

REJOINDER TO HAZE

Fred ADAMS, Murray CLARKE

ABSTRACT: Tristan Haze claims we have made two mistakes in replying to his two attempted counter-examples to Tracking Theories of Knowledge.¹ Here we respond to his two recent claims that we have made mistakes in our reply. We deny both of his claims.

KEYWORDS: Tracking Theories of Knowledge, Robert Nozick, Fred Dretske, putative counter-examples

A. The Oracle Case:

In his original paper, Haze claimed to have invented two counter-examples to tracking theories (though he mainly targeted Nozick). In our reply to Haze, we explained why the examples were neither counter-examples to Nozick nor Dretske. In the first example, person A (Haze) delusionally thinks person B (his neighbor) is an oracle, not a knowledgeable tax lawyer. A dislikes lawyers and would not believe B if A knew B were a lawyer. B tells A “*p*,” a truth about tax law. A believes *p* but also delusionally believes B is an oracle. Haze argues that A does not know that *p* because of the delusion.

We countered that as long as the delusion does not affect A's ability to understand or believe what B says, and as long as B wouldn't say “*p*” unless *p*, that nothing in tracking theories bars A's knowing that *p*. The delusion does not affect A's coming to know that *p*.² With respect to the current interpretation Haze says:

Firstly, the assumption that they make is right: in the example as I intended it, the main delusion I have is that my neighbor is not a lawyer but a divine oracle. I was not imagining myself to have delusions concerning the issue of what my neighbour has and has not said to me.... It occurs to me that perhaps this counterexample should have been more fully specified. If we imagine the origin of my belief to have been forgotten by me, so that it becomes mere history, then *perhaps* I could be said to know that *p*. But as I am imagining it, the stuff about my neighbor being a divine oracle is fresh in my mind and I think of it with wonder every time I think of *p*...I do not know what more to say in support of

¹ Tristan Haze, “Reply to Adams and Clarke,” *Logos & Episteme* VII, 2 (2016): 221-225.

² We also considered a case where the delusion spreads and does affect A's belief and does block knowledge, but Haze does not reply to that interpretation.

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my view here, so I will leave it at that and just hope that you agree with me about this.³

Haze claims that A still does not know that p . We still maintain that he does. Does it matter that A forgot where he acquired his belief that p is true? It could. If someone who did not know that p told him, it would matter. But B knows that p . In the “fully specified” emendation Haze insists that A remembers it was B who said “ p ” each time A believes that p . We still do not see why that matters, as long as the delusion is not affecting A's ability to think clearly about the meanings of tax law p and as long as B knows tax law and is not being deceptive in any way. As far as we can tell A is tracking the truth about p and knows that p . Haze seems to be throwing himself on the court of public opinion. Okay, good. We have presented these ideas at several venues over the past year and everyone so far has agreed with us.

B. The Nutt Case:

Now let's consider Haze's claim that we make a second mistake in our reply to him. Let's call the neighbor in the example ‘Norman Nutt.’ Haze's second example is this:

My neighbor is a tax lawyer. Here, unlike in the previous counterexample, I have no delusional belief. It is my neighbor who is the strange one: for years, he has intently nurtured an eccentric plan to get me to believe the truth about whether p , where p is a true proposition of tax law, along with five *false* propositions about tax law. His intention to do this is very counterfactually robust. He moves in next door to me and slowly wins my trust. One day, he begins to regale me with points of tax law. He asserts six propositions: p and five false ones. I believe them all.⁴

Our reply to Haze's second claim is this:

We think the reason Haze believes this is a counterexample is because he relativizes the method M to the neighbor and the neighbor's dispensing of information and not to Haze's own belief-forming methods. Haze seems to think the method here is that with respect to the true proposition p , the neighbor would not say “ p ” unless p . This causes Haze to think Nozick's tracking conditions are satisfied and that Nozick's theory implies that Haze knows that p . However, this is not the case. (...) Nozick is very clear that methods are the belief-forming methods of the cognizer. (...) Haze's method M in the example is to trust what the neighbor says.... And this method clearly does not track the truth because it is not restricted to “ p ” alone, but freely ranges over the other five

³ Haze, “Reply to Adams and Clarke,” 223.

⁴ Haze, “Two New Counterexamples,” 310.

falsehoods the neighbor utters and Haze believes. So this too, when properly understood, does not constitute a counterexample to Nozick's tracking theory.⁵

Haze's new reply to us is this:

I agree that the method *M* in the example is to trust what the neighbor says – that is exactly how I thought of it when I came up with the counterexample. I do think the tracking conditions are satisfied, but not because I have some idea of what the method *M* is which differs from Adams and Clarke's idea of what the method *M* is.... The first thing to note about this argument is that it does not refer explicitly to any of Nozick's four conditions for knowledge-via-a-method. Nowhere do Adams and Clarke specify, by engaging explicitly with Nozick's theory as formulated in four conditions, why this example, according to them, fails to count as knowledge on that theory....The second thing to note is that Nozick's account nowhere requires that the method *M* in question in a given case track the truth, where tracking the truth is something like general reliability. I agree that, in this example, the method in question – trusting what my neighbor says – is not generally reliable. But that doesn't stop Nozick's conditions from being fulfilled, for the conditions do not require general reliability of method.⁶

Again, we fail to see the problem. Haze agrees that the method is “trusting what the neighbor says.” The neighbor, ‘Norman Nutt,’ says five false things and one true. Hence, condition three states: “If *p* weren't true, and Haze were to use the method of trusting what his neighbor, Norman Nutt, says to arrive at a belief as to whether (or not) *p*, Haze would not believe, via the method of trusting what Nutt says, that *p*.” Nutt harbors some deep, irrational propensity to lie to Haze about matters of law. Accordingly, it is entirely possible that if *p* weren't true, it might be the case that Nutt tells Haze that *p* is true. Thus, it's plausible that the proposition in question is false, and that Nozick's account is therefore correct in implying that Haze fails to acquire knowledge that *p*. Haze, however, contends that the proposition in question is true:

...if *p* weren't true, and I were to use the method of trusting what my neighbor says to arrive at a belief as to where (or not) *p*, I would not believe, via the method of trusting what my neighbor says, that *p*. As I stipulated in describing the counterexample, my neighbor's desire to have me believe the truth about *p* is very counterfactually robust.⁷

This method does not track the truth. Obviously! The crux of the problem is that it seems intuitively likely that if *p* weren't true, it might not be the case that Nutt speaks the truth regarding *p*! We are not sure what more we need to say.

⁵ Adams and Clarke, “Two Non-Counterexamples,” 69.

⁶ Haze, “Reply to Adams and Clarke,” 224-225.

⁷ Haze, “Reply to Adams and Clarke,” 225.

Contrary to Haze's claim that we have unjustifiably imported reliability requirements into Nozick's account, the reliability of the method for arriving at a belief is an intrinsic feature of the account, for the truth of the relevant counterfactual conditional is grounded in nomic relationships rather than in mere probabilistic correlations or in single-case realizations. Since the reliability involved in the account is complete, nomically grounded reliability, it is unaffected by the generality problems that plague probabilistic accounts like Goldman's reliable process theory.

Haze says that we are going rogue, and not staying true to Nozick's conditions. But as every constitutional lawyer knows, the letter of the law does not cover every application to every case. Some interpretation is required. Nozick's theory does not anticipate Haze's attempted counterexamples. But it is not hard to figure out how to apply the theory to the example and it goes as we suggest. This is not a matter of giving a new theory, but of interpreting the existing one. We can't help but note that Haze's original paper offered putative counter-examples to "tracking theories," not just to Nozick. We explained why they were not counterexamples to Nozick or Dretske. Haze did not accuse us of giving a different account than Dretske's – and for good reason. We provide an interpretation of how tracking theories must respond to the examples he raises in order to stay consistent with the intended interpretation of the conditions of the theories.

It is perhaps true that the general method "believing what the neighbor says" need not be tracking the truth for every possible thing the neighbor might say. But according to tracking theories of knowledge (Nozick's and Dretske's), if one is to know something about tax law from a tax lawyer, it had better be the case that the tax lawyer would not say "*p*" about tax law unless *p*. Since this is not the case for Haze's neighbor in example two, tracking theories say that Haze does not know that *p*. And we are not changing anything about tracking theories. The counterfactual, "the neighbor wouldn't say '*p*' unless *p*," is not true. It is right there in Nozick's condition 3 as relativized to the method Haze agrees he intended.⁸ To conclude, we think that Haze is mistaken about both the Oracle Case and the Nutt Case: the first case does constitute knowledge while the second does not.

⁸ Many thanks to John A. Barker for comments on this paper.