conflict with some intuitions elicited by standard anti-individualist thought experiments--which fuel precisely the view that two individuals could be exact internal duplicates yet have mental properties with different propositional contents. We must now have a closer look at those intuitions.

4. Anti-Individualist Thought Experiments

Anti-individualists support their claims with various thought experiments and some independent arguments. The anti-individualist's standard "twin-earth" and "arthritis" cases are intended to support, respectively, "physical" (or "environmental") and "social" forms of anti-individualism. The conclusion that anti-individualists wish to support by means of such cases is, of course, that propositional-attitude content may vary "even as an individual's physical (functional, phenomenological) history, specified non-intentionally and individualistically, remains constant" (Burge 1986a: 6). Mindful of this, let's briefly rehearse these cases.

First, assume that the linguistic devices commonly used in propositional-attitude ascriptions (viz., that-clauses) are "our primary means of identifying" the content of intentional

¹⁶ These examples do not seem to make any difference to the strength of the individualist thesis.

states and events (Burge 1986a: 5). A twin-earth thought experiment¹⁷ to support **physical** anti-individualism would be roughly as follows. Imagine that Oscar has been living for some time in environment w_1 , having regular causal contact with H_2O . When Oscar sincerely utters, "Water is wet," despite his incomplete understanding of the concept, "water," he seems to be reporting his belief that water is wet. Call the property of having a thought with this content "B." In the actual situation, then, Oscar could be said to have property B. In the counterfactual situation, however, his molecule-per-molecule-identical twin (who shares all Oscar's internal properties, including surface stimulations, internal chemistry, etc.) also sincerely utters, "Water is wet." But twin Oscar has been living in a different physical environment w_2 , where, instead of water, there is some qualitatively identical substance with a different chemical composition XYZ. Twin Oscar's utterance, then, **does not** express a thought with the content that water is wet, but rather **that twin water is wet**. Anti-individualists conclude that, in environment w_2 ,

¹⁷ As is well known, Putnam originally proposed his twin-earth case to argue against two common assumptions of individualistic philosophical psychology--viz., that to know the meaning is to be in a certain psychological state, and that meaning determines extension (Putnam 1975: 219). Against the conjunction of these two claims, Putnam suggests a case in which a person and his molecule-per-molecule replica share the same internal psychological properties but, given some relevant environmental differences, the meanings of their utterances differ. The conclusion is, of course, that meaning does not supervene entirely on the internal properties of an individual.

twin Oscar does not have B, since he has never been in contact with water or with speakers having the concept "water." It appears that even though both protagonists have exactly the same physical, internal properties, their propositional-attitude contents differ.

Burge's "arthritis" thought experiment has a similar structure, though it emphasizes the relevance of social factors in determining propositional-attitude content.¹⁸ Imagine Bert, in environment w_1 , being partially ignorant or mistaken about the application conditions of the concept "arthritis," which he takes to refer to a disease of both bones and joints. When suffering pain in his thigh, Bert sincerely complains to his doctor "I have arthritis in my thigh." Although the belief is, of course, false, it seems that we can truly describe Bert's propositional attitude as the belief that he has arthritis in his thigh--which we may call "B." Now suppose that Bert has instead been living in a different social environment w_2 , where the concept "arthritis" refers to a disease of both bones and joints, and that his internal properties (his surface stimulations, internal chemistry, etc.) are the same. The anti-individualist argues that, even though Bert's internal properties have remained constant, his mental properties have not. For when he sincerely utters "I have arthritis in my thigh" in environment w_2 , we could not correctly ascribe to him a belief with the

¹⁸ T. Burge (1979).

content that he has arthritis in his thigh, but one with the content that he has **twin arthritis** in his thigh. So, in the counterfactual situation Bert lacks propositional attitude B.

"Arthritis"-type cases extend the reach of anti-individualist claims, for now the "social" anti-individualist could hold that **many**¹⁹ of an individual's propositional attitudes (involving a great variety of natural- and non-natural-kind concepts) do not supervene locally. This seems to be precisely what Burge has in mind,²⁰ since he runs "arthritis"-type thought experiments for concepts such as "contract," "brisket," "mortgage," "sofa," etc. (Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what concept could **not** be the object of a Burgean thought experiment.)²¹

5. Other Arguments for Anti-Individualism

Anti-individualism may be supported "indirectly" by an argument showing the plausibility of new theories of meaning

¹⁹ The social anti-individualist certainly does not seem committed, however, to holding that **all** concepts are externally determined or individuated in terms of their referents. Clearly, such a view would be untenable, for it could not accommodate the evident intuition that some of our thoughts contain concepts with no referent at all, or with no referents in our immediate environment, as in the case of some theoretical concepts. These very complex issues concerning the scope of anti-individualist claims are, of course, well beyond my present concern.

²⁰ See, for instance, T. Burge (1979, 1986b).

²¹ In what follows, I shall be referring principally to physical anti-individualism (and thus, to twin-earth examples), adverting to the other variety only when the problem at issue demands it.

and reference.²² Cases designed to elicit intuitions of successful reference, even in situations where the speaker lacks the relevant descriptions (or where the descriptions available to him apply to something else), seem to undermine the traditional "description theory" of meaning and reference, and thus support new theories of reference. As is well known, those theories hold that meaning does not supervene locally. Whatever contributes to the plausibility of such theories, then, also contributes to the plausibility of anti-individualism--given some common assumptions about the analogy of linguistic meaning and propositional-attitude content. Thus we appear to have a conditional argument for anti-individualism:

- CA
1. Causal theories of meaning and reference are plausible.
 2. If causal theories of meaning and reference are plausible, then meaning does not supervene locally.
 3. If meaning does not supervene locally, then neither does propositional-attitude content.
- Therefore,
4. Propositional-attitude content does not supervene locally.

²² One may also attempt to support anti-individualism by showing that some alternative doctrine is doomed to failure. Such an indirect argument is, for instance, employed by Putnam (1975): He takes the failure of individualist philosophical psychology to count as evidence against individualism, which he calls "methodological solipsism." Likewise, the failure of traditional description theories of meaning may provide another indirect argument by showing the plausibility of new theories of reference. (See what follows.)

That causal theories are plausible could be argued by cases (e.g., Kripke's and Donnellan's) showing that the traditional description theory is inadequate as an account of meaning and reference.²³ To support the second premise of this argument, we appeal to thought experiments along the lines of Putnam's (1975) "elm/beech tree," "aluminum/molybdenum," and twin-earth cases. And to support (CA)'s third premise, we invoke some compelling intuitions about the analogy between meaning and propositional-attitude content. First, linguistic reports (viz., reports of what a person says) and propositional-attitude reports appear to have the same syntactic structure.²⁴ Furthermore, if one **sincerely says** that one has arthritis in one's thigh, then one **means it**--that is, one is reporting what one **believes**.²⁵ I submit that, if we accept these intuitions (as I believe we should), and if we also find arguments for new theories of meaning and reference cogent, then (CA) supports anti-individualism.²⁶

Note, finally, that any anti-individualist who argues as

²³ For other arguments to show that the failure of the traditional description theory supports causal theories of meaning and reference see M. Devitt (1990).

²⁴ This point is attributed to Z. Vendler (1972). See S. Stich (1991).

²⁵ See R. Stalnaker (1993).

²⁶ Could one hold that, although causal theories of reference may be plausible, this has no bearing on propositional-attitude content? Such a line has been proposed (M. Devitt, 1989), but it seems a non-starter.

above is not thereby committed to a direct-reference semantics, for his argument, if sound, would also be consistent with a neo-Fregean theory.²⁷ But if the intuitions just mentioned about the analogy between meaning and content are compelling, then any direct-reference theorist (that is, any "Millian") would seem committed to anti-individualism. For he takes singular terms, such as proper names and demonstratives, to be devices that refer directly (without the mediation of Fregean senses), thus holding the following principle of direct reference:

DR The only contribution a proper name (also, a demonstrative, an indexical, a natural-kind term and some definite descriptions) makes to the proposition in which it occurs is its object (the referent), and this object is a constituent of that proposition.

According to this principle, many propositions are "object-involving" or "Russellian," in that they have their referents (the objects themselves) as their constituents. Anyone who takes this position seems thereby committed to saying that utterances have semantic properties which do not supervene on the internal properties of the speakers.²⁸ And,

²⁷ A causal theory of reference that incorporates modes of presentation.

²⁸ The direct-reference theorist takes that-clauses in some linguistic reports to express object-involving propositions--that is, propositions containing as some of their constituents the objects referred to by certain terms.

given the above-mentioned intuitions about meaning and content, it is difficult to see how the direct-reference theorist could fail to be an anti-individualist about the latter.²⁹

6. Self-Knowledge

According to a basic Cartesian intuition, self-knowledge has special epistemic features. Traditionally, these have been thought to include immunities from various forms of error and/or epistemic failure--for instance, that self-knowledge is incorrigible, infallible, indubitable, or transparent. Call any such thesis about self-knowledge an "immunity thesis." Naturally, it has not been difficult to produce counterexamples to immunity theses, thereby showing them to be

For example, he holds that Pierre's utterance, "London is pretty," is correctly reported as "Pierre says that London is pretty," and that if the utterance is sincere, that that is the correct report of what the speaker means. He is likely to represent this report as a dyadic relation, with 'Pierre' and the that-clause as its relata--recommending that the that-clause be treated as a referential singular term, referring to a Russellian proposition. If this is his account of linguistic reports, then, given the analogy between meaning and content, the direct-reference theorist seems committed to holding a similar account of belief-reports.

²⁹ Anti-individualism seems to follow trivially from direct-reference semantics and some assumptions about content, such as that that-clauses are the right vehicles for identifying propositional-attitude content, and that if two propositional-attitude tokens have different truth conditions, then they cannot be of the same type. Naturally, this argument holds only for physical anti-individualism, since the Burgean variety complicates the picture by introducing social factors.

too strong.³⁰ But we could, perhaps, capture the basic Cartesian intuition about the epistemic privilege of self-knowledge with a weaker thesis less vulnerable to counterexamples.³¹ The need for a new thesis about privileged self-knowledge that could capture the basic Cartesian intuition has recently become more urgent, because of the emergence of anti-individualism and its alledged incompatibility with self-knowledge. But since little has been done to establish the required thesis, it will be helpful to attempt a rough outline of it and see what intuitive support can be given for it.

How, then, can we devise a privileged self-knowledge thesis that preserves the basic Cartesian intuition while avoiding an immunity claim? We should first restrict our thesis to conscious and current (i.e., non-dispositional) beliefs about one's own thought-contents (henceforth, TC-beliefs)--such as the belief that one is thinking that water is wet or that one has arthritis in one's thigh.³² Clearly,

³⁰ See, for instance, K. Lehrer (1974) and K. Pyne Parsons (1970).

³¹ Questions such as the following will, unfortunately, remain unanswered here, awaiting the development of a suitable theory of self-knowledge: Which mental states enjoy this peculiar form of knowledge? Is this type of knowledge really "unique"? Is it "superior"? If so, in which ways? But clearly they go beyond our present concern.

³² That is, our privileged-self-knowledge thesis is restricted to what some take to be "cogito-like" judgments, such as "I think (with this very thought) that writing requires concentration," or "I judge (or doubt) that water is

any such belief involves a propositional attitude with a certain content, and, as usual, we distinguish the propositional-attitude type, from its content. The former refers to any of the attitudes one may have toward one's own propositional contents (believing, hoping, fearing, etc.), the latter--by assumption--is the proposition embedded in the that-clause used in a propositional-attitude report. "Belief" will be our paradigm propositional attitude, construed as a relation between a person (for our purposes, oneself) and a proposition (which in our case is about one's own thought-contents). We can now understand our privileged self-knowledge claim as follows,

SeK Under normal circumstances, one has privileged access to one's conscious and current beliefs about one's own thought-contents, and such beliefs are truth-warranted.

But TC-beliefs are not the only sort about which such a claim may be made. Obviously, other beliefs about the contents of one's own mind would also be epistemically privileged in the way suggested by (SeK)--for instance, beliefs about one's own conscious and current sensations or perceptual states. Call any belief about the contents of one's own mind an "introspective belief," and the process of forming any such belief, "introspection." Since the alleged problem between

more common than mercury." See T. Burge (1988).

anti-individualism and self-knowledge concerns self-ascriptive beliefs about one's thought-contents, even when any TC-belief is an introspective belief, we restrict our thesis to the former.

(SeK) seems to capture two important theses that make up the basic Cartesian intuition about one's TC-beliefs. One is the thesis of **privileged access**, that we may spell out as follows,

PA Under normal circumstances, from one's own perspective, and unless one has countervailing reasons or evidence, one's TC-beliefs are justified directly or immediately.

To say that a belief is justified directly (or immediately) amounts to saying that one need not appeal to sensory or perceptual **evidence**, or to **inference** from other beliefs, to justify that belief.³³ That one's TC-beliefs could be directly justified in this sense is, of course, an intuition prompted by Cartesian arguments about cogito-like judgments (that is, one's TC-beliefs), according to which they clearly are beyond the reach of common skeptical reasoning. For, under normal circumstances, would it make sense for you to challenge **my** beliefs about **my own** conscious and current thought-

³³ See Chap. 4. For the "based-on relation" see G. Pappas (1979), and M. Swain (1981). That self-knowledge is based neither on evidence nor on inference became clear to me from discussions in S. Schiffer's spring 1995 seminar at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. In what follows, I have profited from ideas suggested there.

contents? Must I have reasons or evidence to be justified in holding them? Note that intuitions of this sort are restricted, not only to normal circumstances, but also to **one's own** perspective, for it would scarcely make sense to claim, that, under normal circumstances, a person could have privileged access to the thought-contents of someone else. (Such a claim would be equivalent to saying, for instance, that, under normal circumstances, **your** beliefs about the contents of **my** thoughts could be directly or immediately justified!)

Moreover, our thesis of privileged access is that TC-beliefs are not **based on** evidence or inference, though this does not entail that one could not appeal to evidence or inference **in special circumstances**. It is compatible with our thesis that one could, in fact, check the epistemic status of one's beliefs about one's own thought-contents, and that one could even make use of some other belief-forming practices, such as perception and inference, to strengthen or weaken their justification.³⁴ But could one have countervailing reasons or evidence that weaken the direct justification of one's belief about the **kind** of propositional attitude one is

³⁴ And to show that TC-beliefs are not directly justified from the third-person perspective, we need not appeal to examples involving Freudian therapists. Consider Alston's (1971: 255) case: "If, when I believe that I feel serene, you observe me acting in such a way as to strongly indicate that I feel upset, then those observations constitute some ground for doubt on your part, a doubt that is not negated, as it is on my part, by my feelings themselves."

currently having?

Imagine, for instance, that I become aware that any time I see a liquid, I have the recurrent thought that water is wet. Alarmed, I undertake therapy, and soon remember that 20 years ago I was very ill--say, a bad pneumonia--due to excessive exposure to water. Now I am seeing a liquid and think that I have an occurrent propositional attitude with the content that water is wet, but, aware of the mentioned memory, I sincerely ask myself: "Am I now **thinking** that water is wet? Or am I now **fearing** that it is? I really cannot tell."³⁵ I submit that, in this scenario, evidence and reasons undermine any direct justification one would otherwise have for one's belief about the **kind** of propositional attitude one is currently entertaining.

And could one have reasons or evidence to undermine the otherwise direct justification of one's beliefs about one's own thought-**contents**? It appears that one could. Imagine, first, that I am a functionalist of some sort: I believe that a mental state, such as a belief, is defined in terms of its causal role. Then suppose I sincerely believe **that I believe** that drinking water is healthy. I realise, however, that lately, whenever I have had a health problem, I have blamed it

³⁵ Consider this similar case: Suppose that for many years I have been a believer in God. Lately, however, I've become more aware of the suffering of innocent people, and found a version of the argument from evil quite persuasive. I am now thinking that I believe that God exists ... but is it a **belief** or a **hope**? I realize that, at this moment, I cannot tell.

on my habit of drinking water, that I feel repulsion to water, cannot tolerate the sight of it, etc. Someone now requests my opinion about whether drinking water is healthy, and I reflect on my beliefs. I think that I believe that drinking water is healthy. But, being a good functionalist (aware of my recent reactions to water, etc.), I also think that I believe that drinking water is not healthy.³⁶ I submit that, in this scenario, evidence and reasons diminish the justification of my belief about the **contents** of my current thoughts.

Finally, since our thesis of privileged access is so qualified, it is clear that it does not entail any immunity thesis, and thus, captures a compelling Cartesian intuition about self-knowledge without being vulnerable to counterexamples. It would appear, then, that one need not undertake any investigation of the environment to be justified in one's TC-beliefs--which seems to amount to the claim that self-knowledge is a priori. Whether or not the aprioricity of self-knowledge is a consequence of our thesis will be discussed presently, but we shall first see what other Cartesian intuition is captured by our privileged self-knowledge claim.

³⁶ And "thinking" here seems to be, not a dispositional but an occurrent mental state. We can imagine that I am now scratching my head and asking myself: "Am I now thinking that I believe that drinking water is healthy? Or am I now thinking that I believe that drinking water is not healthy? I cannot tell." See K. Lehrer (1990) for another case of this sort, but intended to show that beliefs about one's own mental states could be mistaken.

If we could show that just having a TC-belief would almost always make it true, we could then maintain that TC-beliefs are truth-warranted (or "self-verifying"). There is in fact a strong presumption that this is the case--that is, that TC-beliefs are truth-warranted. (Though exactly what it is about TC-beliefs that **makes** them generally true is a difficult question. A Burgean answer might appeal to how such beliefs are formed--for instance, that these beliefs are almost always true because they are caused by the lower-order beliefs they are about.)³⁷

The presumption of truth that one's TC-beliefs have is restricted, of course, to one's own perspective. Let's call this presumption "the thesis of first-person authority," and construe it as follows,

FPA From one's own perspective
(under normal circumstances,
and unless one has some
evidence to the contrary),
one's TC-beliefs are
predominantly true.

But why think that (FPA) holds? Once first-person authority has been qualified as above, that beliefs about one's own thought-contents have such a presumption appears to be a platitude. And, arguably, the best explanation for such beliefs being presumably true is that they are true--though we

³⁷ As is well known, T. Burge (1988) holds that cogito-like judgments are self-verifying, accounting for this along similar lines.

need not claim that they are **infallibly** true, only that they are **predominantly** true. To support this claim, we may compare TC-beliefs with other kinds of beliefs, and realise, by comparison, that if **any** kind of beliefs could be considered "innocent until proven guilty" (that is, true until proven false), beliefs about one's own thought-contents could be! We may then conclude that it is reasonable to think that there is a distinct presumption, as with no other kind of beliefs, that (from one's own perspective and unless one has some evidence to the contrary) one's introspective beliefs are predominantly true.³⁸

Note, again, that our claim is qualified so that it falls short of any immunity thesis, such as the familiar infallibility or incorrigibility theses. Yet it is enough to capture the other well-accepted Cartesian intuition that we wished to retain--viz., that beliefs about one's own thought-contents are especially resistant to **error**.

Finally, if one's beliefs about one's own thought-contents are **both** directly justified and predominantly true, then, of course, they amount in some sense to knowledge. And since we have found intuitive grounds for insisting that they are both, we are committed to saying that a doctrine of privileged self-knowledge, construed as above, is plausible.

³⁸ Under normal circumstances, such a presumption would not, of course, hold for **your** beliefs about **my** own thought-contents. And, from my own perspective, the presumption would not hold if, for instance, I have evidence to the contrary--e.g., if I realize I am in the habit of self-deception.

At the same time, the thought-experiments and arguments discussed previously have shown the doctrine of anti-individualism to be similarly plausible. My position is that privileged self-knowledge and anti-individualism both seem true and that they are consistent.

But clearly, if there are incompatibility problems for the attempt to hold both doctrines, we face an unhappy choice--and perhaps even a reductio. Are there any such problems?

CHAPTER TWO

The Paradox

1. Two Incompatibility Problems

Since the theses of anti-individualism **and** privileged self-knowledge are independently plausible, suppose that we wish to hold both. Some (call them "incompatibilists") argue that we cannot, for there are epistemic problems with any attempt to hold these two doctrines together. But what, exactly, are the problems incompatibilists have in mind? Incompatibilists are of different persuasions: Some argue that any such attempt faces a reductio, while others maintain that, given anti-individualism, one could not know one's own thought-contents without investigating the environment--that is, that anti-individualism is incompatible with the thesis of privileged access. Call an argument proposed to support any of these conclusions, an "incompatibility argument." Accordingly, incompatibility arguments against the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge have been so far of two types: those raising an **entailment** problem, and those raising a **skeptical** problem.

We shall presently see that perhaps these problems are not as different as some have thought.¹ But we shall begin by considering arguments attempting to raise the entailment problem, leaving the discussion of the skeptical problem for Chapter Four, where we shall suggest conclusive solutions for both problems.

What, then, would incompatibility problems entail for those who wish to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge? If the arguments to raise those problems were sound (that is, if the problems did in fact arise), they would generate a **paradox**--a problem with no obvious solution because it involves an inconsistent set of claims, each of which seems independently plausible. And any incompatibility argument, if sound, would amount to a paradox for us, since it would show that a pair of equally plausible claims (viz., anti-individualism and self-knowledge) are in fact incompatible.²

If that paradox could not be resolved, we would, of course, face an unhappy choice, for how could we decide which of our equally plausible, but incompatible, claims ought to be abandoned? Naturally, if incompatibility problems did arise,

¹ For instance, A. Brueckner (1990, 1992), who argues that the entailment problem does not arise, but that the skeptical problem does. Yet we shall see that the latter problem could arise only if the former did as well. More on this in Chap. 4.

² In presenting the alledged incompatibility of anti-individualism and self-knowledge as a paradox, I have profited from suggestions by S. Schiffer as well as from his article "Contextualist Solutions to Scepticism" (1996).

the anti-individualist would also face that "unhappy" choice, for he is aware that common intuitions about privileged self-knowledge are plausible and he wishes to retain them--and that is why he has offered several arguments to solve the alleged problems.³ But since he has not yet succeeded (as recent literature reveals), incompatibilists remain unpersuaded.⁴

In this chapter, I shall first discuss early incompatibilist strategies to raise the entailment problem as an inconsistency problem. Then I shall review some anti-individualist responses to these objections and show why they have failed. Finally, I shall suggest how to block those early incompatibilist strategies.

2. A Paradox for Burgeans?

Early incompatibilist arguments were devised to raise problems for any attempt to hold both **Burgean** anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge, by showing that Burgeans cannot retain common intuitions about the latter.⁵ For instance, suppose that the Burgeans' views about the

³ See, for instance, T. Burge (1988, 1996), and D. Davidson (1987, 1991).

⁴ So far, the anti-individualist's efforts have been rejected by both sides in this debate--those who think that the incompatibility problem amounts to a reductio, such as P. Boghossian (1997), and J. Brown (1995), and those who think that there is a solution to be worked out, such as A. Brueckner (1990) and M. Davies (1996a).

⁵ See, for instance, arguments suggested by M. McKinsey (1991, 1994), and by J. Brown (1995).

special properties of self-knowledge, the supervenience of propositional-attitude content, and knowledge of empirical propositions could be properly illustrated by following claims:

- BT
1. Oscar could know a priori that he is thinking that water is wet.
 2. Oscar could know a priori that his thinking that water is wet necessarily depends upon an empirical proposition E.
 3. The proposition E cannot be known a priori, but only by empirical investigation.

Call these claims the "Burgean triad" and take (E) to be, as McKinsey (1994: 125) suggests, an externalistic proposition that makes Oscar's thought that water is wet a wide state. If each of the above claims correctly captures the Burgeans' views, it appears that the following conclusions follow from that triad:

- a. Burgean anti-individualism is incompatible with privileged access,
- and
- b. Burgean anti-individualism is inconsistent.

The incompatibilist supports (a) as follows. The conjunction of (1) and (2) of the Burgean triad entails that

(E) could be known a priori, but this contradicts (3). Therefore the above triad appears to be inconsistent. It follows that anti-individualists must abandon one of the claims of that triad. But which one? If (2) and (3) are, respectively, the characteristic thesis of anti-individualism and a proposition about empirical knowledge obviously true "on anyone's views," then anti-individualists must retain these claims. This entails that they must abandon (1), which is a substitution instance of the thesis of privileged access. Therefore, if the incompatibilist has correctly construed the Burgean triad, then Burgeans are committed to abandoning the thesis of privileged access after all--and the incompatibilist conclusion (a) will be true.

Furthermore, it is clear that Burge wishes to subscribe to claim (1), since he takes judgments of "basic self-knowledge" to be direct, authoritative, and **nonempirical**.⁶ Then, if he also holds the other claims of the triad, the incompatibilist conclusion (b) will be true.

But must Burgeans hold the other claims of the above triad, as the incompatibilist maintains? That Burge himself would endorse claim (3) seems to follow from his views against the possibility of nonempirical knowledge of empirical propositions.⁷ The remaining question, therefore, concerns

⁶ See T. Burge (1988: 649 et seq.).

⁷ For instance, Burge (1988, 1995) explicitly rejects the possibility of a transcendental argument against skepticism based on anti-individualist theory. More on this on

claim (2) of the triad. Are Burgeans committed to it? And if so, to which interpretation? Recall that, to generate an inconsistency problem, the incompatibilist is required to show, not only that Burgeans must hold that most of a person's thought-contents have externalistic entailments, but also that such entailments are available to the thinker entirely a priori.

To accomplish the former, the incompatibilist could invite us to consider what is entailed by the "characteristic thesis of anti-individualism" (henceforth, simply "(CT)"). This Burge formulates as the following claim:

CT ...[I]ndividuating many of a person or animal's mental kinds--certainly including thoughts about physical objects and properties--is **necessarily dependent** on relations that the person bears to the physical, or in some cases social, environment.⁸

Michael McKinsey (1991) takes (CT) to be the basis of the more particular claim (2) of the allegedly inconsistent triad--viz., that the proposition that Oscar is thinking that water is wet necessarily depends upon an empirical proposition. But this would be a problem only if it could be shown that the relation of **necessary dependence** is available to Oscar entirely a priori, and as it stands, it is not obvious that (CT) entails this; thus it is not obvious that (CT) could

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⁸ T. Burge (1988: 650). Emphasis mine.

create the problem the incompatibilist has in mind.

But the incompatibilist argues that the necessary dependence in (CT) must be cashed out as **conceptual implication**--and since such implications can, of course, be known a priori, the necessary dependence in claim (2) of the above triad is therefore available to Oscar entirely a priori. Moreover, the incompatibilist is aware that some other possible interpretation of this relation could make the Burgean's theory consistent and compatible with privileged access (viz., as a **metaphysical entailment**), and so he also argues that such an interpretation is not available to Burgeans.⁹ We shall have a closer look at the relation of necessary dependence in the Burgean's (CT), to determine which of the two interpretations (the "conceptual" or the "metaphysical") better captures what he has in mind.

How, then, must anti-individualists construe the relation of necessary dependence in (CT)? As I suggested in Chapter One, the commitments of anti-individualists are revealed by their thought experiments. For instance, a twin-earth example shows them holding a supervenience claim, for they take it that Oscar would not have had a belief with the content that water is wet had his environment been relevantly different. And the "arthritis" example shows them holding that, if Bert's social environment were regularly and relevantly different, he

⁹ This is defended by M. McKinsey (1991, 1994) with his "trivialization argument." See my reply here and also A. Brueckner's 1992, and 1995.

would not have had the belief with the content that he has arthritis is his thigh.

But such dependency relations in each of **these** thought experiments could be taken to correspond to counterfactual dependencies which express metaphysical rather than conceptual necessities. Why, then, couldn't Burgeans invoke their standard thought experiments to argue that the relation of necessary dependence they have in mind when they formulate their characteristic thesis is that of **metaphysical** entailment?¹⁰

Note, finally, that it appears that anti-individualist thought experiments could be invoked to argue for the metaphysical interpretation of the necessary dependence in claim (2) of the Burgean triad, and that the incompatibilist cannot raise his inconsistency problem under that interpretation of the entailment. The incompatibilist, then, must be prepared to show that such an interpretation is not available to Burgeans.

3. Burgean Entailments

If Burgeans (and other anti-individualists) wish to avoid the inconsistency problem, it seems that they could adopt the strategy I have suggested--viz., they could concede that they are committed to claim (1) of the above triad of propositions,

¹⁰ In fact, this is precisely what some Burgeans, including Burge himself, have argued. See T. Burge (1988) and A. Brueckner (1992). (I discuss their arguments in this chap.)

yet deny that this leads to inconsistency. For to generate an inconsistency problem, the incompatibilist must argue that the following reading of claim (2) in that triad is **not** available to Burgeans:

2a The proposition that "Oscar is thinking that water is wet" **metaphysically entails** E.

since they are instead committed to,

2b The proposition that "Oscar is thinking that water is wet" **conceptually implies** E.

(where, following the incompatibilist, we say that p conceptually implies q if and only if there is a correct deduction of q from p.)¹¹

Under (2b), of course, the inconsistency problem does arise, for if we assume that the dependency relation invoked by (2) is conceptual, then such conceptual implications **can** be known a priori. And since there is a rule licensing the transmission of that epistemic status--viz., the principle that a priori knowledge is closed under known implication (which is weaker than other closure principles and thus, very plausible)--it would then follow, from (1) and (2b), that (E)

¹¹ As M. McKinsey (1994: 14) puts it: "Let us say that a proposition p conceptually implies a proposition q if and only if there is a correct deduction of q from p, a deduction whose only premisses other than p are necessary or conceptual truths that are knowable a priori, and each of whose steps follows from previous lines by a self-evident inference rule of some adequate system of natural deduction."

could be known a priori. But clearly this contradicts (3), and so the triad is inconsistent.¹² (In other words, if Oscar knows a priori that he is thinking that water is wet, this, together with (2b), would allow him to deduce (E). Then, given (1) and (2b), claim (3) of the above triad would be false--hence, the triad is inconsistent.)

Under (2b), then, the incompatibilist would have successfully shown that anti-individualism is inconsistent and incompatible with privileged access. As McKinsey puts it:

...[L]ook, if you could know a priori that you are in a given mental state, and your being in that state conceptually or logically implies the existence of external objects, then you could know a priori that the external world exists. Since you obviously can't know a priori that the external world exists, you also can't know a priori that you are in the mental state in question. It's just that simple.¹³

But it may not turn out to be that simple. For, if my claim in the previous section is correct, McKinsey is able to raise an apparent inconsistency problem only because he ascribes to Burgeans the claim (2b), and thus a notion of necessary dependence to which they do not seem to be committed. I have suggested that Burgeans could instead be

¹² It should be evident that this argument does not rely on the principle that if p depends upon q, then no one could know that p without first knowing that q. As Burge (1988) and McKinsey (1991) note, since this closure principle is false, the incompatibilist argument would have no force.

¹³ M. McKinsey (1991: 16).

represented as holding (2a), which involves a **metaphysical necessity**, and that this construal seems supported by standard anti-individualist thought experiments--being therefore plausible.

Let us see, then, how (2a) could help Burgeans out of the inconsistency charge. First, consider the following "Kripkean assumption:"

KA Some metaphysical necessities
are often knowable only a
posteriori.¹⁴

(KA) is, of course, generally accepted for metaphysical necessities such as those concerning the chemical composition of natural kinds. But now Burgeans seem in a position to argue that, unless the incompatibilist could show that (2a) does not involve one of those metaphysical necessities, the inconsistency problem for holding the triad (1), (2a) and (3) does not to arise. Call this resolution of the inconsistency problem "the metaphysical-necessity" strategy.

The incompatibilist might, of course, concede that such a strategy would solve the inconsistency problem, granting that

Since metaphysical dependencies are often only knowable a posteriori, propositions that are knowable a priori might metaphysically depend upon other propositions that are only knowable a posteriori. Thus Oscar might know a priori that he exists, and his existence might metaphysically depend upon the existence of his mother, even

¹⁴ See S. Kripke (1972).

though Oscar cannot know a priori that his mother exists.¹⁵

And given that, as we have suggested, Burgeans could invoke their standard thought experiments to insist that their interpretation of the entailment is metaphysical, the burden of proof seems to be on the incompatibilist. For once he has granted that some metaphysical entailments are not knowable a priori, he has to show that such an interpretation of the entailments from thought-contents to the world is **not** available to Burgeans. McKinsey's "trivialization argument" is an attempt to do this.

4. The Trivialization Argument

We have seen that a prima facie resolution of the inconsistency problem facing Burgean anti-individualists would be to construe their entailments as (2a). But according to McKinsey, this is not possible, for then anti-individualists would face this dilemma:

- BD a. If Burgeans hold (2a), their characteristic thesis would be consistent and compatible with privileged access, but **trivial**,
- and
- b. If they hold (2b), their characteristic thesis would be **interesting** but inconsistent and incompatible with privileged access.

¹⁵ M. McKinsey (1991: 13).

Call McKinsey's argument to the effect that this dilemma arises for Burgeans the "trivialization argument." Suppose we concede that, under the metaphysical interpretation of the entailment, (1), (2a) and (3) would be consistent. Here, then, is how the incompatibilist argues that (2a) is not available to Burgeans:

...[this] though correct, is quite irrelevant to the main issue. For anti-individualism is the thesis that some neutral de dicto attitudes are wide states, and to say that a state is wide (not narrow) cannot mean merely that the state metaphysically entails the existence of the external objects. For if it did, then given certain materialistic assumptions that are pretty widely held, it would follow that probably all psychological states of any kind would be wide, so that the concept of a narrow state would have no application at all, and anti-individualism would be merely a trivial consequence of (token) materialism.¹⁶

Thus the incompatibilist argues that the metaphysical interpretation trivializes anti-individualism. For, given token materialism and some Kripkean assumptions about the essentiality of origins, it would be reasonable even for some individualists to hold metaphysical entailments of this sort:

T Oscar's thinking that water is wet metaphysically entails that Oscar's biological parents exist.

(T) is, of course, an instance of (2a)--that is, an instance of the metaphysical interpretation of (2), with "Oscar's

¹⁶ M. McKinsey (1991: 13-14).

biological parents exist" substituted for (E). But (T) trivializes anti-individualism, because the sense in which (T) makes Oscar's thinking that water is wet a wide psychological state "is obviously not the sense of 'wide psychological state' that philosophers like Burge and Putnam have in mind."¹⁷ Therefore, (2a) is unavailable to anti-individualists.

Given this "trivialization argument," Burgeans cannot insist upon a response based on the metaphysical interpretation (a maneuver which has some other complications, as we shall presently see) without begging the question. But there is a strategy to block this trivialization argument, and thus, to avoid the above dilemma.

Note, first, that McKinsey's trivialization argument depends upon understanding the characteristic thesis of anti-individualism (CT) as:

CT₁ Some neutral cognitive states that are ascribed by de dicto attitude sentences (e.g., 'Oscar is thinking that water is wet') necessarily depend upon or presuppose the existence of objects external to the person to whom the state is ascribed.¹⁸

McKinsey argues that since (CT₁) is the thesis anti-individualists usually put forward (in their debate with

¹⁷ M. McKinsey (1991: 14).

¹⁸ M. McKinsey (1991: 10).

individualists), they cannot construe the relation of necessary dependence as **metaphysical entailment**--since, under such construal even some individualists would accept (CT₁). For instance, the trivial (T), which many individualists could endorse, would count as an instance of (CT₁) under the metaphysical interpretation. But (T) is obviously trivial, and thus (CT₁), which is the basis of the more particular proposition (2) of the above triad, cannot be understood as involving metaphysical necessity. Hence, the metaphysical interpretation is unavailable to Burgeans.

But is this correct? Burgeans could argue that (CT₁) is far too weak to capture what they have in mind, and that this is why the blatantly trivial (T) satisfies it. In contrast to (CT₁), consider the following thesis:

CT₂ Some neutral cognitive states that are ascribed by de dicto attitude sentences (e.g., 'Oscar is thinking that water is wet') necessarily depend on or presuppose the existence of objects external to the person to whom the state is ascribed, **where the objects in question are specifically related to the particular content of the cognitive state in question.**

Now Burgeans could hold that (CT₂) captures more perspicuously their widely acknowledged intuition that some key relation(s) (causation, supervenience, etc.) between an individual's intentional states and certain environmental factors are constitutive of, or individuate the content of, the

intentional states in question.¹⁹ To support their claim, Burgeans could invoke our previous argument--viz., that standard, anti-individualist thought experiments, such as twin-earth cases, elicit precisely these intuitions about the counterfactual dependence of propositional-attitude content on specific environmental factors.²⁰

In addition, (CT₂) does not seem to carry the simplistic implication that anti-individualism entails that, for instance, Oscar's water-thoughts require the existence of water (more on this later). Burgeans tend to be quite cautious when they discuss the implications of their views on how thought-contents might be related to environmental factors, as Burge himself suggests in the following passage:

To think of something as water ..., one must be in some causal relation to water--or at least, in some causal relation to **other particular substances that enable one to theorize accurately about water.**²¹

Burgeans could then concede that (CT₁) expresses a minimal component of their view. But they would insist that this thesis is too coarse-grained to capture what they really have in mind, and that the stronger (CT₂) captures better their characteristic thesis.

¹⁹ I believe that this thesis better captures what Burge himself has in mind. See T. Burge (1982a: 116), (1986b: 697) and (1988: 650).

²⁰ See, for instance, Putnam's (1975) and Burge's (1979) standard thought experiments.

²¹ T. Burge (1988: 653). Emphasis mine.

To appreciate the significance of taking the characteristic thesis of anti-individualism in this way, consider the following analogue of (2):

2c The proposition that Oscar is thinking that water is wet metaphysically entails a proposition (E) that is **specifically related** to the particular content of Oscar's thought that water is wet.

Now note that McKinsey's (T) is not an instance of (2c) for the following reason. Although the proposition, "Oscar's biological parents exist," is an empirical proposition, it is not specifically related to the particular content of Oscar's thought that water is wet. As McKinsey's argument indicates, certain assumptions, such as token materialism and Kripkean essentiality of origins, insure that almost **any** thought-content presupposes the existence of the origins of the thinker, whether this be the thinker's biological parents or something else. At the same time, there is no specific relation (a fortiori, no constitutive or individuating relation) between the particular contents of a given thought and the proposition that the thinker's (say) biological parents exist.

McKinsey's trivialization argument trades on ascribing to anti-individualists (CT₁), a thesis far too weak to capture what they have in mind. That is why, when proposition (2) of the above triad is construed as (CT₁), the metaphysical

interpretation has the unhappy result of being satisfied by the blatantly trivial (T), which has nothing to do with the particulars of anti-individualism. But because proposition (2c) is based on ascribing to the anti-individualist the stronger (CT₂), it cannot be satisfied by (T). And since I cannot see any other trivial example that satisfies (2c), I submit that the trivialization argument fails. It seems that the metaphysical interpretation is available to anti-individualists after all!

Clearly, then, anti-individualists can maintain that the set of propositions consisting of (1), (2c) and (3) are consistent, by arguing that the entailment in (2c) is metaphysical (i.e., anti-individualists could hold on to Burge's original argument along these lines).

If all this is correct, then it is McKinsey's objection--that Burgean anti-individualism is inconsistent and incompatible with privileged access--that is in trouble. Indeed, he can run his argument that anti-individualists are committed to the conceptual interpretation of the entailment in proposition (2), **not** because the notion of metaphysical entailment trivializes their characteristic thesis, but only because he ascribes to them a characteristic thesis (CT₁) which is **not** what anti-individualists have in mind. I submit, then, that McKinsey's argument is a straw man.

McKinsey has replied to one possible objection to his trivialization argument with an observation that could be seen

as having some bearing on my views:

Perhaps a defender of metaphysical anti-individualism who notes that my argument does not directly affect any specific anti-individualist claims about content might simply grant my point that the metaphysical version of the characteristic thesis is trivial while insisting that the philosophical interest of anti-individualism lies in its specific claims about the metaphysical dependency of content upon external facts. But I fail to see how a specific claim about content could be philosophically interesting just in itself, apart from any support that the claim might give to at least some form of generalization. What, for instance, would be the intrinsic philosophical interest of the claim that one's thought that water is wet necessarily depends upon, say, the existence of H₂O? Surely, this claim is not interesting in itself. Rather, it is interesting because it seems to support the denial of a philosophical view that has been commonly assumed since Descartes, namely, the view that facts about the contents of one's thoughts are independent of any contingent facts about the external world.²²

But this passage creates more confusion than it dispels. I do not know what McKinsey has in mind when he suggests that specific claims about content would not be philosophically interesting--e.g., the claim that Oscar's thought that water is wet necessarily depends upon the existence of H₂O. Of course, such specific claims **support** the denial of the view about content "commonly assumed since Descartes"--that is, they support the denial of individualism. But since these claims are counterexamples to Cartesian individualism, naturally they do support a generalization!

²² M. McKinsey (1994: 127). Emphasis mine.

A charitable reading of this passage would take it as arguing that, since anti-individualists and their opponents make **general** claims about the individuation of intentional-state and -event types, **particular** claims about someone's thought-contents do not come close to capturing the import of such general claims. If what McKinsey has in mind is that such particular claims fall short of expressing the characteristic claims of anti-individualists, I would agree. Burge, for instance, frequently insists that his doctrine concerns the individuation of mental kinds, and thus, that it goes far beyond claims about the particular contents of individual minds.

Yet none of this entails that the characteristic anti-individualist thesis could not be more specific than the thesis McKinsey suggests. As I have argued above, the characteristic thesis of anti-individualism is significantly more specific than McKinsey's (CT₁) when it comes to elaborating the relation between thought-contents and the external factors upon which thought-contents supervene. Hence my choice of (CT₂), which is not only more specific than (CT₁), but also more general than the example in the passage above. And this is why--if I am correct--it is beyond the reach of McKinsey's trivialization argument.

I conclude, then, that although it was initially plausible to think that there was an entailment problem facing anti-individualists (as suggested earlier), McKinsey has

failed to show that there is. His argument to block the metaphysical-necessity strategy is fallacious, insofar as it trades upon ascribing to anti-individualists a "characteristic" thesis that misrepresents their actual position. But if the metaphysical interpretation is available to anti-individualists after all, there may yet be other reasons for thinking that it is not going to help.

5. A Burgean Argument

Claim (2) of the above the triad must, then, be recast to capture the anti-individualist entailments from thought-contents to the world. And once those entailments are properly understood, it appears that the incompatibilist's trivialization argument has been nothing but a straw man. Thus it fails to raise an inconsistency problem for the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge. To meet McKinsey's objection, Burgeans could (as we suggested) make the following claims:

2c. The proposition that Oscar is thinking that water is wet **metaphysically entails** a proposition (E) that is specifically related to the particular content of Oscar's thought that water is wet,

and

KA Metaphysical entailments are often knowable only a posteriori.

Yet although the maneuver of holding both (2c) and (KA) may be enough to show that McKinsey fails to raise an inconsistency problem for Burgeans, such a move may be no help at all as a solution to the problem incompatibilists really have in mind.²³ For that is what we have called the "entailment problem"--viz., the problem of whether the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and self-knowledge has the consequence that someone could know specific empirical propositions a priori.

Therefore, what Burgeans (i.e., anti-individualists who also hold that self-knowledge is nonempirical) have to meet is the following objection:

EP If one could have a priori knowledge of the anti-individualistic entailments from one's own thought-contents to the world, and a priori knowledge of one's own thought-contents, then couldn't one also have a priori knowledge of the consequents of those entailments?

And Burgeans have so far failed to show that the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge does not lead to such a conclusion--which would, of course, amount to a reductio of any such attempt. It seems, then, that they do face the (EP) problem, and that that problem arises whether the anti-individualistic entailments from thought-

²³ More on this in Chap. 3.

contents to the world are metaphysical or conceptual. That is, the entailment problem for anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge is independent of McKinsey's problem, which could now be outlined roughly as follows,

MkP If one's thought-contents **conceptually imply** some empirical propositions, **and** one could know one's own thought-contents a priori, then couldn't one **also** know a priori those empirical propositions?

But unlike (EP), (MkP) leads us straight into a debate about whether a metaphysical interpretation of the entailments from thought-contents to world is available to anti-individualists. And as we shall see, that is irrelevant to the incompatibility problem at hand. For we shall now show that, even if such an interpretation were available to anti-individualists, this would not be enough to rid them of the entailment problem, once that problem is correctly construed.²⁴

Naturally, if anti-individualists could show that (2c) is **one of those** metaphysical entailments knowable only a posteriori, then they would thereby be in a position to solve both McKinsey's problem and the entailment problem. For they could then maintain that, even if knowledge is closed under **known** entailment, it does not follow that, from a priori knowledge of one's thought-contents, one could know **especific**

²⁴ For the problem at hand, McKinsey's argument seems to be a red herring. This was suggested to me by S. Schiffer.

empirical propositions a priori. Clearly, anti-individualists could then insist that the above triad is consistent, and that it does not have the implausible consequence the incompatibilist has in mind. Burge (1988) and, more explicitly, Brueckner (1992) could be represented as favoring such a response to (EP) and (MkP). A strategy along these lines might be called the "metaphysical-necessity" resolution (as suggested earlier). We shall examine such a resolution and explain our initial skepticism about whether it could solve the incompatibility problem. Let us then look more closely at our reasons for thinking that the metaphysical-necessity strategy will be no help to Burgeans.

Assume first, that the anti-individualistic entailments from thought-contents to the world are metaphysical, and that such entailments are **often** knowable only a posteriori--that is, assume the above (2c) and (KA). How, then, would the Burgean argument for the metaphysical-necessity resolution go from here? Perhaps, it would run as follows,²⁵

- BA
1. Oscar knows a priori that he is thinking that water is wet.
 2. Oscar knows that his thinking that water is wet **metaphysically entails** an empirical proposition (E) that is specifically related to that thought-content.

²⁵ The following argument is not Burge's, but is a construction based on Burge's response to incompatibilism. See T. Burge (1988).

3. Metaphysical entailments are often knowable only a posteriori.
- Thus,
4. Oscar could know (E) only a posteriori.
- Therefore,
5. The Burgean triad is consistent.

We suggested earlier that a Burgean argument along these lines could succeed in showing McKinsey's problem not to arise for anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge. But, assuming (BA)'s premises are true, could this argument be of any help in solving the **entailment** problem? Hardly, for unless Burgeans could further argue that the entailment in premise (2) is in fact one of those metaphysical entailments knowable only a posteriori, (BA)'s conclusions clearly do not follow from such premises--i.e., the argument is invalid.

Hence, Burgeans must argue that the entailment in premise (2) is one of those metaphysical entailments knowable **only a posteriori**. In the absence of such an argument, all that follows from (BA)'s premises is that it is **possible** that (E) cannot be known a priori, and thus, that it is **possible** that the claims of the above triad are consistent. The only valid argument Burgeans could really run with those premises is,

- BA 1. Oscar knows a priori that he is thinking that water is wet.

2. Oscar knows that his thinking that water is wet **metaphysically entails** an empirical proposition (E) that is specifically related to that thought-content.
3. Metaphysical entailments are often knowable only a posteriori.
- Thus,
4. **It is possible** that Oscar could know (E) only a posteriori.
- Therefore,
5. **It is possible** that the Burgean triad is consistent.

The Burgean argument seems now valid, but obviously also too weak to solve the entailment problem. For a solution, Burgeans must support the stronger conclusion that the empirical proposition entailed by Oscar's thought-contents **could not** be known a priori, which in turn would require them to show that the metaphysical entailment in (2) actually **is** one of those knowable only a posteriori. I submit, then, that the only valid argument Burgeans could run with the above premises has no force to meet the incompatibilist's objection, and that the metaphysical-necessity strategy, as discussed so far, cannot solve the entailment problem. Is there, then, any way at all in which Burgeans might prevail against the incompatibilist? Perhaps, a modified version of the Burgean argument could successfully achieve that goal.

6. The Modified Burgean Argument

The metaphysical-necessity strategy to solve the entailment problem has permitted Burgeans to conclude that

B Some metaphysical entailments are knowable only a posteriori, and **perhaps** the entailments (from thought-contents to environmental factors) presupposed by anti-individualism are **some of these**.

which, of course, falls short of what they need. For, contrast (B) with this other claim:

B* The anti-individualistic entailments from thought-contents to the world are some of those metaphysical entailments knowable only a posteriori.

Clearly, if (B*) is well supported, it could make the Burgean argument sound, and thus, the metaphysical-necessity strategy could solve the entailment problem. That is, (B*) could certainly save Burgeans from the incompatibilist's objections.

Call the Burgean argument that results from adding (B*) the "modified Burgean argument," and take it to run as follows,

- MBA
1. Oscar knows a priori that he is thinking that water is wet.
 2. Oscar knows that his thinking that water is wet **metaphysically entails** an empirical proposition (E) that is specifically related to that thought-content.

3. Metaphysical entailments are often knowable only a posteriori.
 4. The entailment in (2) is one of those metaphysical entailments knowable only a posteriori.
- Thus,
5. Oscar could know (E) only a posteriori.
- Therefore,
6. The Burgean triad is consistent.

(Where premises (1) to (3) are as in the Burgean argument, and (B*) is premise (4)).

We have seen how the first three premises of this argument can be supported. The remaining question concerns premise (4): Could Burgeans show that the specific anti-individualistic entailments from one's thought-contents to one's environment are knowable only a posteriori? In fact, Brueckner's "What Anti-Individualists Can Know A Priori" is an attempt to show just that, and this maneuver deserves a closer look.

Let's provisionally concede that the anti-individualistic entailments from thought-contents to environmental factors are modelled on the following:

- N It is necessary that if Oscar is thinking that water is wet, then either (i) water exists, or (ii) Oscar theorizes that H₂O exists, or (iii) Oscar is part of a community of speakers some of whom theorize that H₂O exists.²⁶

²⁶ A. Brueckner (1992: 116).

In addition, assume that entailments of this sort follow from standard anti-individualist thought experiments, and that they express metaphysical necessities. We must now ask: What is the epistemic status of such entailments? For (as we suggested earlier) even if such entailments express metaphysical necessities, we need an argument to further show that they are among those metaphysical necessities knowable only a posteriori. And that may be precisely the argument Brueckner has in mind, for consider the reasons he offers in the following passage:

... Unlike conceptual necessities, some metaphysical necessities are only knowable a posteriori. Knowledge that (N), in particular, depends upon a posteriori knowledge concerning **the connection between chemical analysis and the nature of water.**²⁷

The claim made here is clearly that the anti-individualistic entailments are among those knowable only a posteriori, though

²⁷ A. Brueckner (1992: 116), emphasis mine. In discussing what anti-individualists might know a priori, Brueckner makes some observations that are compatible with the readings of his argument I shall suggest in what follows. For instance, he observes that "there is the worry that the notion of a 'twin' thought is introduced in the course of thought experiments involving a posteriori considerations which concern chemical theory..." and that to establish the epistemic status of anti-individualist claims about the "pertinence of physical environment to the determination of content" requires "to consider the difficult question of whether such claims, if true, are knowable only on the basis a a posteriori knowledge about causal relations between language and the physical world, and about the social character of language..." (Ibid., p. 117).

it is not clear what are we to make of the reasons offered for that claim. Under one interpretation,

I₁ (N) could be known only a posteriori, because its consequent contains concepts presupposing considerations which concern the connection between chemical analysis and the nature of water.

This is, of course, true in the following sense: Isn't it obvious that conditions (ii) and (iii) in (N)'s consequent contain a **concept** (viz., H₂O) which concerns "the connection" between chemical analyses and the "nature" of a certain natural kind? Yet this is puzzling, because in some sense we certainly know a priori many entailments containing concepts with presuppositions of that sort. For example, wouldn't any substitution instance of a logical truth containing such concepts be a trivial counterexample to this interpretation of Brueckner's argument? Surely, in some sense, I know a priori that

LT If water is H₂O, then it is not the case that water is not H₂O,²⁸

even though (LT) involves a concept that presupposes "connections" knowable only a posteriori--viz., that water is H₂O. So, in the sense that makes (LT) a priori, the first

²⁸ Later we shall introduce some distinctions in the notion of a priori knowledge and have some more to say about cases like this. See Chap. 4.

interpretation of Brueckner's passage takes it to be a plainly false claim.

But there is room for a more charitable reading of the passage whereby cases such as (LT) would not count as counterexamples. For (LT), after all, involves a conceptual entailment, and Brueckner has argued that such entailments do not capture what anti-individualists have in mind--i.e., that the entailment in (N) is metaphysical. So, it may be that the claim made in the above passage is instead based on a principle such as the following:

BR Metaphysical entailments that involve concepts of chemical theory concerning the nature of natural kinds are among those entailments knowable only a posteriori.

And a principle of this sort seems plausible, for it could, of course, be supported by some common examples (e.g., that there is water in one's environment entails that there is oxygen and hydrogen--surely an entailment knowable only a posteriori).

Couldn't Burgeans now invoke the principle (BR) to sustain premise (4) of the above argument, and thus solve the entailment problem with the metaphysical-necessity strategy? It appears that (BR) could be what Burgeans need if they are to support the claim that anti-individualist entailments such as (N) are knowable only a posteriori--which is the basis for premise (4) of the above argument. But we shall now see that (N) is not available to anti-individualists, and thus, that

the principle (BR) is irrelevant to the problem at hand.

7. The Metaphysical-Necessity Resolution

If the anti-individualistic entailments from thought-contents to the world are construed as in (N), which contains a concept from chemical theory concerning the nature of water, then it appears that one could invoke (BR) to conclude that such entailments are knowable only a posteriori--thus supporting premise (4) of the modified Burgean argument. Yet if there is another way to construe the anti-individualistic entailments that does not invoke any concept from chemical theory concerning the nature of a natural kind, then the principle (BR) **could not** be invoked to reach the desired conclusion. And it appears that there is such a way, for consider the following candidate:

N* It is necessary that if Oscar is thinking that water is wet, then either (i) water exists, or (ii) Oscar theorizes that water exists, or (iii) Oscar is part of a community of speakers some of whom theorize that water exists.²⁹

²⁹ In my version, the anti-individualistic entailments are weaker than in other proposals, for I do not have in the consequent the requirement that Oscar or other members of his community know the **exact** chemical composition of water (more on this in Chapter Three). Contrast (N*), not only with Brueckner's (N), but also with these other construals:

JB It is necessary that if Oscar has a thought involving the concept of the natural kind k, then either (i) k exists, or (ii) Oscar knows the correct scientific account of k, or (iii) Oscar is part of a community with the concept of k. (J. Brown, 1995: n.4, 151)

If (N*) represents a plausible construal of an anti-individualistic entailment, then clearly the principle (BR) above cannot be invoked to maintain that (N*) is one of those entailments knowable only a posteriori, since the consequent of that entailment **does not** involve any concept of chemical theory concerning the nature of a natural kind. Therefore, if it is possible to model the anti-individualist entailments on (N*)--as I believe it is--then Burgeans are again stuck with the problem of how to show that their entailments are among those metaphysical entailments knowable only a posteriori!

Furthermore, it appears that anti-individualists **must** construe their entailments as in (N*), for (N) is not available to them. Any such entailment would per se make a compelling case against their own theory. For anti-individualists must accommodate not just the (problematic) case of an "empty" concept, but the fairly common case of someone--say, Oscar--having propositional attitudes involving new theoretical concepts with no referents in his environment, and it is difficult to see how they could do so if the anti-individualistic entailments were as in (N). Obviously, any such case would be one in which Oscar is theorizing about a new concept referring to a natural kind, but

B If I have the concept water, then water exists. (P. Boghossian, 1997: 165)

- a. He has not been in contact with the natural kind k (viz., the referent of Oscar's new concept),

and

- b. Neither he nor other members of his community yet know the **exact** chemical composition of that natural kind.

For instance, this would be the case if Oscar had never observed k, because k is unobservable (or observable but too remote), and no member of his community had the concept "k," though Oscar nonetheless were theorizing about the existence of k and knew enough to distinguish this natural kind from a superficially identical but chemically different twin natural kind.³⁰

And couldn't Burgeans run a thought experiment in which mutatis mutandis Oscar is the astronomer who, at the beginning of this century, theorized about the existence of the planet Pluto, without his (or other members of his community's) ever having been in contact with Pluto? (Naturally, that thought

³⁰ That anti-individualists like Burge do wish to accommodate cases of this sort is clear enough: "...Adam's having attitudes whose contents involve the notion of water does not entail the existence of water. If by some wild communal illusion, no one had ever really seen a relevant liquid in the lakes and rivers, nor drunk such a liquid, **there might still be enough in the community's talk to distinguish the notion of water from that of twater and from other candidate notions.** We would still have our chemical analyses, despite the illusoriness of their object. (I assume here that not all of the community's beliefs involve similar illusions.)" See T. Burge (1982a: 116. Emphasis mine).

experiment will imagine Oscar theorizing about that planet and his twin doing the same. But Oscar's utterance "Pluto exists," would, of course, report his belief that Pluto exists, while twin Oscar's utterance "Pluto exists" would report his belief that twin Pluto exists--that is, that the planet which in his galaxy takes the place of our Pluto exists.) If Oscar were that astronomer, then neither he nor anyone else at the time had directly observed Pluto, and no one had an **exact** scientific account of the planet. Yet it appears that, if anti-individualism is an acceptable theory of propositional-attitude content, then anti-individualists should be able to say that in that scenario Oscar did have propositional attitudes involving the proper-name concept/term "Pluto." Aware of this, Burgeans have clearly intended to accommodate such cases, but can they do it? It appears that they are in a position to hold that Oscar does have the proper-name concept/term "Pluto" if either of the following obtain:

- a. There is enough in Oscar's environment to ground the proper-name concept/term "Pluto,"
or
- b. Oscar (or some members of his community) knows enough about Pluto to distinguish Pluto from twin-Pluto.

In fact, Burge himself acknowledges that anti-individualists need to accommodate such cases (which represent standard cases in science), for if they couldn't, then something would seem

wrong with their theory. That is why Burge cautiously observes, regarding the introduction of a new **theoretical** concept in science,

... if one is sufficiently precise, **one could introduce a 'natural kind' notion, like water, without having had any causal contact with instances of it.** This seems to happen when chemical or other kinds are anticipated in science before their discovery 'in nature.' The point places a prima facie limitation on anti-skeptical uses of our argument.³¹

To sum up, suppose the anti-individualistic entailments from thought-contents to the world are, as Brueckner proposes, modelled on (N). Then, since (N) involves concepts derived from chemical theory concerning the nature of water, Burgeans could invoke a principle such as (BR) to claim that such entailments are among those knowable only a posteriori. Thus they would be in a position to solve the entailment problem with the metaphysical-necessity strategy.

But I have argued that Burgeans cannot take (N) as the paradigm of such entailments. For if they did, they would be unable to accommodate many common cases of concept-possession that they do wish to accommodate--namely, cases involving the introduction of a theoretical concept under the conditions described above. It appears, then, that the paradigm of the anti-individualistic entailments is instead (N*). But since (N*) **neither invokes** any concept derived from chemical theory

³¹ T. Burge (1982a, note 18: 120). Emphasis mine.

about the composition of a natural kind, **nor concerns** "the connection between chemical analysis and the nature of water," it cannot be used, together with the principle (BR) to argue that such an entailment is one of those metaphysical entailments knowable only a posteriori. Yet that is precisely what anti-individualists willing to solve the entailment problem with the metaphysical-necessity strategy are required to hold!

I submit that, even if (BR) is compelling (that is, even if some metaphysical entailments are knowable only a posteriori), it cannot be of any help in showing that the anti-individualistic entailments from thought-contents to the world are knowable only a posteriori--i.e., that (BR) cannot be invoked to support premise (4) of the modified Burgean argument. That principle is of no use to Burgeans, and any attempt to sustain the metaphysical-necessity resolution based upon it cannot succeed. We should take the anti-individualistic entailments to be metaphysical, but seek our solution to the entailment problem elsewhere.

8. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have considered an early form of the incompatibilist objection to the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge. I have also examined some anti-individualist replies to that objection. On my view, the incompatibilist fails to raise a problem for such

an attempt, for he misconstrues the relevant anti-individualistic entailments: He takes them to be conceptual, but they could as well be metaphysical. I have suggested that the incompatibilist argument to show that those entailments are conceptual (viz., McKinsey's trivialization argument) is fallacious, and that, since there is no other reason to construe them as such, we could insist (without begging the question) that they are metaphysical.

But I have also argued that, although McKinsey's problem fails to arise, there is another entailment problem facing anti-individualism that Burgeans have not so far resolved. And, as our discussion of the Burgean argument has suggested, the appeal to the metaphysical interpretation of the anti-individualistic entailments from thought-contents to the world cannot solve that problem. To meet this objection, we modified the Burgean argument, adding the required premise that the anti-individualistic entailments are among those metaphysical entailments knowable only a posteriori. But we found no adequate support for this premise and concluded that the modified Burgean argument seems unsound.

Finally, even if the incompatibility problems for anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge discussed here were shown not to arise, there might still be, as we saw, an entailment problem for those doctrines, which perhaps needs only a more perspicuous formulation. And if that problem did arise, there might be yet other moves we could make besides

the metaphysical-necessity strategy--for it is now plain that that strategy would not solve the problem, and we had better abandon it.

CHAPTER THREE

A Reductio of Compatibilism

1. Introduction

With the failure of the incompatibilist's maneuver to raise an **inconsistency** problem for Burge, it is now clear enough that the epistemic problem facing the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge needs to be put in a more perspicuous way. Naturally, an argument to determine whether Burge's views on anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge are consistent would be of some philosophical interest,¹ but a more interesting argument would be one showing that there is a reductio facing any attempt to hold both doctrines. Such an argument should, of course, make it plausible not only that

... personal knowledge about our thoughts plus the kind of knowledge that is provided by philosophical argument **seem**, together, to open an unacceptably 'non-empirical' route to knowledge of empirical facts..."²

¹ Such an argument is, of course, proposed by M. McKinsey (1991). See Chap. 2.

² M. Davies (1996a: 1 et seq.), emphasis mine. See also J. Brown (1995) and P. Boghossian (1997).

but also that the attempt to hold both privileged self-knowledge and anti-individualism **does** have some unacceptable consequences. Is such an argument, then, available to the incompatibilist?

First, call the attempt to hold both privileged self-knowledge and anti-individualism "compatibilism." Suppose that Oscar, a devoted compatibilist, is having the occurrent, conscious thought that water is wet. Given his compatibilist persuasion, he is obviously in a position to make the following claims,

1. I know that I am now thinking that water is wet,

and

2. I know that someone's thinking that water is wet entails that water exists.

But now it appears that Oscar could **also** come to know that water exists by a simple deduction from premises that are merely about his own thought-contents and anti-individualist theory. Yet, that Oscar could infer such a conclusion **does not** amount to a problem. For, if the premises of his inference were available to him only empirically, his conclusion that water exists would inherit the same epistemic status.

On the other hand, if such premises were available to Oscar a priori, then, assuming that a priori knowledge is closed under known entailment, he would thereby be in a position to know a priori that water exists--which clearly

amounts to a problem, since nobody can know **that a priori!** Any such unacceptable claim about the epistemic status of an empirical proposition would be not merely a **problem** but actually a reductio of the compatibilist attempt to hold both anti-individualism and self-knowledge.³

Call such a problem the "entailment problem." In this chapter we shall look more closely at the incompatibilist's argument to raise the entailment problem, and see what his assumptions are. We shall then discuss whether some anti-individualist strategies could succeed in solving that problem.

2. The Entailment Argument

In light of the argument the incompatibilist has in mind, let us recast each of the premises of Oscar's inference and consider an important question. Now the incompatibilist holds that, given both privileged self-knowledge and anti-individualism, two sorts of premises could be available a priori: those concerning one's beliefs about one's own thought-contents and those concerning a theory of mental content. But how can this be?

Oscar's first premise would, of course, read as follows

1. I know a priori that I am now

³ In what follows we shall assume that anti-individualists wish to retain common intuitions about privileged self-knowledge (at least, those that we have found plausible). That is, we shall assume that anti-individualists subscribe to compatibilism.

thinking that water is wet.

That the belief involved in this knowledge claim is justified and true, and thus that in some sense it amounts to knowledge, follows from the basic Cartesian intuitions about privileged self-knowledge that we proposed in Chapter One. For Oscar's belief that he is thinking that water is wet is an instance of a self-ascriptive belief about one's own thought-contents, and he has privileged access and first-person authority over his beliefs of this sort. Given privileged access, it follows that, under normal circumstances and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, Oscar's belief is not based on evidence or inference--that is, it is justified immediately (or "directly"). In addition, given first-person authority, it follows that, under normal circumstances and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, his belief is truth-warranted.⁴ Therefore Oscar's belief that he is thinking that water is wet, being justified and true, amounts in some sense to knowledge.

But in which sense, if any, could knowledge of this sort count as a priori? The answer depends on how we construe a priori knowledge.⁵ Suppose, for instance, that, with the incompatibilist, we adopt the following criterion for knowledge of this kind:

⁴ See Chap. 1.

⁵ More on this in Chap. 4.

A Priori Knowledge = Knowledge attainable without investigation of the environment.

Under this construal of a priori knowledge, it follows that, given privileged access and first-person authority, Oscar certainly could know a priori that he is thinking that water is wet. So there is a sense in which premise (1) of the incompatibilist argument seems true.

Let's now consider the second premise of that argument--namely,

2. I know a priori that someone's thinking that water is wet entails that water exists.

Oscar could come to know the entailment in this premise if he knows anti-individualist theory--which, arguably, he could come to know by philosophical argument and standard thought experiments. But again, in which sense, if any, could knowledge of this sort count as a priori?⁶ Suppose that Oscar

⁶ The question of whether thought experiments afford a priori knowledge is very complex and goes far beyond my present concerns. Some may hold that, to run his experiments, some empirical beliefs, as well as nondeductive inference, must be available to Oscar. He must have at least some empirical beliefs, because he needs to specify the relevant background conditions against which he is to test whether content supervenes locally. And, naturally, providing adequate descriptions of the relevant states of affairs in the actual and possible worlds requires empirical beliefs involving object-dependent propositions about planets, natural and biological kinds, etc. Otherwise, how could Oscar work out the ceteris paribus conditions relevant to the phenomenon he wishes to test? For a different argument to the effect that thought experiments afford only empirical knowledge see K.

has adequately set out a twin-earth case, would he then be in a position to conclude without investigating his environment that content does not supervene locally? Given some assumptions about ascriptions of meaning and content (concerning, for instance, the role of that-clauses or of difference in truth-conditions for identifying propositional-attitude content), it seems that Oscar could conclude from the imagined state of affairs that content does not supervene locally. Naturally, this conclusion is available to him by **inference**, without an investigation of the environment--thereby satisfying the incompatibilist's criterion of a priori knowledge. So the second premise of his argument seems also to be true in some sense.

But once we concede that there is a sense in which Oscar's beliefs (1) and (2) amount to a priori knowledge, it appears that the incompatibilist can run the following argument:

- EA
1. Oscar could know a priori that he is thinking that water is wet.
 2. Oscar could know a priori that his thinking that water is wet entails that water exists.
 3. Therefore, Oscar could know a priori that water exists.

Call any argument along these lines an "entailment

Wilkes (1988). More on this in Chap. 4.

argument." The entailment argument (which is, of course, intended as a reductio of compatibilism) generates a **paradox**, for we seem to have independent grounds for holding each of the following claims,

- P
- a. Given a plausible closure principle, (EA) seems valid,
 - b. Given privileged self-knowledge, premise (1) seems true,
 - c. Given anti-individualism, premise (2) seems true,
- yet
- d. Given common assumptions about empirical knowledge, (EA)'s conclusion seems false.

Since all these claims seem equally plausible, but certainly inconsistent, how could we decide which one should go? Let's first consider whether the argument that generates this paradox requires some assumptions we need not make.

3. The Incompatibilists' Assumptions

Would it be plausible to dispute the validity of the incompatibilist's argument? Clearly, (EA) is valid if

- A₁ There is a closure principle guaranteeing the transmission of epistemic status from (EA)'s premises to its conclusion.

And the incompatibilist holds, of course, that there is such a principle--viz., a principle sanctioning conditionals of

this form:

CP If S knows a priori that p and that p entails q, then S knows a priori that q.

If (CP) is what the above argument requires, then the incompatibilist could maintain that, although closure principles in general are not fully vindicated, his (CP) merely sanctions the rule that a priori knowledge is closed under **known** entailment. And this closure principle is indeed comparatively weaker and less controversial than other closure principles, and prima facie plausible. Therefore, to argue against such a principle seems an uphill battle. I submit that (until further discussion) we are better off acknowledging the following:⁷

A₁* If the closure principle guaranteeing the transmission of epistemic status from (EA)'s premises to its conclusion is (CP), then that inference seems valid.

But the incompatibilist's argument would in fact be unsound if he fails to sustain this other assumption:

A₂ **Both** self-ascriptive beliefs about one's own thought-contents **and** anti-individualist theory are knowable a priori.

⁷ More on the closure principle required by the incompatibilist's argument in Chap. 4.

For suppose that we find reasons to maintain that self-ascriptive beliefs about one's own thought-contents are empirical beliefs, or that anti-individualist theory is, like chemistry, knowable only a posteriori. Then, surely, if Oscar could deduce some empirical propositions from premises, one of which at least is a posteriori, then his deduced empirical propositions would **not** be a priori!⁸

Yet, given the incompatibilist's notion of a priori knowledge discussed above, we have found that self-ascriptive beliefs about one's own thought-contents **and** anti-individualist theory are **both** knowable a priori in some sense. But if there is a sense in which (A₂) seems true, we are better off (again) questioning another assumption required by the entailment argument:

A₃ The anti-individualistic entailment of someone's thinking that water is wet is a substantial empirical proposition.

Anti-individualists have, in fact, argued against assumptions such as (A₃), holding that, on their theory, the empirical proposition entailed by one's thinking that water is wet is not as substantial as the incompatibilist seems to think.⁹ On the other hand, we have found that, to avoid arguments such as McKinsey's trivialization argument, anti-individualists must

⁸ See, for instance, S. Kripke (1971).

⁹ See, for instance, A. Brueckner (1992).

hold that

Q The empirical propositions entailed by one's thought-contents are specifically related to such contents.

With this qualification, the empirical proposition entailed by Oscar's thinking that water is wet must certainly be more substantial than McKinsey's¹⁰

EP₁ Oscar's mother exists.

At the same time, the anti-individualistic empirical proposition entailed by Oscar's thought-contents could (but need not) be what the incompatibilist suggests--namely,

EP₂ Water exists.¹¹

Naturally, if this is in fact the anti-individualistic proposition entailed by Oscar's thought-contents, then, since (obviously) nobody can know a priori that water exists, and Oscar could deduce (EP₂) from his knowledge of those thought-contents, it appears that the entailment problem does arise after all. Yet some anti-individualists have denied this.¹² They take any such construal of the relevant entailments to be

¹⁰ See Chap. 2.

¹¹ P. Boghossian (1997: 166 et seq.) argues that this is precisely the "twin-earth" anti-individualist's entailment.

¹² See, for instance, T. Burge (1982a), A. Brueckner (1992), and C. Peacocke (1996).

too simplistic, and thus argue that the problem the incompatibilist has in mind **does not** actually arise.

We must, of course, examine the arguments on both sides to determine who's right in this debate. For our present purposes, however, it will be enough to note that, in order to generate the entailment problem, (EP) must be taken to be a substantial empirical proposition (though such a proposition could be weaker than (EP₂)). Consider, for example, the following candidate:

EP₃ Either (i) water exists, or
 (ii) Oscar theorizes that water
 exists, or (iii) Oscar is part
 of a community of speakers some
 of whom theorize that water
 exists.

We could ask, if the proposition entailed by one's thinking that water is wet were as in (EP₃), would compatibilists thereby be in the clear? It appears that this disjunction, although obviously weaker than (EP₂) and also consistent with the above proposed qualification (Q), is substantial enough to generate an entailment problem, since the claim that one could know (EP₃) a priori also seems unacceptable.¹³

But if the incompatibilist's assumptions are plausible,

¹³ That construing the entailed proposition as the above disjunction cannot help in solving the problem the incompatibilist has in mind is clear enough once we portray Oscar as having a thought involving a biological-kind concept such as "dog." Given physical anti-individualism and object-dependence, the entailed proposition must be cashed out as the proposition **that dogs exist**--which, clearly, no one could know a priori. More on this in Chap. 4.

how could we solve the paradox his argument generates? For recall that we do wish to hold both privileged self-knowledge and anti-individualism. We must, then, find a way to reject the incompatibilist's argument (EA). Let's look more closely at his strategies to defend (EA)'s premises.

4. A Priori Entailments?

The incompatibilist holds that, given anti-individualism, if one has certain thought-contents, then some empirical conditions obtain, **and** such entailments are available to the thinker entirely a priori. For, as we saw, if Oscar came to know that water exists, from premises some of which are knowable only a posteriori, then his knowledge claim would inherit the epistemic status of the premises--that is, it would also be a posteriori.¹⁴ Hence, unless the incompatibilist could show that it is possible to know both anti-individualist theory **and** one's own thought-contents entirely a priori, he could not mount his entailment argument.

¹⁴ That is, any incompatibilist attempt to substantiate premise (2) of the entailment argument must prove more than merely that, if anti-individualism is true, Oscar could deduce the relevant entailments from his knowledge of anti-individualist theory and his a priori knowledge of his own thought-contents. For even if Oscar could deduce these entailments, his knowledge of them would not thereby be a priori. Obviously, a deduced claim could qualify as a priori only if **all** the premises in the deduction were a priori! In what follows, charity requires that we assume that this is precisely what incompatibilists have in mind--even though this is not explicit in many of their arguments (e.g., M. McKinsey's (1991, 1994) and J. Brown's (1995) incompatibilist arguments). Otherwise, such arguments should, of course, be considered nothing more than ignoratio elenchi.

Here we shall consider how he could sustain the former--that is, that

- 2* It is possible that Oscar could come to know anti-individualist theory entirely a priori.¹⁵

In fact, we already suggested how to support a claim of this sort, for isn't it possible to know anti-individualist theory entirely on the basis of standard thought experiments? And don't those thought experiments afford knowledge that does not require any investigation of the environment? This seems to suggest how the incompatibilist must proceed if he wishes to argue for the aprioricity of anti-individualism. That is, he must first argue that Oscar could come to **know** anti-individualist theory by running standard thought experiments, and that these would make available to him the relevant anti-individualistic entailments of his thought-contents.

The incompatibilist, then, will contend that, since a priori knowledge is knowledge that does not require an investigation of the environment, such thought experiments clearly would afford Oscar a priori knowledge of the those anti-individualistic entailments--and thus, that (2*) would be thereby sustained.

But perhaps this conclusion is too hasty, for there may still be some moves compatibilists could make to show that

¹⁵ Obviously, that anti-individualism is knowable a priori is crucial for the incompatibilist assumption (A₂) discussed earlier.

standard thought experiments afford only a posteriori knowledge of anti-individualism. If any such move were successful, the above claim (2*) would, of course, be false, and the entailment problem would not arise. We shall now consider how Brueckner-inspired compatibilists might attempt a move in this direction.

First, take these compatibilists' task to be that of supporting:

- C Standard anti-individualist thought experiments afford only a posteriori knowledge of anti-individualism.

Second, assume that knowledge claims based on standard anti-individualist thought experiment are **inferential** claims--that is, that thought experiments are arguments devised to provide inferential support for a certain conclusion. Then, consider how the compatibilists' argument for (C) could run if they sought to elaborate on the following observation:

... it is hard to tell how much of anti-individualist theory is derived from a posteriori considerations. The theory tells us, quite generally, that in order for Oscar to have water-thoughts, there must be enough in Oscar's world (whatever it is like) to rule out the attribution to him of various 'twin' thoughts (such as twater-thoughts). Maybe this is knowable a priori if anti-individualism is true (though **there is a worry that the notion of a 'twin' thought is introduced in the course of thought experiments involving a posteriori considerations which concern chemical theory**).¹⁶

¹⁶ A. Brueckner (1992, 116-7). Emphasis mine.

Since we have taken thought experiments to be inferences, the compatibilist argument inspired by this passage could be represented as resting on the following principle:

B If an argument involves a posteriori considerations concerning an empirical theory, then the conclusions supported by any such argument are knowable only a posteriori.

Naturally, to decide about the plausibility of this principle we need to know how to cash out the "a posteriori considerations" involved in standard anti-individualist thought experiments. Yet, since such considerations come up in the course of **twin-earth** cases, it is reasonable to think that the a posteriori considerations compatibilists have in mind concern concepts of chemical theory about the composition of some natural kinds--for instance, H₂O and XYZ. But, if this is correct, then (B), the principle compatibilists need to run their argument, faces two objections.

First, suppose that (B) is cashed out as the claim that what is known through reasoning involving the **concepts** of an empirical theory is thereby knowable only a posteriori. Then such an unqualified principle (B) would be plainly false, for, as we suggested in Chapter Two, some trivial counterexamples of a priori reasoning "involving a posteriori considerations which concern chemical theory" would falsify that principle. The following trivial inference--which clearly involves such considerations, but nonetheless is in some sense a priori--

would be a counterexample to the unqualified principle (B):

- TI 1. Water is H₂O.
3. Therefore,
It is not the case that water
is not H₂O.¹⁷

Second, suppose that what compatibilists really have in mind in the above passage is that to run a twin-earth thought experiment we need a posteriori considerations of chemical theory concerning the composition of a natural kind. But under this interpretation the compatibilist claim would also turn out to be false, since the anti-individualist himself could offer many counterexamples to it--the famous Putnamian "aluminum/molybdenum" thought experiment being perhaps the most familiar.¹⁸

Since I cannot see any other possible interpretation of the Brueckner-inspired compatibilist argument to support (C), I conclude that this attempt to show that thought experiments afford only a posteriori knowledge of anti-individualism is unsound--since it seems to be based on an unqualified principle (B) which turned out to be false.

But perhaps there is still another move to defend (C). We shall now consider how such a move could be made.

¹⁷ More on this in Chap. 4.

¹⁸ Clearly, to run this thought experiment we need not refer to the chemical composition of such substances--that is, to a posteriori considerations concerning chemical theory. See, for instance, T. Burge's (1982b) version of this thought experiment.

5. An Appeal to Ordinary Belief-Ascriptions

Let us now consider another attempt--partially suggested by Gary Ebbs (1997)--to show that anti-individualist theory could be known only a posteriori. Call it the "appeal to ordinary belief-ascriptions," and take it to consist in the following argument:

- OBA
1. Anti-individualist theory is based on common intuitions about our practices of belief-ascription.
 2. Our practices of belief-ascription are knowable only a posteriori.
- Therefore,
3. Anti-individualist theory is knowable only a posteriori.

Clearly, since how speakers ordinarily attribute propositional attitudes with certain contents is an a posteriori matter, we accept the second premise of this argument without controversy. The compatibilist could now reach his conclusions if he can show that anti-individualist theory is based on a posteriori beliefs about propositional-attitude attributions--i.e., if he can support premise (1). To do this, he first notes that ordinary practices of propositional-attitude ascription always presuppose "some background or other of 'empirical' beliefs."¹⁹ He then argues that

... the anti-individualist **starts** by taking at face value our ordinary judgments about what speakers

¹⁹ See G. Ebbs (1996: 508).

believe, what they are talking about, and when they agree or disagree with each other.... The anti-individualist's thought experiments clarify our understanding of such ordinary belief attributions.²⁰

Suppose the maneuver now consists in arguing that, since there are some relations between anti-individualist theory and a posteriori beliefs about ordinary propositional-attitude ascriptions, therefore the former is also knowable a posteriori. But whether such an argument could succeed depends upon exactly what are the relevant relations between anti-individualism and ordinary propositional-attitude attributions. How are we to construe those relations?

We might first recall that ordinary propositional-attitude attributions are invoked in the course of arguing that anti-individualism does not generate an epistemic problem for self-knowledge. As we have seen, this would be so if anti-individualism were knowable only a posteriori, which is what compatibilists who subscribe to the above argument have in mind. Yet to be able to sustain that claim with considerations of this sort, they must take the relation between anti-individualism and our beliefs about ordinary propositional-attitude attributions to be a **basin**g relation--that is, they must be holding that the former is based on the latter, as premise (1) of the above argument maintains. But how is the based-on relation cashed out to get the desired conclusion?

²⁰ G. Ebbs (1997: 256). Emphasis mine.

That is, in which sense, if any, is anti-individualist theory based on ordinary belief-ascriptions?

Anti-individualists generally assume that that-clauses in ordinary propositional-attitude attributions are the correct vehicle for identifying the content of propositional attitudes.²¹ In addition, as we saw in Chapter One, consistency with intuitions about ordinary attributions of propositional attitudes seems to be a reason that favors anti-individualism as a theory of propositional-attitude content over its rival.²² But if our beliefs about such attributions constitute a reason or premise for anti-individualism, it follows that the based-on relation mentioned above must be understood as being inferential.²³

Yet even if ordinary belief-ascriptions provided a reason in support of anti-individualist theories of content, the appeal to the former falls short of showing that anti-individualism is knowable only a posteriori. For suppose, first, that someone sincerely says:

S If dogs are carnivorous, then
 dogs are carnivorous.

²¹ See T. Burge (1986a).

²² Recall that we accepted the intuition that meaning and content are analogous, and thus, that linguistic reports of what one sincerely says and other reports of what one believes are related. Surely a theory that can accommodate this intuition is better than one that cannot. For a different view on this, see B. Loar (1988).

²³ However, it does **not**, of course, follow from these considerations that those beliefs **entail** anti-individualism.

Assuming that the speaker is sincere and means what he says, we could certainly ascribe to him the belief in the proposition expressed by this conditional.²⁴ Our propositional-attitude report would then be as follows:

BA That speaker believes that, if dogs are carnivorous, then dogs are carnivorous.

Since the question of whether any actual propositional-attitude ascription of this sort is true is (uncontroversially) an a posteriori matter, any theory about how speakers **actually** ascribe such attitudes would also be a posteriori. One may be tempted to conclude, therefore, that anti-individualist theory is also a posteriori.

But this seems wrong, for anti-individualism is not a theory about particular belief-ascriptions--that is, about the actual contents of individual minds. Given that anti-individualism has a general import, what it tells us (in general) about particular belief-ascriptions such as (BA) is that, for someone having a propositional attitude with that content, some external conditions must obtain. For instance, the speaker must have been in (causal) contact with dogs, or with other speakers having the concept, "dog." Hence, in the case under discussion, the question anti-individualists would ask is not how speakers **actually** ascribe propositional

²⁴ Such a proposition is, of course, in some sense knowable a priori. More on this in Chap. 4.

attitudes such as (BA). Since they wish to establish the correct supervenience claim for propositional attitudes with that content, they would rather ask: What external conditions must obtain if someone is to have the propositional attitude of

PA Believing that if dogs are
carnivorous, then dogs are
carnivorous,

instead of

PA* Believing that if twogs are
carnivorous, then twogs are
carnivorous?

I submit that anti-individualism concerns the latter, rather than actual, ordinary ascriptions of propositional attitudes. Hence, we could appeal to ordinary belief-ascriptions if we wished to argue that particular belief-ascriptions are knowable only a posteriori, though such an appeal would fail to show that anti-individualism has that epistemic status.

I conclude that the assumption (2*), required by one of the premises of the entailment argument, is now shown to be plausible--that is, that anti-individualist theory is in fact knowable a priori. If my case for the plausibility of this assumption is sound, then Oscar could come to know anti-individualist theory by conceptual analysis and thought experiments--both accepted forms of a priori knowledge. He could thereby **deduce** the empirical conditions that (according to anti-individualism) must hold if he is having a thought

with a certain content. And what is deduced from a priori premises would, of course, also be a priori.

But this conclusion wants some arguing, for the incompatibilist has made some further assumptions here, and these must be defended.

6. Empirical Conditions

That Oscar could come to know anti-individualism a priori is, we have seen, a plausible assumption. Yet anti-individualists may concede this assumption, and still insist that the entailment problem does not arise unless some further claims could be made out. As we have seen, the incompatibilist must also support that

- A₃ The anti-individualistic entailment of someone's thinking that water is wet is a substantial empirical proposition.

And whether this could be supported at all depends on **exactly what** the consequents of the anti-individualists' entailments are to be, when, for instance, the antecedent states that someone has a mental property with the content that water is wet. The incompatibilist's favorite candidate, of course, is:²⁵

EP₂ Water exists.

²⁵ See, for instance, P. Boghossian (1997).

For, surely, if other incompatibilist assumptions could be made out (including the further, very plausible claim that nobody can know a priori that water exists), (EP₂) would generate the entailment problem. Yet anti-individualists²⁶ insist that it is too simplistic to cash out the consequents of their entailments as (EP₂). To determine who's right, we must first see why (EP₂) could be thought the suitable consequent for the anti-individualists' entailment.

Consider the following principle:

C If one has never been in contact with natural kind k, one could not have the natural-kind concept k.

Now if anti-individualists are in fact committed to (C), then it would seem that they are thereby committed also to (EP₂). But must they hold (C)? For P. Boghossian they must: "...[I]f Twin Earth externalism is true, then contact with water is required for possession of the concept water," he insists.²⁷ Naturally, as it stands, this is just a claim--but perhaps there are good reasons for it.

Before considering what these might be, it should be recalled that some anti-individualists do seem to endorse (C), at least for meaning and reference. Putnam, for instance, maintains that "one cannot refer to certain kinds of things,

²⁶ See T. Burge (1982a), and A. Brueckner (1992).

²⁷ P. Boghossian (1997: 167).

e.g., trees, if one has no causal interaction at all with them."²⁸ And Davidson appears to adopt a similar view, when he proposes the Swampman thought experiment:

My replica can't recognize my friends; it can't recognize anything, since it never cognized anything in the first place. It can't know my friends names (though of course it seems to), it can't remember my house. **It can't mean what I do by the word 'house'**, for example, since the sound 'house' it makes was not learned in a context that would give it the right meaning--or any meaning at all. **Indeed, I don't see how my replica can be said to mean anything by the sounds it makes, nor to have any thoughts.**²⁹

The question of whether or not Burge endorses (C)³⁰ is more difficult, since he introduces social factors in the determination of content. Moreover, Burge has been very cautious on this issue, explicitly rejecting any commitment to (EP₂). Rather than pursue this question, however, I shall discuss whether anti-individualism as defined in Chapter One entails (C).³¹

First, let's consider what reasons one might have for holding (C). Suppose that it is a **plain fact** that,

²⁸ H. Putnam (1981: 16).

²⁹ D. Davidson (1987: 443-4). Emphasis mine.

³⁰ See T. Burge (1982a).

³¹ Perhaps some of the anti-individualist's own cases, such as Davidson's "Swampman" or Putnam's "brain in a vat," could provide counterexamples to a claim along (C)'s lines. For an argument to that effect, see E. Sosa (1993).

PF For **most** natural-kind concepts one possesses, one has them owing to one's having been in (causal) contact with the corresponding natural kinds.

Of course, conclusions such as those suggested above by Putnam and Davidson do not follow from (PF). Similarly, it is clear that (PF), even if correct (as I believe it is) would not entail (C), for it does not follow from (PF) that one **must always** have (causal) contact with a natural kind in order to have the concept of it. Obviously, (PF) is consistent with the case of someone's having the concept of a natural kind because he is theorizing about it, having had no causal contact with it.³² Moreover, the strong intuition that cases of this sort are possible makes it difficult to imagine what reasons there could be for holding (C)--which is clearly inconsistent with that intuition. I submit that this does in fact amount to a reason for not subscribing to (C).

And there is another reason why anti-individualists are better off without such a claim: viz., the obvious fact that, given (C), the consequents of many entailments from thought-contents to the world are going to be like (EP₂)--thus generating an entailment problem for those who wish to hold both (C) and privileged self-knowledge. Hence anti-individualists seem to have two significant reasons against (C).

³² See Chap. 2.

But perhaps it could also be shown that such reasons against (C) represent bad news for anti-individualists, for they may be committed to holding that, for instance, some contact with water is required for Oscar to acquire the concept water--that is, that they may, after all, be committed to (C)! In fact, Paul Boghossian (1997) is among those who argue that anti-individualists have no choice but to adopt such a claim. For, in their standard thought experiments, the "functional duplicates" Oscar and twin-Oscar do have the concepts water and twin-water respectively. And, given that ex hypothesi these characters are "chemically indifferent," how could they have those concepts if they had not had contact with the corresponding substances? Boghossian's point is that, in the absence of contact with those substances--and given that these characters do not know the exact chemical compositions of the referents of their concepts--they would fail to be the exact functional duplicates required by the thought experiments.³³ Hence, anti-individualists who run twin-earth thought experiments (henceforth, "twin-earth anti-individualists") are committed to saying that, if Oscar has the concept water, then (given that ignorance is required) he must have had contact with water.

But now we face a different problem: Must any anti-individualist actually be a twin-earth anti-individualist? If we assume that this label applies to Burge, then the argument

³³ P. Boghossian (1997: 166).

looks like a petitio principii. For Burge requires only that the protagonists of the thought experiments be in identical internal states **non-intentionally and individualistically described**. Now suppose that Earth and twin-Earth are dry planets, so that neither Oscar nor twin-Oscar could have ever been in contact with water or with twin-water. Then the Burgean could simply hold that we assume that each protagonist has the concept (or theorizes about) water and twin-water respectively, provided that there is enough (i.e., other entities) in their environments to ground these concepts. We can suppose that each protagonist entertains various mental states, which he would express with the sounds, "There is some water within twenty miles," "I hope water quenches thirst," and the like, and that the mental states each protagonist thereby expresses interact with other states of his and produce output behavior, bodily motions, etc. that are identical for both protagonists--where these are "identical" **non-intentionally and individualistically described**. The protagonists would then still be the exact internal duplicates required by standard anti-individualist thought experiments. Burgean thought experiments first require us to suppose that the protagonists are physically, behaviorally, phenomenally, and (on some formulations) functionally identical in their inner states, when these are non-intentionally and individualistically described.

Yet the Burgean could then hold (as Burge himself does)

that, when these states are intentionally described (i.e., when we ascribe contents to them), the contents of the states each protagonist is having differs in virtue of relevant differences in their social or physical environments.³⁴ Moreover, this does not seem to entail that, assuming the protagonists are chemically ignorant, if they do have the concepts water and twin-water without contact with the corresponding substances (say, because they are theorizing), their inner states non-intentionally and individualistically described would be functionally different.³⁵

I submit, then, that we still need another argument to show that anti-individualism entails (C); and that in the absence of such an argument, we could still construe this theory as being able to accommodate the case of someone's having a natural-kind concept because he is theorizing about a certain natural kind (without having had contact with that natural kind, or with speakers who have the concept of it).

I shall now argue that anti-individualists would indeed be committed to claiming that contact with water is a

³⁴ As Burge puts it: "... the contents of Adam and Adam_{te}'s beliefs and thoughts differ while every feature of their non-intentionally and individualistically described physical, behavioural, dispositional, and phenomenal histories remains the same. ...The difference in their mental states and events seems to be a product primarily of differences in their physical environments, mediated by differences in their social environments--in the mental states of their fellows and conventional meanings of words they and their fellows employ." (1982a: 102)

³⁵ See, for instance, T. Burge (1982a: 99-100).

necessary condition of Oscar's having the concept water, if they were to assume (as Boghossian's twin-earth anti-individualist does) that

TEA All concepts are individuated
in terms of their referents.³⁶

This is, of course, a strong object-dependence thesis. And as we saw in Chapter One, the anti-individualist supervenience claim per se does not entail such a thesis, for it is clear that there are causal theorists who **could consistently** deny (TEA) and be anti-individualists about content--for instance, neo-Fregeans. But if this is correct, then it is surely a mistake to represent anti-individualists (in general) as holding (TEA). For then, Boghossian's reasons for thinking that anti-individualists must hold (C) have no force to mount an objection against all forms of anti-individualism. (And, obviously, if the scope of that objection is not restricted, it would be at best a straw man.)

I conclude that there are no good reasons to take (EP₂) as the paradigm of the consequents of the anti-individualists' entailments, unless we construe anti-individualism as the thesis that **all** concepts are individuated in terms of their referents.³⁷

³⁶ For Boghossian (1997, n. 4), "'x' individuates 'y'" if "if the value of 'x' has been different, the value of 'y' would have been different."

³⁷ More on this in Chap. 4.

But what, then, should those consequents be for anti-individualists who do not subscribe to (TEA)? In the discussion of the metaphysical-interpretation solution,³⁸ I suggested the following as a first approximation:

EP₃ Either (i) water exists, or (ii) Oscar theorizes that water exists, or (iii) Oscar is part of a community of speakers some of whom theorize that water exists.

Yet (EP₃) does not capture the worst-case scenario that may generate the entailment problem when anti-individualism is held in conjunction with privileged self-knowledge--and, accordingly, it should be modified.

For note that, if (EP₃) were the suitable entailed proposition for anti-individualists, it could perhaps be argued that, since its consequent is in part about Oscar and in part about the world, the entailment problem fails to arise. Now the argument is that, even if Oscar could know (EP₃) a priori, this would not be a problem, because "knowledge that the consequent obtains does not constitute knowledge that the environment of the subject must be some way."³⁹ But does (EP₃) really help anti-individualists out of their predicament?

³⁸ For stronger candidates, see A. Brueckner (1992), J. Brown (1995) and P. Boghossian (1997). My version of the entailment was suggested in Chap. 2.

³⁹ J. Brown (1995: n.4, 151). See also T. Burge (1982a) and A. Brueckner (1992).

Hardly, since although anti-individualists could claim that a priori knowledge of (EP_3) is very underdetermined, this (though correct) seems to beg the question against incompatibilism. And it is clear that many, including Burge, would rather avoid a theory with the consequence that something like (EP_3) is knowable a priori. For even if the a priori knowledge afforded by anti-individualism is partly about the subject and partly about the world, anti-individualism and self-knowledge would again face the entailment problem.

Moreover, the incompatibilist could concede that consequents such as (EP_3) make it more difficult to raise a problem for anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge, yet insist that anti-individualists are committed to stronger consequents. For instance, one could argue that proposition (ii) should not be included in the consequent. Oscar could surely come to know (ii) a priori, since any person could tell whether or not he has a certain concept, because he is theorizing about the referent of that concept. Naturally, one could know a priori whether or not one is theorizing about something!

In short, what the incompatibilist has in mind when he attempts to raise the entailment problem are cases where Oscar can deduce that either (i) or (iii) in the disjunctive consequent obtains. And this will be, for instance, when Oscar's natural-kind concept has not arisen through theorizing

about the corresponding natural kind. If this is correct, then the paradigm of the entailment that could raise incompatibility problems for privileged self-knowledge is

- 1 It is necessary that, if Oscar has the concept "water," and he is not theorizing about water, then either (i) water exists, or (ii) Oscar is part of a community of speakers some of whom theorize that water exists.

Surely if Oscar could know entailments of this sort a priori, given privileged self-knowledge, perhaps he could also know a priori the antecedent of such entailments. But then he could deduce their consequents--a process that would, of course, also be a priori. It appears, then, that the question of whether or not Oscar theorizes about a natural kind he has never been in contact with, is altogether irrelevant for the actual entailment problem envisioned by the incompatibilist.

Finally, there are other modifications that should be introduced in the anti-individualist entailment. I have argued⁴⁰ that anti-individualism is not a doctrine about the particular contents of individual minds--and that a fortiori anti-individualism is not a thesis about the particular contents of Oscar's mind (more on this later). Rather, anti-individualist theses concern the individuation of mental-state and -event types, and so have a general import that should be

⁴⁰ See Chap. 2.

captured in the entailment used to raise the incompatibilist's problem.

Moreover, the anti-individualists' theses have no general scope,⁴¹ since anti-individualism is the denial of individualism--and for this one need only show that **some** mental properties supervene externally. In fact, anti-individualists⁴² have taken great care to limit the scope of their theses, since they don't wish their views to be conflated with a thesis about reference.⁴³ Although some have worried that anti-individualist thought experiments could be devised for almost **any** concept,⁴⁴ anti-individualists themselves intend their theses to apply only to mental properties containing specific types of concepts--e.g., natural- and biological-kind concepts and some artifact and proper-name concepts.

What, then, should the consequent of the anti-individualistic entailment be if the antecedent asserts that a subject has a thought involving a natural kind concept k? I suggest that it should be

EP₄ Either (i) k exists, or (ii) x is part of a community of speakers some of whom theorize about k.

⁴¹ See Chap. 1.

⁴² See, for instance, Burge (1982a), and M. Davies (1996a).

⁴³ T. Burge emphasizes this point in "Other Bodies."

⁴⁴ See, for instance, J. Kim (1997).

I submit that (EP₄) is weaker than other candidates, but not weak enough to provide a way around the entailment problem for compatibilists who wish to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge.

7. The Quick Resolution

We have seen that the entailment problem rests on some assumptions that seem true. The incompatibilist has made it initially plausible that anti-individualism can be known a priori, and that Oscar's thinking that water is wet entails a substantial empirical proposition knowable only a posteriori. But the entailment problem does not arise unless a further claim can be made out:

E Anti-individualist entailments
 from thought-contents to
 environmental conditions can be
 known a priori.

Among incompatibilists who attempt to support a claim of this sort is Paul Boghossian (1997). He holds that, if "twin-earth" anti-individualism is true, then

TE Oscar could know a priori that
 if he has the concept water,
 then water exists.

But (TE), together with the other premise of the entailment argument--viz., that Oscar can know a priori whether or not he has a certain concept--implies that Oscar could know a priori that water exists. And, given the plausible assumption that

nobody can know a priori that water exists, the incompatibilist appears to have a reductio of the attempt to hold both doctrines, anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge.

But, given these doctrines, we must now ask in which sense, if any, is the epistemic claim made by (TE) true? Obviously, this is a specific epistemic claim about the anti-individualistic implication of Oscar's having the concept water. Yet it seems reasonable to think that the conflict the incompatibilist has in mind is not about the particular case of an individual's having the concept "water," but has a more general import. Arguably, the incompatibilist holds that, given those doctrines, the anti-individualistic implications of someone's having **any** mental property involving some types of concepts are knowable a priori.⁴⁵ To capture this import of the claim, we recast (TE) to include at least natural-kind concepts:

TE* Oscar could know a priori that if he has a natural-kind concept k, then the natural kind k exists.

But now anti-individualists could try this "quick" reply:

QR (TE*) is false, since nobody can know its antecedent a priori.

⁴⁵ Since (TE) is suggested in the course of a discussion of Putnamian twin-earth thought experiments, the incompatibilist probably maintains that similar entailments hold any time the antecedent states that a subject has a mental property involving a natural-kind concept.

It is clear that nobody can know a priori whether or not **any** of his concepts is a natural-kind concept--unless, of course, **all** concepts were natural-kind concepts, but that seems a position unlikely to find adherents.

Furthermore, charity seems to require that we construe the anti-individualists' entailments as in the more general embedded sentence in (TE*). And once such entailments are so construed, then it appears that a move such as (QR), which seems available to anti-individualists, could solve the entailment problem. To support such a move, anti-individualists could certainly insist that, although a person **may think** he has a natural-kind concept, he might be mistaken about its referent, or about whether or not the concept is a natural-kind concept at all. For instance, suppose I mistakenly think that I have the natural-kind concept "jade," when in fact it refers to two different kinds.⁴⁶ Would it then make sense to claim that

TE₁ I know a priori that if I have
the natural-kind concept
"jade," then jade exists?

Or I might mistakenly believe that I have the natural-kind concept ether, when what I in fact have is a non-natural-kind empty concept! Again, would it make sense to claim that

TE₂ I know a priori that if I have
the natural-kind concept
"ether," then ether exists?

⁴⁶ Namely, jadeite and nephrite. See H. Putnam (1975).

Anti-individualists appear to be in a position to invoke considerations of this sort to argue, first, that whether or not a certain concept can be known to be a natural-kind concept depends on investigations of the environment or of how other speakers use that concept--and thus that nobody could know instances of (TE*) a priori, because their antecedents are knowable only a posteriori. Moreover, anti-individualists could add that, whether or not a person is **mistaken** about the application conditions of a concept is an empirical question, and thus similarly knowable only a posteriori. If all these considerations are correct, then it appears that, under some construal, the theses of anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge do not entail that one could know empirical propositions a priori.

The incompatibilist's rejoinder to this move could be that of introducing social anti-individualism into the discussion, and recasting the relevant entailments as follows:

- R Oscar knows a priori that if he has a concept "c," then he has been in contact either with instances of c, and "c" is a natural-kind concept, or with other speakers having the concept "c," whether or not "c" is a natural kind concept.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ This is inspired by Brown's (1995: 154-5) candidate for the entailment, which is "Necessarily, if x has a thought involving concept c, and x is agnostic about the application conditions of c, then either x is in an environment which contains instances of c and c is a natural kind concept, or x is part of a community which has the concept c, whether or not c is a natural kind concept."

This seems to allow the incompatibilist to avoid the above objection, since now the requirement that the concept be a natural-kind concept has been dropped. So it appears that such a paradigm of the entailments could provide all the incompatibilist needs to raise the entailment problem.⁴⁸ But it is easy to see that (R) cannot deliver what it promises.

Consider the following thought experiment. Suppose Oscar lives on a planet that contains many liquids other than water, that he has never been in contact with water, and that no one in his community has the concept "water." Oscar, however, theorizes about a colorless, odorless, drinkable liquid that he calls "water." He sincerely reports his mental states by uttering "There is water somewhere in this galaxy," "I hope it quenches thirst," and the like. He predicts that this liquid is a compound of other substances, such oxygen and hydrogen, but wonders how many molecules of each would be required for water--that is, he is agnostic about the application conditions of the concept water. (Yet, as the anti-individualist requires,⁴⁹ he does know enough to rule out other candidates for water--for instance, XYZ).⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Note that we assume here that Oscar can know his thought-contents a priori. More on this later.

⁴⁹ See T. Burge (1982a).

⁵⁰ We can imagine that Oscar knows the table of elements and rules out any candidate for water whose chemical composition does not contain elements from this table. (I am aware of some difficulties in this suggestion, but I think the anti-individualist might be able to solve them. More on this later.)

I believe anti-individualists could invoke cases of this sort to argue that their theory does not have the consequence envisioned by the incompatibilist. To do this, they could maintain that the entailment now ascribed to them--namely, (R)--is false, since the waterless-earth case provides a counterexample to it: in the waterless-earth case

a. Its antecedent turns out to be true--Oscar has thoughts involving the concept "water,"

but

b. Its consequent turns out to be false--**ex hypothesi** Oscar is not in an environment containing instances of water or part of a community that has the concept "water" (whether or not "water" is a natural-kind concept).

In light of the waterless-earth thought experiment, the incompatibilist (R) should be modified in the following way:

R* Oscar could **know** that if he has a concept "c," and c is not a theoretical concept with no referent in his environment, then he has been in contact with instances of c and "c" is a natural-kind concept, or with other speakers having the concept "c," whether or not "c" is a natural kind concept.

But it is now clear that (R*) is too weak to generate the entailment problem, for there is condition in its antecedent knowable only a posteriori--namely, that c is not a

theoretical concept with no referent in Oscar's environment. Anti-individualists are certainly not committed to the claim that one can know a priori whether any of one's own concepts is a theoretical concept lacking a referent in one's environment!

8. Is The Quick Resolution a Solution?

The incompatibilist, however, might still construe the anti-individualists' entailments on the model of (R) if only he could further argue that anti-individualists cannot accommodate the waterless-earth example in the way suggested above. But in the absence of such reasons, anti-individualists can insist that any argument based on ascribing to them a claim they do not actually hold--viz., that one can know a priori entailments on the model of (R)--is nothing more than a straw man.

But suppose, for instance,

a. That anti-individualists do hold, as some seem to think, an object-dependence thesis,⁵¹

and

b. That instead of having a natural-kind concept "water," Oscar is having a thought involving the biological-kind concept "dog."

⁵¹ More on this in Chap. 4. See also P. Boghossian (1997).

Then it is difficult to see how the quick-resolution move could help these anti-individualists out of the entailment problem, for now it appears that we must construe their position as entailing that contact with dogs is required for having the concept "dog." It seems, then, that if we hope to save these anti-individualists from the entailment problem, we must try some other move. But first let us consider another difficulty that might arise for the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge.

9. A Puzzle for Anti-Individualism

Perhaps the incompatibility problem discussed so far is just a puzzle that arises when one realizes that some semantic relations (reference, content, etc.) are externally determined. For how could it then be that one has first-person authority over one's own reflexive judgments about those relations? According to Loar (1992), this is the puzzle facing those who wish to ascribe two conflicting properties to first-person, reflexive judgments about semantic relations--namely,

- a. the "epistemic" property of being a priori (where "a priori" means "not open to doubt on external grounds"),⁵²

and

⁵² For brevity, "being/not being open to doubt on external grounds" will sometimes be a posteriori/a priori (the latter taken provisionally to mean knowledge that does not require investigation of the environment).

- b. the "counterfactual" property of involving an externally (causally, socially, etc.) determined contingent relation.⁵³

Assume that self-ascriptive beliefs about what one means, or refers to, have (a) and that relations such as meaning or reference have (b). These properties appear to be at odds, for if a judgment has the former it would not be open to doubt on external grounds, yet if it has the latter, it would be. To see the puzzle, consider the following judgment:

1. Given that Yeltsin exists, "Yeltsin," as I am now using that name, refers to Yeltsin.

Except for the "existence presupposition," (1) seems to have both properties, which obviously leads to contradictory epistemic claims. Contrast (1) with these other first-person judgments:

2. Given that Esau exists, I begat Esau,

and

3. Given that my eldest son exists, I begat my eldest son.

⁵³ That first-person judgments about semantic relations have these properties is (for Loar) supported by the first-person experience, and by standard thought experiments respectively.

Is (1) similar to (3), which is trivially a priori, or to (2), which is not? Let's first consider why (2) and (3) seem to differ in epistemic status. According to Loar, the concept "my eldest son" in (3), unlike "Esau" in (2), describes or "conceives" something as relevantly related to oneself.⁵⁴ To capture this difference, he proposes the following Principle of External Doubt:

EDP Suppose the term\concept X does not conceive its object as 'thing that is R to me' or the like. Then, if the term\concept R conceives the relation it stands for as externally determined, the judgment
Given that X exists, I am R to X
is coherently open to doubt on external grounds.⁵⁵

Now the claim is that (3) does not fall under (EDP), while (2)

⁵⁴ B. Loar (1992: 55).

⁵⁵ B. Loar (1992: 56). Some problems arise when one tries to understand (EDP): Is "X" a term/concept, as (EDP) declares at the beginning, or an object, as "Given that X exists, I am R to X" suggests at the end? And to what, exactly, is the property of being a posteriori predicated? Loar's puzzle suggests that what is a posteriori is whether a certain external relation between a concept and an object--e.g., reference--obtains. But (EDP) predicates this property of reflexive judgments of reference, and in order to evaluate examples and counterexamples to (EDP) it is important to establish whether this epistemic property is assigned to **relations** or to **judgments about relations**. The relevance of this is illustrated by Loar's own examples: To what, for instance, is the property of "not being open to doubt on external grounds" applied in example (3)? Since it cannot be to the relation 'x begets y' (which is open to doubt on external grounds), it must be to the judgment about the relation.

does. And what about (1)? Since it contains "Yeltsin," which is not a definite description, it cannot be construed on the model of (3).⁵⁶ It would then appear that (1) also falls under (EDP)--that is, (1) seems open to doubt on external grounds. But this conflicts with our first-person intuition about the aprioricity of (1). Hence judgments of this sort generate at least a prima facie puzzle for anti-individualism.

10. The Puzzle Dissolved

According to Loar, to resolve the puzzle we rely on (EDP) and on a certain phenomenology of the semantic relation in question. In the case of the reference-relation of "socially deferential" proper names, the description (from the first-person perspective) should run as follows:

...[socially deferential proper names are] **reflexively constrained** by a distinctive relation, a socially mediated relation between a token-use (by me) of a name N and an object Q: in producing this token of N I draw on its use by a certain group of speakers, and they use N to refer to Q.⁵⁷

It is suggested that similar constraints apply to other categories of concepts (natural-kind concepts, demonstrative concepts, etc.). The connection between each category and a specific relational concept would be such that I could not say that a certain object **exists**, but that it is not in one or the

⁵⁶ See B. Loar (1992: 57-8).

⁵⁷ B. Loar (1992: 66). Emphasis mine.

other of these categorical relations to my concept-token.⁵⁸ According to Loar, people have some intuitive understanding of these concept-object relations, which he takes to be a demonstrative notion of the relation which holds between open-ended concept-object pairs (this thought/that tree, etc.).⁵⁹

But how does this bear on the anti-individualist puzzle? Consider the following example:

4. Given that that tree exists, my thought, "That tree is an oak," was about that tree.

Assume that all demonstratives in (4) are conceptually linked, and that the demonstrative concept in the object-level thought 'that tree' has the implication of 'the tree that is Rmem to me'--where Rmem is the externally determined ("visual-memory") relation that corresponds to this type of demonstrative concept.⁶⁰ Then, according to Loar, the following conceptual implications hold:

- (i) 'that thought is Rmem to that tree' conceptually implies 'that thought refers to, is about, that tree,'

⁵⁸ For instance, I could not consistently think "Sarah Bernhardt played Phedre" and at the same time deny that my concept-token "Sarah Bernhardt" bears some external relation to Sarah Bernhardt. See B. Loar (1992: 57-8).

⁵⁹ Such a notion would itself be a "recognitional" demonstrative concept, something like "that relation." See B. Loar (1992: 65-66).

⁶⁰ This is drawn from a description theory (considered by Loar implausible in itself).

and

- (ii) 'that tree exists' conceptually implies 'that thought is Rmem to that tree.'⁶¹

In Loar's view, these provide the solution to the puzzle, for (i) and (ii) together with the "existence presupposition," explain why (4) is not open to doubt on external grounds, even when it involves the externally determined relation of reference.

But before even considering this phenomenology (or any other), we must settle on the question of whether or not there actually is a puzzle of the sort Loar has found here. I shall argue that there isn't, and thus that, even if a phenomenology of externally determined concepts like Loar's turned out to be plausible, it is not needed to solve any problem between anti-individualism and self-knowledge.

Why, in the first place, should we think that there is a puzzle facing anti-individualism? Recall that the puzzle is whether the anti-individualist can consistently ascribe to judgments such as (1) properties (a) and (b)--respectively, the property of being a priori, and the property of involving an externally (causally, socially, etc.) determined contingent relation. The anti-individualist may be forgiven for wondering

⁶¹ According to Loar, "conceptual implication" is a relation where to conjoin the proposition on the left-hand side with a denial of the proposition on the right-hand side would be contradictory.

why this is puzzling, for he will soon discover that (a) and (b) constitute a "puzzle" only because the following assumptions are also made:

c. The concept-token "Yeltsin"--as I use it in my thought or language--might not have referred to Yeltsin,

and

d. Externally determined contingent relations cannot be known a priori.

The anti-individualist could concede (a) and (b)--given privileged self-knowledge and his own doctrine, respectively--but deny these other claims. Against (c), he could reason as follows. Contrast (c) with

c* The syntactic token "Yeltsin"--as I use it in my thought or language--might not have referred to Yeltsin.

(Where any string of sounds or marks is a "syntactic token.")

That **reference** is a contingent relation is consistent with either (c) or (c*), but, given a widely held Kripkean intuition about the reference of proper names, the latter is to be preferred. In fact, if that intuition is accepted, then the following remarks suggest that reference is indeed contingent in the sense of (c*):

There are worlds in which (our) Yeltsin exists and in which 'Yeltsin' as I use it does not refer to Yeltsin. But at the same time I cannot coherently

suppose--if I conceive the matter in the manner of (1)--that the actual world might be among them.⁶²

Otherwise, we would have to understand this passage as saying that a token of the proper-name **term/concept** "Yeltsin" (in a world in which Yeltsin exists) may have **failed** to refer to Yeltsin! And this is in conflict with our intuition about proper names being rigid designators, which we may suppose that anti-individualists, like many others, have accepted since Kripke (1972). According to that intuition, in a world in which Yeltsin exists, the **proper-name term/concept-token** "Yeltsin" refers to Yeltsin, because it refers to him in **all possible worlds** in which the referent of the proper-name term/concept exists.

If we took reference to be contingent in the sense of (c*), we could find many examples to illustrate Loar's remarks. A world in which (our) Yeltsin exists but my tokens of "Yeltsin" fail to refer to him would be, for instance, one in which I utter the sounds "Yeltsin" to refer to my cat (whether or not I also have the socially deferential term/concept "Yeltsin"). In this case, what has failed to refer to Yeltsin is not the concept, but the **syntactic token** "Yeltsin." I submit that it is in this sense that reference is a **contingent** relation--which is captured, of course, by (c*).

Now, what about anti-individualists? Should they take

⁶² B. Loar (1992: 52). Emphasis mine.

reference to be a contingent relation in the sense of (c) or of (c*)? To decide between these alternatives, we must look at standard, anti-individualist thought experiments--and these seem to support the weaker conclusion that, had the situation been different, my **syntactic token** "Yeltsin" might not have referred to Yeltsin. But how could that be?

Suppose my molecule-per-molecule replica inhabits a planet indistinguishable from Earth, except that its denizens use the expression "Yeltsin" to refer to Twin Yeltsin. Would my replica have the socially deferential concept "Yeltsin"--our Yeltsin? Hardly, for it seems that when he sincerely utters "I want to shake hands with Yeltsin," his syntactic token "Yeltsin" neither refers to nor expresses the concept "Yeltsin" (rather, he refers to, and expresses, the concept "Twin Yeltsin"). Accordingly, I would not describe this situation by saying that my replica has the concept "Yeltsin" yet fails to refer to Yeltsin. For how could he have acquired the concept "Yeltsin," given that no one on twin Earth (including my replica) has ever been in contact with, or theorized about, Yeltsin? I submit, then, that anti-individualists could take **reference** to be a contingent relation, in the sense of claim (c*), and that it is only in that sense that reference could be open to doubt on external grounds.

But even if anti-individualists were to concede that reference is a contingent relation in the stronger sense (c),

the puzzle would still not arise unless they were also to concede (d). What reasons might the incompatibilist have to support (d)? Note that (d) is related to (EDP), a principle that holds that judgments of the form "Given that X exists, I am R to X" are open to doubt on external grounds when these conditions obtain:

(i) The concept "X" does not conceive its object as "thing that is R to me,"

and

(ii) The relation R is conceived as externally determined.

Presumably, the reason Loar's example (2) falls under (EDP)-- while (3) does not--is that (2) does not satisfy condition (i) above: i.e., the concept "Esau" does not conceive its object as a thing relevantly related to myself.⁶³ And, conversely, (3) would be a priori because the concept "my eldest son" **does** conceive its object as a thing relevantly related to myself.

Yet we could also account for the special epistemic status of (3) by spelling out the notion of aprioricity itself. For instance, suppose that, as before, we take this notion to be

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- ⁶³ Recall Loar's examples:
1. Given that Yeltsin exists, "Yeltsin," as I am now using that name, refers to Yeltsin.
 2. Given that Esau exists, I begat Esau.
 3. Given that my eldest son exists, I begat my eldest son.

AP A proposition is knowable a priori if it does not require investigation of the environment.

Then the proposition expressed by "Given that my eldest son exists, I begat my eldest son," as well as that expressed by "Given that Yeltsin exists, I am using the token 'Yeltsin' to refer to Yeltsin" would be knowable a priori. For, from one's own perspective, no investigation of the environment is required in order to know such propositions.⁶⁴ Hence, by adopting the above notion of aprioricity, one reaches (more directly) Loar's conclusion--namely, that (3) and (1) are a priori, while (2) isn't. And why should this be puzzling?⁶⁵

Loar appears to be correct in holding that (1) is not **obviously a priori**, as (3) is. But, to account for this difference, we need not engage in a phenomenology of the relations involved. Contrast my account of why (1) is a priori with Loar's account:

My explanation ... because (1) concerns a self-ascriptive belief about what one means and/or refers to.

⁶⁴ Naturally, many other propositions, such as **that triangles are figures** and **that 23 is a prime number**, would come out a priori in this sense too.

⁶⁵ Furthermore, even if Loar could succeed in generating a puzzle along the lines he has in mind, it would be quite different from the paradox created by other incompatibilist arguments, since he is making an "existence presupposition."

Loar's

... because in (1), the concept "Yeltsin" does not conceive its object as a thing relevantly related to myself.

(EDP), then, seems to have no bearing on resolving the alleged puzzle facing anti-individualists. And what support is there for that principle in any case? It consists mostly of examples such as (2) and (3), which illustrate respectively the cases of judgments involving externally determined relations, only one of which falls under (EDP). The support for the principle is supposed to be evident from the differences between these examples.⁶⁶

But if what I have argued is correct, then there is an alternative account of the difference between (2) and (3) that is to be preferred. I submit that, since the difference between (2) and (3) can be explained by something other than (EDP), the support for this principle cannot come from the above examples. Where, then, does it come from?

A final problem with (EDP) concerns an assumption we can now reject--viz., (d). (EDP) seems to be based on the assumption that propositions involving externally determined contingent relations are open to doubt on external grounds, except when they are trivially true, as in (3). To see that such an assumption is highly controversial, however, consider,

⁶⁶ As we saw, according to this principle (2) and (3) differ in that the term\concept "my eldest son" in (3) conceives its object as "thing that is R to me," while (2) does not conceives its object in the same way.

for example, the following propositions, which do involve external, contingent relations:

5. Given that I have thoughts with certain contents, I am related to something outside me,

and

6. Given that I have experiences, I am related to (some of) the objects of my experience.

Naturally, many (including Kantians, and anti-individualists)⁶⁷ would deny that propositions like these are open to doubt on external grounds. (The issue concerns, of course, the possibility of transcendental arguments, which cannot be dismissed without a counterargument.) Furthermore, since (EDP) appears to entail that one cannot know propositions like (5) a priori, it begs the question against anti-individualism. For some anti-individualists have argued that, if anti-individualism is true, then it may be that one

⁶⁷ For instance, A. Brueckner (1992) has argued that, in order for Oscar to have water-thoughts, there must be enough in Oscar's world to rule out attributing to him twin thoughts, and that the candidates for content-determination are physical in nature and distinct from the subject of the contentful states. Then perhaps Oscar can know a priori that

P It is necessary that if Oscar is thinking that water is wet, then there exist some physical entities distinct from Oscar.

(Although the question of which sort of entities are required is an a posteriori matter.) And Burge (1982a: 113) holds, of course, that having certain thought-contents entails a relation to things outside the thinker, since he has argued that a person's "de dicto attitudes involving the notion of water do presuppose the existence of other entities... ." See also C. Peacocke (1996) and T. Warfield (1992).

could know propositions of this sort a priori. These, and other problems concerning (EDP), seem to indicate that there is no good reason for subscribing to that principle.⁶⁸ But without it, the puzzle Loar has in mind dissolves.

I concede that a puzzle would at first seem to arise, if we were to assume that judgments about externally determined, contingent relations are always open to doubt on external grounds (which is the basis for the principle (EDP)). But we need not make such an assumption. It simply does not apply to self-ascriptive judgments about **what one means** or **what one is thinking about**. With the failure of this attempt to raise a problem for anti-individualism and self-knowledge, we appear to be at last in a position to show that they are compatible--provided we can resolve one remaining difficulty.

⁶⁸ I have also shown that the sense in which **reference** is an externally determined, contingent relation should be qualified, and that there are reasons to reject (EDP)--viz., that we don't need it to solve the puzzle, its support is too weak (just two examples), and that it is difficult to understand what claim it is being used to make.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Paradox Resolved

1. The Skeptical Problem

Any theory that entailed that knowing one's own mental contents requires an investigation of the environment would be unable to accommodate the well-accepted intuition that, under normal circumstances, one has privileged access to those contents. Anti-individualism¹ may be vulnerable to this objection, for it does seem to invite questions of this sort:

... if the individuation of a certain state involves its environmental relations, how is it possible for a person to know he is in that state without checking on his environmental relations?²

and similarly,

¹ In what follows, "anti-individualists" are those who subscribe to the general theses about meaning and content proposed by H. Putnam (1975), D. Davidson (1987), and principally, T. Burge (1979). Otherwise, I shall specify "Burgeans," "Davidsonians," etc.

² C. Peacocke (1992: 227).

... if mental facts are constituted, not by the intrinsic character of the events occurring inside, but by the relations these internal events bear to external affairs ... then how is it possible to know, by "looking inward," by introspection, what is going on in the mind?³

Call anyone who holds that, given anti-individualism, it is **not** possible to know the contents of one's own propositional attitudes without an investigation of one's external relations a "content-Skeptic" or, simply a "Skeptic" (with a capital "S"). If the Skeptic could support his claim, anti-individualists would certainly face at least a prima facie problem, for they would then have to abandon privileged access. But does such a problem really arise? And what, exactly, is the Skeptic's claim?

First, the Skeptic need not claim that, given anti-individualism, it is not possible **at all** to attain knowledge of the contents of one's own thoughts,⁴ but only that it is not possible to have knowledge of the contents of one's own propositional attitudes **without an investigation** of one's

³ F. Dretske (1995: 40-1). For Davidson, such questions may be encouraged by the anti-individualists' view that, for example, the "difference between referring to and thinking of water and referring to and thinking of twater ... lies in the outside world, beyond the reach of subjective or sublunar knowledge" (1987: 327 et seq.). See also Burge (1988).

⁴ This Skeptic may be vulnerable to an objection of being incoherent (Ebbs 1996, 1997), but not when his claim is construed in the more charitable way I suggest here. (More on the incoherence charge later.)

physical and/or social environment.⁵

Furthermore, the Skeptic's claim, if supported, would have only a limited scope: he is holding that, given anti-individualism, one could not know the contents of **some** of one's own propositional attitudes--viz., those involving concepts that, according to anti-individualism, are externally determined.⁶ Unfortunately, since anti-individualists (principally, Burgeans) do hold that a **great** number of concepts are in part externally determined, the Skeptic does have room to mount his objection.

In the light of this, if we cast the Skeptic's claim in terms of justification instead of knowledge,⁷ it reads as follows,

S Given anti-individualism, it is not possible to have justified beliefs about

⁵ In other words, to raise his objection, the Skeptic need only claim that given anti-individualism, one would not have **first-person access** to the contents of one's thoughts. T. Woodfield (1982: viii), for instance, holds that, when a thought is externally determined, "Because the external relation is not determined subjectively, the subject is not authoritative about that. A third person might well be in a better position than the subject to know which object the subject is thinking about, hence be better placed to know which thought it was."

⁶ If Oscar is now having a thought involving the concept "phlogiston," for instance, or "isosceles triangle," anti-individualists are certainly not committed to holding that the content of thoughts involving any such concept is determined (in part) by environmental factors. Hence, for thoughts of this sort, no Skeptical problem arises for anti-individualists.

⁷ In what follows I shall, for convenience, often use "knowledge" where "justified belief" is all that need be at issue.

the contents of most of one's own propositional attitudes without an investigation of one's physical and/or social environment.

According to (S), then, anti-individualists are committed to an implausible view. For, surely, that a person has to conduct an investigation of his environment to know the contents of many of his own occurrent, conscious thoughts is at odds with the common intuition about self-knowledge mentioned above. If the Skeptic's claim can be supported, anti-individualists will have at least a prima facie problem, since they do wish to hold **both** their theory of mental content **and** privileged access. On the other hand, the Skeptic, if he is to succeed, must do more than merely devise scenarios that would raise self-knowledge problems for any theory of mental content. Rather, he must show that it is precisely anti-individualism that cannot accommodate the plausible intuition of privileged access. What arguments, then, can he offer to support his claim?

2. Arguments for Skepticism

The Skeptic first invokes standard, anti-individualist, twin-earth cases to argue as follows.

1. The course of Oscar's experience is the same either on earth or twin earth. (ex hypothesi)
2. If the course of Oscar's experience is the same either on earth or twin earth, then Oscar's **evidence** for

believing that he is living on earth is indistinguishable from his evidence for believing that he is living on twin earth.

3. If Oscar's evidence for believing that he is living on earth is indistinguishable from his evidence for believing that he is living on twin earth, then he does not know that he is not living on twin earth.

Therefore

4. Oscar does not know that he is not living on twin earth.

The conclusion of this argument is obviously supported by the familiar intuition that our beliefs about the physical world (henceforth, "PW-beliefs") are underdetermined by the evidence available to us. Such an intuition is, of course, the basis of an epistemic principle that fuels many hypotheses (e.g., Cartesian dreams, envatted brains, etc.) devised by skeptics to make it plausible that our PW-beliefs are unjustified, and thus do not amount to knowledge.⁸ Call that principle "underdetermination of the evidence" and let "P" stand for a PW-belief, such as that there is a hand before me:

UE If one's evidence for believing that P is indistinguishable from one's evidence for believing that not P, then one does not know that P.

In addition, the Skeptic argues that, given anti-individualism, if Oscar does not know that he is not living on

⁸ See A. Brueckner (1994b).

twin earth, he does not know that he is thinking that water is wet. Had Oscar been living there for some time,⁹ transported unawares, his sincere utterance, "Water is wet," would **not** express a water-thought, for ex hypothesi, on twin earth the external conditions required for water-thoughts do not obtain--e.g., Oscar is not in (causal) contact with instances of water, or with other speakers having the concept "water."¹⁰ Assuming that the contents of Oscar's thoughts involving natural-kind concepts are in part determined by his external relations, if he has been living on twin earth for some time, when he sincerely utters, "Water is wet," he expresses the thought that twin water is wet. Then, living on twin earth for some time is a Skeptical "counterpossibility" to Oscar's thinking that water is wet--the latter, naturally, **entailing** that he has not been living on twin earth for some time.

Now suppose that in this scenario Oscar were having a thought that he would report by uttering "Water is wet:" Could he know that he is, for instance, having a water-thought, if he cannot rule out the Skeptical counterpossibility that he is living on twin earth? It seems that he could, for there is after all no plausible closure principle prescribing that, to

⁹ Living on twin earth **for some time** is required, for otherwise anti-individualism would have the implausible consequence that Oscar could not know his thought-contents from one day to the next. See P. Boghossian (1989) for an argument to this effect, and Burge's (1996) reply.

¹⁰ See Chap. 2.

know a proposition, one must know all its entailments. Yet, given a more plausible closure principle, if such entailments were **known** to Oscar (perhaps, by knowing anti-individualist theory), could he then know his thought-contents, if he could not rule out the entailed proposition that he is living on twin earth? Anti-individualists appear committed to holding that, in this scenario, Oscar cannot know his thought-contents without investigating his environment.¹¹

The skeptical principle supporting this line of reasoning is, of course, "exclusion"--which I shall formulate **mutatis mutandis** as follows:

EP To know that one is having a certain thought-content, one must rule out any **known** counterpossibility to one's having that thought-content.¹²

(EP), of course, reflects the Skeptic's standard for knowing one's own thought-contents, but this principle is not enough by itself to support the Skeptical claim. Rather, the Skeptic must further argue that Oscar **is in no position to rule out** that he is living on twin earth. Yet, as we saw, this seems a simple task: the Skeptic may merely remind anti-

¹¹ In what follows, "knowing one's thought-contents without an investigation of the environment" will be simply "knowing"--unless otherwise indicated.

¹² Clearly, this is a version of some familiar exclusion principles invoked by skeptics--as formulated, for instance, in B. Stroud (1984). The term "exclusion" is adopted from E. Sosa's fall 1997 seminar at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

individualists that, ex hypothesi, twin earth is qualitatively identical to earth. So, if Oscar were living there (transported unawares, etc.), he could not tell the difference, because all the evidence available to him (the course of his experience) would be exactly the same. In short, with his principles of exclusion and underdetermination of the evidence in twin-earth scenarios, the Skeptic is now in a position to run an argument of this sort:

I claim to know that I am thinking that some water is dripping. If I know that I am thinking that some water is dripping, then I know that I am not thinking, instead, that some twater is dripping. But I do not know that I am not thinking that some twater is dripping, since, according to externalism, if I were on twin earth thinking that some twater is dripping, things would seem exactly as they now seem (and have seemed). So I do not know that I am thinking that some water is dripping.¹³

Or equivalently, we can take the Skeptic to be arguing as follows:¹⁴

¹³ A. Brueckner (1990: 448). Obviously, the Skeptic now reasons as follows:

1. If Oscar knows that he is thinking that water is dripping, then he knows that he is not thinking that twin water is dripping.
2. But Oscar does not know that he is not thinking that twin water is dripping.
Therefore,
3. Oscar does not know that he is thinking that water is dripping.

¹⁴ Reasons along these lines are not to be confused with arguments based on the assumption that to know one's thought-contents one must know what is entailed by them. For consider the fact that speakers in many cases fail to know the exact referents of their concepts. If we argued that, to avoid

- A
1. If Oscar does not know that he is not living on twin earth, then he does not know that he is now thinking that water is wet.
 2. Oscar does not know that he is not living on twin earth.
 3. Therefore, Oscar does not know that he is now thinking that water is wet.

(A) is clearly valid, and its premises, supported by standard anti-individualist thought experiments and common skeptical principles, seem plausible. Yet, according to widely accepted intuitions about self-knowledge, the denial of (A)'s conclusion seems equally plausible. As with other skeptical arguments, (A) appears to create a conflict, because we are confronted now with an inconsistent set of claims, each of which seems true when considered individually. Call the conflict generated by this Skeptical argument "the Paradox" (with a capital "P").¹⁵ Its solution, naturally, will have to show that at least one of the following claims must be abandoned, since they cannot all be held consistently:

- a. the Skeptical argument (A) is valid,

taking them to be logically incompetent, we should say that when they utter "Water is not H₂O," they believe (without knowing) that H₂O is not H₂O, then we should be making such a mistaken assumption. This assumption appears to be made, for instance, by A. Bilgrami (1992b: 240).

¹⁵ This is a version, mutatis mutandis, of the paradox that, according to S. Schiffer (1995), some common skeptical arguments generate.

b. given anti-individualism and some skeptical principles, (A)'s premises seem true,

but

c. given the thesis of privileged access, the denial of (A)'s conclusion also seems true.

Could anti-individualists resolve this Paradox? Suppose they were to question (A)'s soundness--i.e., reject claim (b). They might, for instance, concede (A)'s first premise yet argue that the second is false, since Oscar could infer that he is not living on twin earth from his knowledge of both anti-individualism and his thought-contents. But this maneuver would seem to commit them to the following:

- B
1. If Oscar does not know that he is not living on twin earth, then he does not know that he is now thinking that water is wet.
 2. But Oscar does know that he is now thinking that water is wet.
- Therefore,
3. Oscar does know that he is not living on twin earth.

And (B), obviously, has a catch: for, here, knowledge of an empirical proposition--that one is not living on twin earth--is attained through a simple modus tollens from premises supported only by a theory of mental content and common intuitions about self-knowledge. And such a deduction runs sharply counter to intuitions elicited by "perfect deception"

thought experiments--viz., that the contents of one's sensory, perceptual, and doxastic states do not entail the truth of one's beliefs about the physical world, other minds, etc. According to those intuitions, such beliefs cannot be justified by inference (either deductive or inductive) from the contents of one's own mind.

Aware of such problems, anti-individualists may assert (B)'s premises, but deny its unwelcome conclusion. Yet how could this conclusion be avoided when it obviously follows by simple deduction? Call this the "simple-deduction problem." The problem would, of course, be avoided if anti-individualists could persuade us that Oscar could know his thought- contents, and know that those thought-contents entail some environmental factors (e.g., that he is not living on twin earth) yet fail to know that those environmental factors obtain. But this looks like an uphill battle, since it would amount to arguing against a closure principle which, if not fully vindicated, seems prima facie very plausible.¹⁶

Note that, if (B) were sound, a similar strategy could be used against almost any skeptical hypothesis--thus (B) would amount to a refutation of skepticism about the physical world, based entirely on intuitions about mental content and privileged self-knowledge! But surely we will need an argument showing that such intuitions have more force than those

¹⁶ Anti-individualists who wish to reject closure would, of course, be challenging the Paradox's claim (a). More on this later.

elicited by skeptical scenarios. I submit that an argument such as (B) might be shown sound, but that that would need arguing. As it stands, (B) is unacceptable--in fact, it lends indirect support to Skepticism.

Now it appears that anti-individualists have a problem, since the Skeptical claim that their theory conflicts with privileged access is supported both, directly, by (A), and, indirectly, by what looks like a reductio of any anti-individualist attempt to reply to Skepticism by invoking intuitions about privileged self-knowledge. Does the anti-individualist have any recourse here?¹⁷

3. The Davidsonian Solution

If one's social and/or intellectual practices' having certain properties presupposed that one does know the contents of one's own thoughts, then couldn't beliefs about those practices' having such properties (henceforth, "SIP-beliefs") be "justifiers" of self-ascriptive beliefs about one's own thought-contents? Some candidates for justifiers of this sort are the SIP-beliefs that we are interpretable, have a

¹⁷ Recall that anti-individualists face a problem similar to that created by common skeptical arguments: they wish to accept the premises but deny the conclusion of a valid argument. And, as in the case of the skeptical paradox, the solution to their problem, must not only indicate which of the inconsistent claims is false, but also explain why each of them seems individually plausible. More on this in my final conclusions. See S. Schiffer (1996), and K. DeRose (1995).

language,¹⁸ know what we talk about,¹⁹ and are critical thinkers²⁰ and moral agents (in the sense of being "cognizant of and responsible for" what we do).²¹

Call those who attempt to solve the Skeptical problem by making a move along these lines "Davidsonians." Consider how Davidson himself makes such a move in the following passage:

...[although] an interpreter must, if he is to get things right, look to relations between the mind he is interpreting and its environment, this does not prejudice the self-knowledge of the knower... I say "I believe the Koh-i-noor diamond is a crown jewel"... And suppose, as is the case, that I know what the words I have just uttered mean, and that I am making a sincere assertion. Finally, let us suppose that you and I agree on these points... From these suppositions it follows that I know what I believe, but it does not follow that you know what I believe. The reason is simple: you may not know what I mean. Your knowledge of what my words mean has to be based on evidence and inference ... it does not make sense to suppose I am generally mistaken about what my words mean; **the presumption that I am not generally mistaken about what I mean is essential to my having a language--to my being interpretable at all.**²²

If Davidson's claim in this passage is merely that, for practical purposes, we can assume that we are interpretable, then even the Skeptic will agree. But since Davidson makes his

¹⁸ D. Davidson (1987, 1991).

¹⁹ G. Ebbs (1996, 1997).

²⁰ T. Burge (1996).

²¹ V. McGeer (1996: 488).

²² D. Davidson (1991: 212). Emphasis mine.

claim in the course of a reply to the Skeptic, we may take it to be as follows:

J The belief that one is interpretable
 is a justifier of one's beliefs
 about one's own meanings or thought-
 contents.

Such a claim would, of course, require an argument: What, then, is the argument for (J)?

There is more than one way the Davidsonian argument could run--and it is not clear to me which of them is intended by Davidson himself. Suppose it runs as follows:

- C 1. If I am to be interpretable, I must know
 the contents of my own thoughts.
- Therefore,
 2. (1) is a good reason to think that I do
 know the contents of my own thoughts.²³

But if this is the argument the Davidsonian has in mind, then it does not support his claim, since it is obviously invalid. Moreover, it fails as a non-deductive inference any sort (either inductive or abductive): For suppose I wish to achieve a certain goal, and that achieving it presupposes that some conditions obtain. Would this be a good reason to think that those conditions **do** obtain? Surely this would be nothing more

²³ W. Sellars (1979) may have in mind a strategy along similar lines to justify introspective, perceptual, and memory-beliefs. In fact, discussions of Sellars's argument in E. Sosa's Fall 1997 seminar at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York were helpful in working out possible construals of the Davidsonian argument. (C) here is an adaptation of another argument discussed in that seminar.

than a fallacy of wishful thinking.

On a more charitable view, however, the Davidsonian argument may be construed as follows:

- D
1. If I do not know the contents of my own thoughts, then I am not interpretable.
 2. But I am interpretable.
 3. Therefore
I do know the contents of my own thoughts.²⁴

Though obviously valid, and perhaps sound, (D) has a catch: For one thing, the second premise assumes the point at issue, since it involves an SIP-belief that the anti-individualist must defend to the Skeptic. For the Skeptic's claim entails that, given anti-individualism, SIP-beliefs are not justified--that is, that one is **not** justified in believing that one is interpretable, has a language, etc. In fact, the Skeptic may run a standard twin-earth case to show this.

²⁴ That the Davidsonian wishes to run an argument of this sort is clear in the following passage: "[C. Wright and A. Bilgrami]... have hoped to make headway on this problem [viz., psychological evidence against first-person authority] by abjuring epistemological accounts of self-knowledge altogether... The Wright-Bilgrami alternative [to traditional accounts] is to recognize how our faith in first-person authority itself underlies and shapes the structure of our day-to-day interactions; so whatever justification it merits derives from the success (Bilgrami says human indispensability) of these interactions. The philosopher's project is thus ... to defend first-person authority not internally, so to speak, but rather externally, by showing how our ways of interacting with one another entitle us to assume that, normally speaking, our judgments about ourselves are systematically and significantly reliable." See V. McGeer (1996: 487).

Imagine that Oscar is transported unawares back and forth from earth to twin earth many times, living on each planet for as many years as anti-individualists would consider sufficient for his having both concepts, "water" and "twin water." Like us, Oscar has many SIP-beliefs, including the belief that **he is interpretable** when he uses tokens of the expression "water." Now suppose the Davidsonian, who knows about the trick played upon Oscar, is browsing through Oscar's diary and finds an undated entry reading, "There is water nearby." In this scenario, could the Davidsonian interpret Oscar? Could he report Oscar's propositional-attitude content? If he has no clue as to which world was Oscar's actual environment at the time of writing that sentence (Was he on earth or on twin earth?), it seems that the Davidsonian cannot determine which belief the diary's entry reports, and that Oscar is uninterpretable. Moreover, given that the anti-individualists' thesis holds for the content of many propositional attitudes (those involving externally determined concepts), a great number of Oscar's sincere utterances may also turn out to be uninterpretable--since analogous thought experiments could be run for them.

If this is correct, the Davidsonian is not allowed to assume that SIP-beliefs are justified **without first showing** that Skepticism is wrong--and a fortiori, he is not allowed to assume (D)'s second premise. I submit that (D) begs the question against the Skeptic.

Furthermore, that the Davidsonian's strategy would fail to solve the Skeptical problem becomes clear once we consider the situation he would be in, if he decides to reflect upon his convictions. It is likely that he would find himself with these two opposite intuitions:

a. my social/intellectual practices make it plausible that I have a language, that I am interpretable, etc., and this, in turn, makes it plausible that I know the contents of my thoughts,

but

b. given my anti-individualism, the Skeptical argument, which is obviously valid and has premises I cannot reject, makes it equally plausible that I do not know the contents of my thoughts.

Naturally, since (a) and (b) seem equally plausible, they appear to be a restatement of the Skeptical Paradox. (An argument to the best explanation could perhaps help the Davidsonian to decide which of those intuitions is the more plausible, but as yet no such argument has been suggested.)

But perhaps the strategy Davidsonians really have in mind is to show that Skepticism is incoherent and thus, necessarily false.²⁵ For it is a truism that if one did not know one's

²⁵ When Davidson (1991: 207 et seq.) argues that Skepticism "... is intelligible only on the supposition that having a thought requires a special psychological relation to the object used to identify the state of mind" he seems to have in mind the charge that Skepticism is incoherent. See

own thought-contents, one would not know what one is talking about. But if one did not know what one is talking about, how could one formulate **any** hypothesis, including Skeptical ones? The idea here is, of course, that the Skeptic's being able to formulate his hypotheses per se undermines his claim--that is, that Skepticism is self-defeating:

But if [skeptical] doubts undermine our confidence that we know what we are talking about, the same doubts also undermine our confidence that we can use our sentences to ... describe "objective" possibilities. **When we use our words to express the skeptic's reasoning we in effect undermine the general conclusion that we don't "know the contents" of our thoughts unless we first find out which of our subjective worlds we are in.**²⁶

In short, the Davidsonian argument now appears to be:

- E
1. If one could not know one's own thought-contents, then one could not know what one is talking about.
 2. If one could not know what one is talking about, then one could not formulate Skeptical hypotheses.
- Therefore,
3. If one could not know one's own thought-contents, then one could not formulate Skeptical hypotheses.

Clearly, this valid argument, if sound, would undermine the skeptical claim that knowledge of one's thought-contents is not possible--showing it to be self-defeating, and thus

also G. Ebbs (1996: 516).

²⁶ G. Ebbs (1996: 516). Emphasis mine.

necessarily false. But that is not what the Skeptic claims: he does not dispute the thesis of privileged self-knowledge in general, but only that anti-individualists should be able to retain it. That is, what the Skeptic really has in mind is a reductio of anti-individualism. Hence an argument such as (D), if sound, would undermine only skepticism about self-knowledge, yet have no force against Skepticism.²⁷ If (D) is the argument the Davidsonian proposes as a solution to the Skeptical problem, then it seems nothing more than an ignoratio elenchi.²⁸

4. The Burgean Solution

We have seen that the Skeptical problem cannot be solved by simply invoking common assumptions about certain properties

²⁷ If (D) showed that skepticism about one's own thought-contents is incoherent, and a fortiori implausible, the Skeptic's objection to anti-individualism would be even stronger--for he has maintained all along that it is incompatible with a plausible doctrine of self-knowledge. Unless anti-individualists could independently support the compatibility of both doctrines, then, they could not invoke (D) to resolve their Paradox.

²⁸ Could an appeal to disquotational truth-conditions for first-person ascriptions of meaning and content show that, given anti-individualism, we do have privileged access? Davidson (1991: 212-213) makes such an appeal: "I can do no better, in stating the truth conditions for my utterance of the sentence 'The Koh-i-noor diamond is a crown jewel' than to say it is true if and only if the the Koh-i-noor diamond is a crown jewel. If I say this, I utter a tautology, but if you give the truth conditions of my utterance in the same words, you are making an empirical claim..." . But even if correct, this maneuver amounts to insisting that one does have privileged self-knowledge, without showing that that is consistent with anti-individualism. See also G. Ebbs (1996, 1997).

of our social and intellectual practices, or by arguing that Skepticism about self-knowledge is incoherent. But perhaps the problem could be solved by showing that some special properties of one's own experience justify self-ascriptive beliefs about one's propositional-attitude content. And if it could also be shown that such beliefs are predominantly true, then anti-individualists would be in a position to argue that in some sense one could know the contents of one's own propositional attitudes, though entirely ignorant of the environmental conditions that must obtain if one is to have propositional attitudes with particular contents.²⁹ In fact, Burge's attempt to solve the Skeptical problem by appealing to some special properties of self-knowledge suggests that he has in mind a strategy of this sort--which we shall now consider.

When confronted with the Skeptical problem, anti-individualists generally hold that a person knows his own thought-contents, even when many of those contents may be determined in part by environmental conditions about which he knows next to nothing.³⁰ Call the attempt to support this claim by invoking special properties of beliefs about one's

²⁹ Although a similar claim could be made for self-ascriptive thoughts about one's own sensory or perceptual states, what follows concerns only self-ascriptive thoughts about the contents of one's own propositional attitudes.

³⁰ Burge (1996, 1986a) and Davidson (1987, 1991) clearly argue to this effect, though Putnam (1975), by introducing the notion of "narrow content" seems to concede a great deal to the Skeptic with respect to "wide content." For a reading of Putnam along these lines, see D. Davidson (1991).

own occurrent, conscious thought-contents, "Burgean," and beliefs of this sort, "TC-beliefs" ("TC-judgments," etc.). There is a basic, well-accepted Cartesian intuition concerning the privileged status of a person's TC-beliefs which takes them to be, in some sense, immune to error and/or epistemic failure. And one could, of course, subscribe to this elementary intuition about self-knowledge without endorsing the Cartesian view that self-knowledge is infallible, indubitable, incorrigible, etc.--such properties being consistent with, though not entailed by, the Cartesian intuition as I construe it here. Thus Burgeans need hold only that, under normal circumstances, TC-beliefs are justified and true, and support this claim by invoking some distinct properties of the first-person experience when entertaining such beliefs.

Burge himself seems to have in mind a strategy of this sort, for in his reply to the Skeptic, he appeals to a "restricted" Cartesian view³¹ of TC-judgments such as "I think (with this very thought) that writing requires concentration," or "I judge (or doubt) that water is more common than mercury." Following Burge, let us assume that judgments of this sort constitute "basic self-knowledge," and

³¹ For Burge (1986a: 649), although Descartes "tended to overrate the power of authoritative self-knowledge and its potential for yielding metaphysical conclusions..." he was right in that "these sorts of judgments or thoughts constitute knowledge, that they are not the products of ordinary empirical investigation, and that they are peculiarly direct and authoritative."

that they are reflexive,³² direct (or non-inferential), self-verifying,³³ and nonempirical:³⁴ How would the Burgean solution to the Skeptical problem go from there?

Note first that an appeal to Cartesian intuitions about the special properties of self-knowledge per se appears to be of no help in finding that solution, since, as we saw earlier, these plausible intuitions tend to favor the Skeptic--whose objection is precisely that anti-individualism fails to accommodate them! If, for example, Burgeans were to insist that TC-beliefs are nonempirical, the Skeptic, of course, could simply admit that this intuition is very plausible, yet insist that anti-individualism fails to accommodate it, since it entails that many of a person's thought-contents are determined (in part) by factors he could know only by empirical means.

But even if a person's having certain thought-contents presupposes factors knowable to him only empirically, couldn't

³² A TC-judgment is reflexive because it consists in "thinking a first-order thought that the judgment itself is about." If this is so, then it may be that it "inherits" the content of the first-order thought it is about--and thus what enables the content of the latter may also enable the content of the former, as Burge (ibid: 656) holds. More on this later.

³³ TC-judgments are self-verifying (or "truth-warranted") in that "making these judgments itself makes them true" (Burge, Ibid, p. 649).

³⁴ That TC-judgments are "nonempirical" or "a priori" means that they are justified without sensory observation. In Burge's words (1995: 272), the "justificational force" of such judgments "... is in no way constituted or enhanced by reference to or reliance on the specifics of some range of sense experiences or perceptual beliefs."

he nevertheless know his own thought-contents without having first to investigate those factors? After all, no plausible closure principle holds that to know a certain proposition, one need know all its entailments.³⁵ But although the reasoning behind this maneuver is correct, it cannot meet the Skeptic's objection, for, as construed here, it does not rest on such an implausible principle.³⁶

A more charitable reading takes the Skeptic's closure principle to be instead that knowledge is closed under **known** entailment--which, although not fully vindicated, is certainly immune to the above Burgean maneuver and also prima facie plausible. Arguing against this principle would appear to be an uphill battle that many, including (so far) Burgeans, would wish to avoid. But if this closure principle were granted, could the special epistemic properties of self-knowledge be of any use in solving the Skeptical problem?

Burgeans, who try to solve it by insisting on Cartesian intuitions about self-knowledge while holding on to closure, seem to face a dilemma generated by thought experiments of the following sort. The news is broken to Oscar that he himself has been the subject of standard anti-individualist tricks:

³⁵ Burge (1986a), naturally, dismisses an argument based on this implausible closure principle--but the Skeptical argument need not assume such a principle.

³⁶ His argument is not, for instance, that if one knows that one is thinking that water is wet, and thinking that water is wet entails that there is H₂O in one's environment, then one knows that there is H₂O in one's environment. See earlier discussion in this chapter.

Transported unawares back and forth between earth and twin earth several times, he has spent enough time on each to have the concepts of two superficially identical but micro-structurally different substances he refers to by the token, "water." Told that at this very moment he is either on earth or twin earth--but not which one--Oscar cannot figure out where he is, since the course of his experience would be exactly the same in either case. Suppose he is looking now at some water-like substance and has a conscious thought that he would report by uttering "Water is wet." What is the content of his occurrent thought? If asked about it, what could he possibly say?

As a devoted Burgean who takes knowledge to be closed under known entailment, Oscar realizes that, if he knows that he is thinking that water is wet and knows that these thought-contents have certain anti-individualistic entailments, then he would know a great deal about his actual environment--perhaps, that he is in contact either with water or with others having the concept "water." Naturally, he would then be in a position to infer that, for instance, he is on earth.

But Oscar also realizes that he is the protagonist of a standard anti-individualist thought experiment, which entails that ex hypothesi he must be relatively ignorant about whether he is in an environment containing water or its superficially identical twin. (Moreover, Burgeans explicitly deny that a person could come to know specific propositions about his

environment by inference from the contents of his own mind.)³⁷ Yet whether Oscar is in the one or the other environment is relevant to determining the contents of his propositional attitude, for according to anti-individualism, these would differ radically according to where he was. Oscar, then, as a good Burgean, has no choice but to be a Skeptic about the contents of his occurrent, conscious thought.

I submit that Burgeans face a dilemma. Since they insist on the special properties of self-knowledge while holding on to closure, it would seem that--given their characteristic thesis--they must run into the simple deduction problem. But, at the same time, they deny that a person could come to have substantial empirical knowledge by inference from the contents of his own mind--thus, foreclosing the simple-deduction objection with a commitment to skepticism about self-knowledge. Unless they could come up with some other strategy, then, their attempt to respond to Skeptical arguments (see arguments (A) and (B) earlier in this chapter) by appealing to the special epistemic properties of self-knowledge seems to fail.

But there may yet be room for a move of the following sort. Burgeans could hold that there is a sense of "knowledge" in which a person's beliefs about his own thought-contents constitute knowledge, even if he is entirely ignorant about whether the empirical conditions necessary for his having such

³⁷ See Chap. 3.

beliefs obtain.³⁸ Call such conditions "enabling conditions." According to Burgeans, then, what are the enabling conditions of TC-beliefs?

Note, first, that any such belief is "higher order" in that it takes as its propositional content the lower-order thought it is about.³⁹ Consider, for example, Oscar's judgment that he is thinking that water is a liquid: Burgeans hold that "A judgment that one is thinking that water is a liquid must be grounded in an ability to think that water is a liquid."⁴⁰ Does this mean that Oscar's second-order thought presupposes the same enabling conditions of the (first-order) thought it is about? Naturally, thought and thought-about could have exactly the same enabling conditions only if they were the **same** mental act, as Burge holds.⁴¹ But to run the anti-Skeptical argument they have in mind, Burgeans need not

³⁸ For the strategy we are about to discuss, see J. Heil (1991). That Burge (1986a: 654 et seq.) also favors a strategy of this sort is clear enough when he argues that to have basic self-knowledge "... one need not know the enabling conditions. It is enough that they actually be satisfied."

³⁹ Naturally, a higher-order thought can take as its propositional content not only beliefs but also sensory, or perceptual states of the person--e.g., Oscar's thinking that he has a toothache.

⁴⁰ See T. Burge (1988: 654).

⁴¹ T. Burge (1988) explicitly takes thought and thought-about to be the same "mental act" (so that what enables the former also enables the latter). I do not know what to make of that claim: For suppose I first think "Water is flammable," then reflect upon this thought, and actually think "I believe that water is flammable." How could these mental acts be **identical** when, obviously, they have different properties (e.g., one is false and the other true)?

make that controversial claim, but instead only the claim that TC-beliefs have the property of being "reflexive." They could then hold that any such belief "inherits" the contents of the corresponding lower-order state it is about. Thus, the enabling conditions of the latter are likely also to be enabling conditions of the former. (In this way they could claim that higher-order thoughts have some "exclusive" enabling conditions--and that, under normal circumstances, the ability to entertain them presupposes the ability to entertain the lower-order thoughts they are about.)⁴²

Now Burgeans are in a position to make the move they have had in mind all along: In some restricted sense of "knowledge," we would surely say that a person's first-order beliefs constitute knowledge if the enabling conditions for his entertaining such beliefs obtain--whether or not he knows that they do. Suppose that Oscar believes that water is a liquid and he is in fact in the appropriate (causal) relation to the relevant substances in the external world, his faculties are working properly, and beliefs produced by such

⁴² "Under normal circumstances" is required given cases of this sort: Imagine that Oscar's faculties for entertaining first-order beliefs are working properly, and that for some time, he has been in (causal) contact with samples of "water" and "liquid" or with other speakers who have the concepts of these things. Oscar would then seem able to entertain the belief that water is a liquid. But suppose Oscar is somewhat "odd" in forming his higher-order beliefs--say, he does it through wild guessing. In that scenario, if he thinks, "Water is a liquid," and reflects upon his occurrent thought, he may not be able to think, "I believe that water is a liquid" but something else. Then, of course, his higher- and lower-order beliefs would have different enabling conditions.

faculties are predominantly true. Obviously, in such circumstances, Oscar knows (in a restricted sense) that water is a liquid--whether or not he also has good reasons for thinking that the enabling conditions of his belief obtain. If, on the other hand, he does have such reasons, he would know then that water is a liquid in some other sense of "knowledge." Call these the "minimalist" and "reflective" senses of knowledge, respectively.⁴³

Naturally, that some beings who are unable to have reflective knowledge (e.g., infants and some animals) seem nonetheless able to have beliefs that amount to knowledge supports the view that, for a belief to constitute knowledge, it is required only that its enabling conditions obtain--that is, that reflective knowledge is not necessary for knowledge. But there are well-known problems facing this view. For one thing, it may be too liberal: if knowledge **does not** require having good reasons for thinking that the enabling conditions of one's beliefs obtain, then wouldn't thermometers turn out to have knowledge?⁴⁴ Furthermore, to adopt the minimalist sense of knowledge seems to "solve" the skeptical problem only by conceding to the skeptic the chief point of contention--

⁴³ Distinctions along similar lines are, of course, commonly discussed in the literature. See, for instance, E. Sosa (1988: 183) for the notion of reflective justification and S. Schiffer, (1996: 330 et seq.) for how the various senses of "knowledge" bear on the solution to the paradox generated by skeptical arguments.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, W. Sellars (1979).

viz., that one cannot have reflective knowledge of the physical world.

But difficulties of this sort could perhaps be avoided by a minimalist conception of **self-knowledge**. The grounds for such a move seem already prepared by Burgeans, for recall that they hold that in basic self-knowledge, higher-order TC-beliefs have the **same** enabling conditions of the lower-order beliefs they are about. Then perhaps one's TC-beliefs constitute knowledge if those enabling conditions obtain--whether or not one has good reasons for thinking that they do obtain. Call this "minimalist" self-knowledge.

Yet is such a conception of self-knowledge adequate? Consider, for example, the case of small children, at an age at which there is psychological evidence of self-deception:⁴⁵ While it is plausible to claim that those children are capable of entertaining first-order beliefs that constitute (in the minimalist sense) knowledge, it does not seem plausible, given the evidence, to hold that their TC-beliefs amount to self-knowledge. According to the minimalist conception, however, wouldn't those children have self-knowledge? I submit that the minimalist view of self-knowledge is too liberal.

Furthermore, even if Burgeans could manage to avoid the

⁴⁵ Evidence to this effect has been offered recently in some research by A. Gopnik (1993).

liberality problem,⁴⁶ they would face another objection: The minimalist about self-knowledge (like the minimalist about knowledge) can "solve" the Skeptical problem only with a Skeptical solution, for if successful, he shows merely that one could have minimal but not reflective self-knowledge. Naturally, minimal self-knowledge falls short of capturing a common Cartesian intuition about self-knowledge--viz., that a person has especially good reasons for his beliefs about his own mental contents. And if Burgeans give up that intuition, then the Skeptic wins.

5. How to Solve the Skeptical Problem

Anti-individualists who are not content with a Skeptical solution to their problem may still have available some strategies that could allow them to preserve a reflective view of self-knowledge, while avoiding the simple-deduction problem.⁴⁷ They could resort to an upfront questioning of the principle that knowledge is closed under known entailment.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Perhaps, by distinguishing between enabling conditions of belief and belief-about (see my suggestion above).

⁴⁷ In what follows, we assume that anti-individualists also hold an object-dependence thesis--for instance, the thesis that concepts are individuated by their referents. For this construal of anti-individualism, see P. Boghossian (1997).

⁴⁸ That the Skeptic does need a closure principle of this sort is clear enough from the problem he attempts to raise for anti-individualism with his argument (B), discussed earlier in this chapter. The anti-skeptical maneuver of questioning such a closure principle upfront is certainly

If successful, they would be able to maintain the claims the Skeptic regards as inconsistent--viz., that Oscar knows that he is thinking that water is wet and that one's thinking that water is wet entails that one is not living on twin earth, yet fails to know that he is not living on twin earth.

Clearly, by making this move, anti-individualists would be in a difficult position, since they would thereby be disputing a principle that, although not fully vindicated, is prima facie very plausible. Yet couldn't the above claims actually make a good case to argue for the failure of closure? Perhaps the plausible intuitions that support each of the above claims--intuitions about self-knowledge, the individuation of propositional-attitude content and skeptical scenarios--outweigh those supporting closure. Anti-individualists, however, need not attempt a defense of this strategy,⁴⁹ for there is a simpler solution to the Skeptical problem to be found in a closer look at each of the above

familiar since R. Nozick's (1981) response to the skeptic. For arguments against closure independent of anti-skeptical strategies, see S. Hales (1995).

⁴⁹ Such a defense might run as follows. First, one could take each of these claims to be a "conviction"--i.e., a belief about which one felt certain--and then insist that, although the set appears inconsistent, the tension could be resolved by reflecting, in a principled manner, upon the intuitions mentioned above--which are the sources of one's convictions. After all, similar puzzles are familiar in philosophy--the typical case being the moral philosopher who feels certain both about condemning slavery and about the classical principle of utility. He might be able to resolve his puzzle by reflecting upon the sources of his convictions, in a principled manner--using some accepted justificatory method, perhaps "reflective equilibrium."

claims.

But first, let's present each claim in a more perspicuous way. We must foreclose a maneuver that would be far too simple--viz., that of claiming that on a waterless planet, one could have the concept, "water," though never in contact with water or with other speakers having the concept, "water." That would be the case if, for instance, one had the concepts, "oxygen" and "hydrogen," and were theorizing about what natural kind would result from their combination. Although we may then seem to be in a position to "solve" the Skeptical problem, we have in fact only moved the Skeptic's objection to a different level. To avoid such a misleading "solution," let us replace common, anti-individualist examples involving natural-kind concepts with examples involving biological-kind concepts--say, "dog."⁵⁰

To capture the problem the Skeptic has in mind when he takes the above claims to be inconsistent, requires that we qualify those claims. For it appears that anti-individualists cannot solve the Skeptical problem by invoking the special epistemic status of self-knowledge--i.e., by holding that,

⁵⁰ The concept "dog" is, of course, an externally determined concept, and we could show this by running a standard, anti-individualist thought experiment: Imagine that, living on twin earth for some time, Oscar has been in contact neither with dogs nor with other speakers having the concept "dog," but only with twogs, dog-like creatures genetically different in some relevant way, from dogs. Then, when he sincerely utters, "Dogs are carnivorous," he is not thereby reporting the belief that dogs are carnivorous, but some other belief--viz., that twogs are carnivorous.

given privileged self-knowledge, Oscar could know his own thought-contents, whether or not he knows where he is living. For if this were so, Oscar could come to deduce specific empirical propositions from premises knowable without investigation of the environment, and knowledge so acquired would, in some sense, be "a priori."⁵¹ Naturally, this is a problem because nobody could know empirical propositions a priori, such as that one is not living on twin earth or that dogs exist. We can provisionally simplify the problem at hand if we recall that the above claims concern a priori knowledge and then ignore some skeptical intuitions generated by twin earth scenarios. I submit that a more charitable construal of the claims the Skeptic regards as inconsistent is the following:⁵²

- T
1. Oscar could know a priori that he is thinking that dogs are carnivorous.
 2. Oscar could not know a priori that dogs exist.
 3. Oscar could know a priori that one's thinking that dogs are carnivorous entails that dogs exist.

Is this triad inconsistent? And why hold each of its claims? Let's first consider whether (1) is plausible. Call

⁵¹ That is, they seem to run into the simple-deduction problem. See the Skeptical argument (B).

⁵² In this more perspicuous way of putting the problem at hand, I have profited from recent discussions with S. Schiffer, who has also suggested this solution.

the process of forming self-ascriptive beliefs about one's own occurrent, conscious mental states "introspection." To support the claim that Oscar's beliefs about his thought-contents (like his other introspective beliefs) are generally justified and constitute knowledge, we invoke the common Cartesian intuition that the **access** one has to one's introspective beliefs is epistemically privileged. For, at least under normal circumstances, one need not appeal to sensory or perceptual **evidence**, or to **inference** from other beliefs, in order to justify any of one's own introspective beliefs.⁵³ That is, we take any such belief to be "directly" or "immediately" justified. We then recall the intuition that, at least under normal circumstances, just having an introspective belief seems to make it true. That is, we take any such belief to be "truth-warranted," or "self-verifying."⁵⁴

But how can we show that introspective beliefs do have these properties? That they are directly justified could be shown by examples. Suppose, for instance, that at this very moment I have an occurrent, conscious belief that I would

⁵³ The common (but not problem-free) intuition here is, of course, that from the first-person perspective, such beliefs are not **based on** evidence or other beliefs. Naturally, this does not mean that, if required, evidence or inference would not be available to the person who has the belief. More on this later. See also W. Alston (1976, 1971), G. Pappas (1979), and M. Swain (1981). On this topic, I have benefited from discussions about privileged self-knowledge in S. Schiffer's spring 1995 seminar at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

⁵⁴ As we saw earlier, Burge (1988) also holds that judgments of "basic self-knowledge" are self-verifying.

express by saying "I think that it is hot here." If challenged, how could I justify my belief? Arguably, I could, under normal circumstances, simply appeal to the state my belief is about--viz., the sensation I have that it feels hot here--and no empirical evidence or inference from other beliefs would be needed (although evidence or inference may also be available). Given examples of this sort, the intuition that introspective beliefs are directly justified seems rather compelling.⁵⁵

What, then, about the intuition that introspective beliefs are truth-warranted? Clearly, if it could be shown that they are, it would follow (since we have supported the claim that they are directly justified) that they amount in some sense to knowledge. Of course, to say that introspective beliefs have such a property need not lead to the view that they are infallible or incorrigible, for the weaker claim that they are predominantly true also captures the intuition that they are truth-warranted. But how could we show that they are predominantly true? One could certainly maintain that if any kind of beliefs can be considered "innocent until proven

⁵⁵ There is the fear, of course, that direct justification may lead to dogmatism, for couldn't someone proceed similarly to claim, for instance, that his "demon" beliefs are justified? But this problem--which, naturally, goes beyond my concerns here -- could be solved by showing a disanalogy between these two kinds of beliefs. One could argue, for instance, that evidence or inference **may be** available only for introspective beliefs.

guilty," introspective beliefs can.⁵⁶ Arguably, there is a distinct presumption, as with no other kind of beliefs, that (from one's own perspective and unless one has some evidence to the contrary) one's introspective beliefs are true.⁵⁷

We are now in a position to conclude that, under normal circumstances, a person's introspective beliefs are justified and true, and thus constitute knowledge. Hence, a fortiori if Oscar believes he is thinking that dogs are carnivorous, then in some sense he knows it.

This, however, still leaves a problem: Should we think that Oscar's knowledge here is a priori (or nonempirical)? Oscar's belief that he is thinking that dogs are carnivorous involves, of course, an empirical proposition--viz., that dogs are carnivorous. Arguably, given some assumptions about **object-involving** propositions, any proposition about dogs must be clearly empirical, for it presupposes that a particular biological kind (a certain species) exists.⁵⁸ But a belief

⁵⁶ The intuition that introspective beliefs are true until proven false is captured by the notion of "first-person authority," as construed here. See my Chap. 1 and D. Davidson (1991). The traditional skeptic, naturally, challenges this intuition, but, for the purposes of our discussion, we can ignore his arguments. For a recent skeptical argument of this sort see C. Wright (1991).

⁵⁷ Naturally, such a presumption does not hold from someone else's perspective--e.g., my therapist's--or from my own if I have evidence to the contrary--for example, if I am the Anscombean character, who seems to sincerely believe that he has a pain in a certain limb, yet nurses another limb.

⁵⁸ This anti-Skeptical maneuver was recently suggested to me by S. Schiffer.

that is about an empirical proposition must itself be in some sense empirical--and thus, Oscar's higher-order belief that he is thinking that dogs are carnivorous must be in some sense an empirical belief.

To this, however, the Skeptic will rightly object that beliefs about one's own thought-contents are available to oneself "without investigating the environment," and aren't such beliefs a priori? If we wish to regard them so, we must distinguish two senses of "a priori knowledge." In a strong sense, only beliefs that do not presuppose any empirical proposition could amount to a priori knowledge--as, for example, when one knows that triangles have three internal angles, or that 23 is a prime number. But, in some other sense, beliefs that do not require an investigation of one's environment, even when they may presuppose some empirical propositions, could also amount to a priori knowledge--as, for instance, my current belief that I have a headache, or that if Clinton lied, then he lied. These seem to presuppose, respectively, that I have a head, and that Clinton exists. Call the former "strong a priori" or "a priori_s knowledge," and the latter, "weak a priori" or "a priori_w knowledge." I submit that if Oscar knows a priori that he is thinking that dogs are carnivorous, then his knowledge is a priori_w.

Furthermore, that beliefs about one's own thought-contents are not a priori in the strong sense is consistent with the view of self-knowledge I have suggested. For on my

view the privileged epistemic status of such beliefs does not stem from their aprioricity, but from two principles:

a. One has privileged access (i.e., such beliefs are not based on evidence or inference),

and

b. One has first-person authority (i.e., such beliefs are presumably true).

If one has privileged access to self-ascriptive beliefs about one's thought-contents, then this is sufficient for those beliefs to have a special epistemic status: for they would thereby be **justified** directly or immediately--the property of having first-person authority being relevant only if we wish to make a **knowledge** claim about any such belief. But if this is correct, then Oscar's belief about his thought-content would be epistemically privileged in that he has immediate access to beliefs of that sort--which, not being based on evidence or inference, are directly justified. And that, of course, could be held consistently with our previous claim that such beliefs are not a priori in the strong sense.

But, given principle (ii), we are in a position to make the further claim that any such belief constitutes knowledge--though knowledge of a special kind. For, compare Oscar's belief that he is thinking that dogs are carnivorous with his belief that--say--dogs exist. The latter is a belief about the physical world (what we have called "PW-beliefs"). And

clearly, in the case of beliefs of this sort, we ought to proceed differently from the case of beliefs about one's own thought-contents if we are to make knowledge and justification claims. To make knowledge claims about PW-beliefs, one can invoke neither first-person authority nor the truth-warranted status of such beliefs. And to make justification claims, one obviously cannot take such beliefs to be directly justified. For even if one were to assume some version of direct realism, although one would certainly be committed to holding that Oscar could know directly that--say--there is a tree before him, it would scarcely make sense for a direct realist to claim that Oscar could know **directly** (that is, with privileged access) that dogs exist. But, for the problem under discussion, why should we assume direct realism in any case?

We could surely maintain that Oscar's PW-beliefs, and his beliefs about his own thought-contents, are both empirical, but although the former are neither truth-warranted nor direct, the latter have both properties and are thus epistemically privileged. And this explains why one need not investigate the environment to justify one's beliefs about one's own thought-contents--that is, we can now explain why such beliefs are a priori. In light of this, a more perspicuous claim (1) would be:

- 1* Oscar knows a priori that he is thinking that dogs are carnivorous.

Thus understood, claim (1) is plausible. But our

discussion suggests that another claim of the triad is also plausible--viz., claim (2). It is plausible that Oscar does not know a priori (in either of the two senses above mentioned) that dogs exist, since knowledge of that sort would involve a PW-belief, and such beliefs do not have special epistemic properties--that is, they are neither directly justified nor truth-warranted.

But now, assuming that knowledge is closed under known entailment, we seem to encounter the following difficulty:

- O If a person can know a priori that he is thinking that dogs are carnivorous, and he can also know a priori the anti-individualistic entailments of that thought-content, wouldn't he be able to know a priori (by simple deduction) that he is not living on twin earth? Yet you seem to hold the former and deny the latter.

It appears, then, that the anti-Skeptical strategy so far outlined founders. For it seems unavailable to those who hold claim (3) of the above triad. Let us, then, have a closer look at that claim.

According to the Skeptic, a claim such as (3) represents a consequence of anti-individualism, for, given this theory,

- A Oscar knows a priori that his thinking that dogs are carnivorous entails that dogs exist.

Naturally, if (A) is a consequence of anti-individualism, and

claims (1) and (2) of the above triad are plausible, then anti-individualists who wish to hold those claims face a very unhappy situation, for they are either inconsistent or run head-on into the simple-deduction problem.⁵⁹ But whether or not the latter is a problem that need be avoided, I shall now show that the apparent dilemma actually fails to arise for anti-individualists, for their entailments need not be construed as required by the argument the Skeptic has in mind.

Recall, first, that the Skeptic's basis for his claim (3) in the above triad is an anti-individualistic entailment such as (A). Suppose now that we grant the Skeptic (as I believe we should) that Oscar could figure out some anti-individualist entailments from thought-contents to the world by knowing anti-individualist theory (which, arguably, he could come to know by standard anti-individualist thought experiments) and thus that such knowledge is attainable without conducting an investigation of one's environment.⁶⁰ Would it then follow that knowledge so acquired has the status of being a *priori*, or nonempirical? Hardly, given the reasons we offered above

⁵⁹ This is, of course, really another version of the entailment-problem objection discussed earlier--which amounts to the objection that to hold **both** privileged self-knowledge **and** anti-individualism has the absurd consequence that a person could come to know specific propositions about his environment by deduction from the contents of his mind (a consequence that anti-individualists have so far tried to avoid). See Chaps. 2 and 3.

⁶⁰ See Chap. 3.

regarding the epistemic status of Oscar's belief about his thought-contents. We argued there that higher-order beliefs about propositions which are clearly empirical are not themselves a priori_s: If they are knowable without investigation of the environment, but presuppose propositions knowable only empirically, they count as a priori_v. On this view, Oscar's higher-order belief--that his thinking that dogs are carnivorous entails that dogs exist--is only a priori_v!

This becomes clear if we consider the beliefs that constitute the antecedent and consequent of that entailment. For both presuppose propositions that are knowable only a posteriori: on the one hand, the antecedent is a belief that presupposes the proposition that dogs are carnivorous, and we have shown such beliefs to be empirical; and, on the other hand, the consequent contains a PW-belief involving a proposition which, for similar reasons, is also empirical--viz., an object-involving proposition presupposing the existence of a certain biological kind.⁶¹ Couldn't we then hold, as before, that any such higher-order belief, if a priori at all, it is only a priori_v?

We can now make a move similar to the one we made before--viz., to insist that Oscar's belief ("that his thinking that

⁶¹ Note that, given these reasons, it is enough that a belief be about an object-involving proposition to fail to count as a priori_s. Thus the proposition that, if Clinton lied, then Clinton lied, could not count as a priori in that strong sense, for it presupposes the existence of Clinton. This point was suggested to me by S. Schiffer.

dogs are carnivorous entails that dogs exist") fails to be a priori, but is in some sense epistemically special. Naturally, the reasons for holding the latter would now run along different lines. We could maintain, for example, that this belief, unlike others, seems to follow by simple deduction from anti-individualist theory--which could in turn be known by standard anti-individualist thought experiments. Call any belief inferred from a thought experiment a "TE-belief."⁶² Clearly, if justified and true, any TE-belief would constitute knowledge of a special kind, for it would not require an empirical investigation of the environment. We have suggested that such knowledge be considered a priori.

In light of this, a more perspicuous construal of the anti-individualistic entailment seems to be:

- 3* Oscar knows a priori, that his thinking that dogs are carnivorous entails that dogs exist.

But if (3*) is the entailment Oscar could come to know from his knowing both his own thought-contents and anti-individualist theory, then it seems that what founders is not the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and privileged

⁶² This stipulation is intended to apply to any belief supported by a thought experiment, and not only to those that follow from standard, anti-individualist twin-earth cases. To run the argument I have in mind, it is enough that the belief be inferred from a thought experiment, and irrelevant whether such an inference is deductive, inductive or abductive (viz., argument to the best explanation). In any such case, the "based-on relation" would be inferential, and that is all I need for the argument that follows.

self-knowledge, but rather the Skeptic's attempt to show that these doctrines are incompatible--since, as we shall now see, there is no plausible closure principle available to license his argument.⁶³

First, we concede that it is plausible to hold that a priori knowledge (understood as a priori_s knowledge) is closed under known entailment, but argue that obviously it does not apply to the inference the Skeptic has in mind. For that inference, the Skeptic would need a plausible closure principle licensing that a priori_w knowledge is closed under known entailment, and unfortunately, there isn't any. To see this, we acknowledge that, although Oscar has privileged access to his empirical beliefs about his own thought-contents, he obviously **does not** have privileged access to the anti-individualist **entailments** of those beliefs (which have been shown to be TE-beliefs, and thus inferential).

But, if this is correct, then nothing follows from the premises of the Skeptic's argument. For even if we grant that each of his premises in (B) has the special epistemic property of being knowable without an investigation of the environment,

⁶³ This has been suggested to me by S. Schiffer, who offers an example to explain what goes wrong with analogous incompatibilist arguments:

1. Oscar knows a priori that he is having a headache.
2. Oscar knows a priori that if he is having a headache, then he has a head.
- Therefore,
3. Oscar knows a priori that he has a head.

the absurd conclusion needed by his reductio--that Oscar could know a priori (or nonempirically) that dogs exist--does not thereby follow. That, after all, would require that the special epistemic status of the premises be transmitted to the conclusion, and that could not happen. For at least one of Oscar's premises has an epistemic status that, clearly, cannot be transmitted through inference--viz., his belief about his own thought-contents. We have agreed that one has **privileged access** to such beliefs, in that they **are not** based on evidence or inference. But clearly, any such status **cannot** be transmitted from the premises to the conclusion of an argument, since any belief supported by premises would thereby be **inferential!**

I submit that once the epistemic status of each of the premises in the Skeptic's argument is properly understood, it then becomes plain that those premises do not entail the absurd conclusion the Skeptic has in mind--viz., that Oscar could know a priori that dogs exist. His argument is simply invalid, for there is no plausible closure principle licensing the transmission of epistemic status from premises to conclusion.

Our intuition that anti-individualists can retain privileged self-knowledge is now shown to be well-founded, since we are in a position to reject the Skeptic's conclusion. But this dispels only one of the puzzles created by the Skeptical argument, leaving the others unresolved. For if his

argument is invalid, what was its initial appeal? And if he misrepresents the epistemic status of anti-individualistic entailments and self-knowledge claims, why did his premises seem plausible? Although it is now clear that anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge are compatible, it remains to consider some conclusions, and see how we might resolve once and for all the Paradox generated by the Skeptic's argument.

6. The Paradox Resolved

The Skeptic's chief claim is that anti-individualists must give up privileged self-knowledge, for, if they wish to retain it, they run into the simple-deduction problem. That is, the Skeptic agrees with other incompatibilists that the attempt to hold both anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge leads to what I have called "the entailment problem." And, naturally, if that objection could be made out, it would amount to a reductio of any such attempt.

Yet I have shown the Skeptic's arguments to be unsound. And unlike previous responses, mine neither begs the question nor is itself Skeptical. I have maintained that the Davidsonian maneuver of arguing for self-knowledge by invoking properties of our social or intellectual practices that presuppose self-knowledge begs the question against the Skeptic. And I have shown that the Burgean response concedes far too much to the Skeptic, since it settles for the claim

that one can know one's thought-contents if their enabling conditions obtain, whether or not one knows that they do. Of course, I do agree that, given anti-individualism, self-knowledge of the sort Burgeans have in mind is possible. For I hold that, under normal circumstances, self-ascriptive beliefs about one's thought-contents are justified and--since they are also **predominantly true**--constitute knowledge.

But unlike Burgeans, I can insist that "reflective" self-knowledge is possible after all. For, first, I subscribe to a thesis of privileged access according to which, from one's own perspective (and unless one has some evidence to the contrary) such beliefs are **directly** justified. At the same time, because my "Cartesian" intuitions about self-knowledge are very weak (as they do not entail infallibility, incorrigibility, etc.), and I do not assume skepticism about perception or reasoning, I can hold that, **in special circumstances**, one could certainly check the epistemic status of one's beliefs about one's own thought-contents. One could even make use of some other belief-forming practices, such as perception and inference, to strengthen or weaken their justification. I have shown how a maneuver of this sort is available to anti-individualists who wish to hold on to reflective, privileged self-knowledge.

Yet something more must be said about the Skeptic's unsound argument (A) if we are to achieve a decisive

resolution of the Paradox it generates:⁶⁴ How could it be that it seems at first valid? I submit that it is because the principle that knowledge is closed under known entailment, although not fully vindicated, is prima facie very plausible. And, at first, we may think that the Skeptic is appealing to such a principle. But once we see what is entailed by the thesis of privileged access, it becomes obvious that the principle that knowledge is closed under known entailment is **not available** to the Skeptic, and that there is no other plausible closure principle that sanctions the inference he has in mind.

And how could it be that each of his premises seems at first plausible? I submit that it is because they rest on some common intuitions, each made plausible in turn by standard skeptical hypotheses, such as Cartesian demons, envatted brains, and the like. Note, first, that the Skeptic, in arguing that Oscar does not know that he is not living on twin earth, makes some skeptical assumptions concerning what is required for our physical-world beliefs to be justified and to amount to knowledge--what we have called the principles of

⁶⁴ In light of our earlier discussion, this argument now runs as follows:

- A
1. If Oscar does not know that he is not living on twin earth, then he does not know that he is now thinking that dogs are carnivorous.
 2. Oscar does not know that he is not living on twin earth.
- Therefore,
3. Oscar does not know that he is now thinking that dogs are carnivorous.

exclusion (EP) and underdetermination of the evidence (UE).⁶⁵

Naturally, if the Skeptic is really assuming exclusion and underdetermination, this will undermine his argument. For, if sound, his argument would show only that **the conjunction** of anti-individualism **and** skepticism about the physical world engenders skepticism about self-knowledge--which, of course, seems nothing more than an ignoratio elenchi that could be met by the anti-individualists' refusal to assume the skeptic's principles. And why, indeed, should they assume those principles in any case, since, as we saw in Chapter One, their theory is not about the epistemic status of our physical-world beliefs, but only about the external supervenience of propositional-attitude content? I conclude that one of the Skeptic's premises--viz., that Oscar does not know that he is not living on twin earth--may seem plausible, given common skeptical intuitions that arise when we examine the epistemic status of our beliefs about the physical world. But anti-individualists need not assume either the Skeptic's premise or its supporting principles.

What, then, about the premise that "if Oscar does not know that he is not living on twin earth, then he does not know that he is thinking that dogs are carnivorous"? Perhaps whatever makes it plausible that Oscar does not know that he

⁶⁵ The Skeptic, of course, uses such principles together with the hypothesis that the course of Oscar's experience, were he transported unawares, would be the same both on earth and on twin earth.

is not living on twin earth, also makes it plausible that he does not know his own thought-contents. After all, skeptics usually argue that skepticism about the physical world "spreads" to invite skepticism about the contents of our minds--which, of course, is a common Cartesian claim.⁶⁶

But here my response is two-fold. First, I have maintained that anti-individualists could concede that premise yet insist that when its epistemic status is properly understood--viz., as a belief based on inference from a standard twin-earth thought experiment--it cannot be invoked by the Skeptic to mount his argument (B). For that argument is a reductio of the attempt to hold that premise together with the premise that one has privileged access to one's own thought-contents. But even if anti-individualists were to concede such premises, nothing would follow, for we have shown that there is no rule of inference guaranteeing the transmission of epistemic status from premises to conclusion in the Skeptic's argument.

Second, suppose the Skeptic wished to insist that, given the principles of exclusion and underdetermination of the evidence, if a person's physical-world beliefs are not justified, then neither are his beliefs about his own thought-contents. But then the Skeptic's position would be of no interest at all--for it would be only another general

⁶⁶ For a recent argument to this effect, see C. Wright (1991). Of course, Descartes held the "indubitability" of the cogito to put it beyond such skepticism.

skeptical claim about self-knowledge.⁶⁷ And such a claim could, of course, be met by the Cartesian maneuver of taking beliefs about one's own thought-contents to be directly justified--for if those beliefs are not based on **reasons** or **evidence**, they are beyond the reach of the skeptic's principles of exclusion and underdetermination of the evidence.

It appears, then, that anti-individualists are completely in the clear, for of the various possible incompatibilist attempts to mount a reductio, it is now plain that all fail. Anti-individualism and privileged self-knowledge are compatible after all.

⁶⁷ Recall that the interesting Skeptical claim is that, **given anti-individualism**, one could not know one's thought-contents without investigating the environment.

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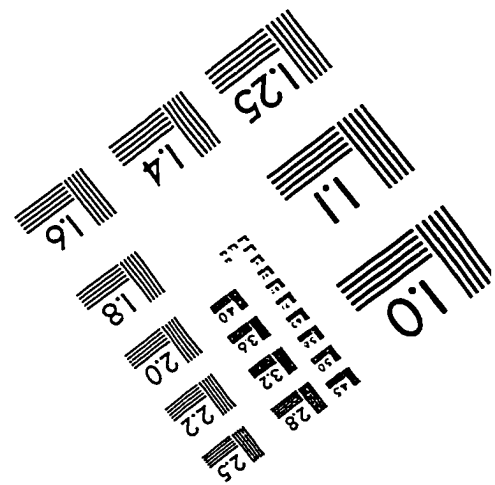
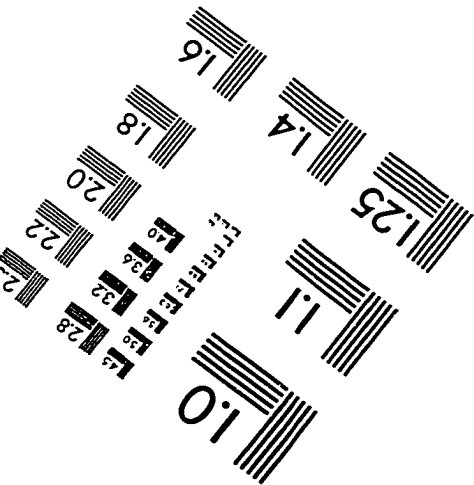
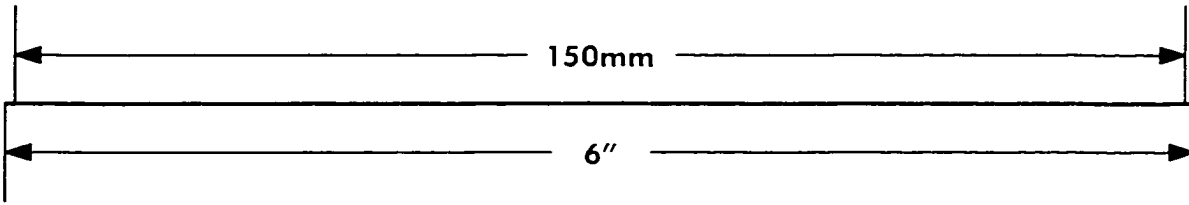
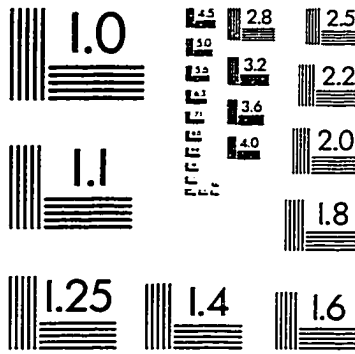
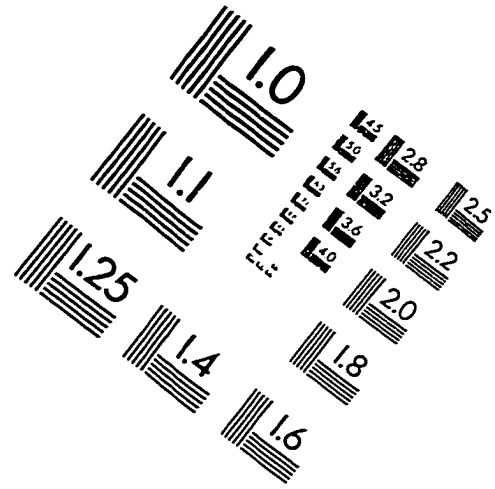
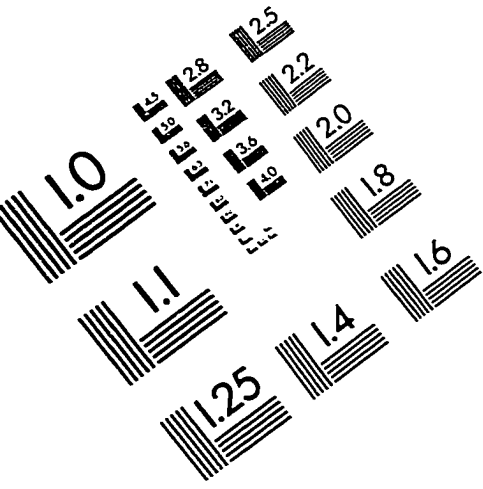
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