**Humean cum Counterfactual Skepticism and Epistemic Deontologism**

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**§1 Abstract**

We present a strategy to avoid versions of Humean and counterfactual skepticism based upon a deontologist theory of justification, a partial guideline for how to side step Gettier problems for certain statements and the assumption that certain statements are compelling. As an upshot the threats of Humean skeptical arguments disappear for some subjects and classes of statements.

**§2 Humean Skepticism**

David Hume in effect pointed out that inductive arguments are not valid, and argued that our inductively grounded prognoses for the future are only certain in as far as we can be certain about some uniformity principles which would themselves be as much in need of justification as the prognoses considered to begin with. Humean skepticism may e.g. question particular statements concerning causality holding between events and some statements concerning the future.

**§3 Counterfactual Skepticism**

Statements like *If I had jumped unequipped from here I would have fallen quickly downwards* as uttered by someone on the top of Matterhorn fall under the spell of Humean-like skepticism, for such statements go beyond what we can observe with our senses or establish by ratiocination. We call this form of skepticism *counterfactual skepticism* because the statement in doubt has a counterfactual form.

**§4 The Occasional Irrelevancy of the Future**

An advantage with expressing exemplifications of Humean like skepticism with counterfactuals as in §3 is that such expressions do not invoke future states of the world. As a consequence we do not in such cases need to fend off or preoccupy ourselves with such temporal delicacies as the truth values of future contingents, and so we do not need special metaphysical assumptions concerning the reality of the future.

**§5 Gettier Resistency**

We say that a statement *q* is *Gettier resistent* just if *q* is known by the subject if, and only if *q* is true and the subject believes *q* and the subject is justified in believing *q*. The definition of classes of Gettier resistent statements may be sensitive e.g. to what subject it is for, but we will here concentrate upon just one imagined subject and context so variations in extension will largely be avoided.

**§6 Private Interferential Counterfactual Statements**

We take a statement of the form *If I had done p, then q would have happened* to be a private interferential counterfactual statement; it is *private* because it invokes the first person as subject, and *interferential* because it invokes the subject as an agent.

**§7 Immediate Private Interferential Counterfactual Statements**

We take *immediate* private interferential counterfactual statements to be private interferential counterfactual statements with the additional requirement that *p* and *q* are concerned with the subject's spatiotemporal vicinity so that the subject can promptly observe whether *q* if the subject does *p* and the subject is moreover able to deliberate clearly as to whether to do *p* or not to do *p*. An *outlook* is an immediate private interferential counterfactual statement.

**§8 Outlooks and their Gettier Resistancy**

We assume that outlooks are Gettier resistent. This means as per §5 that an outlook is known by the subject just if it is justified, true and believed.

**§9 Futuristic statements and their Gettier Resistancy**

A statement of the form *It will always be the case that p* is a futuristic statement, and a statement is a futuristic statement if it is the negation of a futuristic statement or a disjunction of two futuristic statements. We will assume that futuristic statements are Gettier resistent.

**§10 Epistemological Deontologism**

We presuppose a theory of justification known as *epistemological deontologism* which takes a subject to be *justified* in believing something just if it is *epistemologically* *permitted* that the subject believes it.

**§11 Kant's Law**

Kant’s Law is the idea that *‘ought’ implies ‘can’*, i.e. that if it ought to be the case that a certain state of affairs obtains then it is also physically possible for that state of affairs to obtain. We assume that Kant's Law is true, and also as regards the epistemic notion of duty correlated with epistemic permissions by the inter definability that believing *q* is epistemologically permitted for a subject just if it is not the case that believing *not-q* is an epistemological duty for the subject. So we have that a subject epistemically ought to believe a proposition just if the subject has an epistemic duty to

believe the proposition. Kant's Law in epistemic contexts is that if a subject has an epistemic duty to believe a proposition *q* then it is physically possible for the subject to believe the proposition *q*.

**§12 Epistemic Deontologism and Doxastic Voluntarism**

Epistemic deontologism has come under attack on account of the supposition that doxastic attitudes are not under voluntary control. Given the assumption that beliefs are not under voluntary control, it is then assumed that epistemological deontologism does not make sense on account of Kant's Law as per §11. I disagree with the tenet that no beliefs are under voluntary control, and e.g. think that persons who chose to climb Matterhorn thereby also chose to believe that they are climbing Matterhorn. There are more interesting cases of voluntary control over beliefs related to for example stereotypes and ideology, and we occasionally do expect and hope of others that they educate themselves to abandon extremist views such as e.g. with anti vaccination attitudes. Often changes of opinion do occur as a result of deliberation, as when persons do jury duty. Of course, many beliefs are not under voluntary control. Nevertheless, the adoption of Kant's Law as per §11 together with epistemic deontologism does not logically require or entail that the subject on occasions may believe a proposition and also may believe the negation of the proposition.

**§13 Physical Necessity and Compelling Propositions**

A state of affairs *q* is physically necessary if, and only if the state of affairs *not-q* is not physically possible. A proposition *q* is *compelling* for a subject S if, and only if it is physically necessary for S to believe that *q.* We do not presuppose any particular semantics for physical necessity, and the intended meaning of *it is physically necessary that S believes q* may also be captured by saying that *S is not able to not believe that q.*

**§14 Compelling Propositions are Justified**

Suppose proposition *q* is compelling for subject S in the situation, so that it is physically necessary in the situation that S believes *q*. By interdefinability it follows that it in the situation is not physically possible for S to not believe *q.* By a doxastic application of *Kant's Law* it follows that if it ought to be that it is not the case that S believes *q* then it is physically possible that it is not the case that S believes q. As we suppose *q* is compelling, it follows by modus tollens that it is not the case that it ought to be the case that it is not the case that S believes *q.*  By the mutual inter definability of obligation and permission it follows that it is permitted that S believes *q.* Consequently, by the theory of justification set out in §10 it follows that S is justified in believing *q*. It thus follows that compelling propositions are justified. Notice that this is a quite general result which holds for all kinds of propositions that are compelling to a subject. Observe that one odd and seemingly unacceptable feature of our theory of justification is that even crazy beliefs are justified if compelling; but this is not such a high cost, and our theory does not have as a consequence that the adduced crazy belief is true.

**§15 Compelling Outlooks**

We assume that some outlooks are compelling, i.e. that some immediate private interferential counterfactual statements are such that the subject is not able to refrain from believing in them. The statement *If I had jumped unequipped from here I would have fallen quickly downwards* in §3 uttered by someone on the top of Matterhorn is an example of an outlook which is compelling for the utterer, whose name is *Matterson*.

**§16 The Compelling and Justified Matterhorn Outlook**

We have assumed that Matterson's outlook to the effect that he or she would have fallen quickly downwards if jumping unequipped from Matterhorn is a compelling statement for Matterson while upon Matterhorn. The example we use is dramatic in order to underline the extent to which propositions can be experienced as compelling. By §14 it follows that Matterson is justified in believing that he or she would have fallen quickly downwards if he or she had jumped unequipped from Matterhorn.

**§17 Believing the Matterhorn Outlook**

We assume that Matterson while on the top of Matterhorn indeed does believe that he or she would have fallen quickly downwards if jumping unequipped from Matterhorn. The reasonable skeptic does not doubt that Matterson so believes.

**§18 The Veracity of the Matterhorn Outlook**

We assume that it is indeed true that Matterson would have fallen quickly downwards if he or she had jumped unequipped from Matterhorn. Again, reasonable people agree.

**§19 The knowledge of the Matterhorn Outlook**s

Given our assumption in §8 that outlooks are Gettier resistent, and given §§14-18, it follows that Matterson knows that if he or she had jumped unequipped from the top of Matterhorn then he or she would have fallen quickly downwards.

**§20 A skepticism à la Hume, and its resolution**

Consider the statement *There will be daylight again* as uttered and considered during the darkness of night by Marta. The statement Marta considers is threatened by traditional style Humean skepticisms, without the need for counterfactual machinery.

**§21 On why Marta Knows there will be daylight again**

By §9, Marta's statement *There will be daylight again* is futuristic and so Gettier resistent and known just if justified and true and believed. Further, the proposition *There will be daylight again* is compelling for Marta, as per §13, so Marta is justified in believing that there will be daylight again. Further, not even the skeptic thinks that Marta does not believe that there will be daylight again or that there will not be day light again; so we can claim that Marta believes the proposition that there will be daylight again and that it is true that there will be daylight again. Taking stock, by invoking §5 and §9 it follows that Marta knows that there will be daylight again.

**§22 Conclusion**

We have considered two statements which give information that go beyond what we can directly perceive or establish by ratiocination and so beyond the type of knowledge sanctioned by skeptical philosophers as David Hume. Our result is that the subjects thinking about the statements we put forth, and which are prone to fall prey to Humean like skepticism, indeed do know the statements. These anti skeptical results readily generalize to related skepticisms by adapting the methods and assumptions we invoked. So we may e.g. develop anti Cartesian strategies or strategies to counter skepticisms with respect to the existence of the past or the external world or other minds and more.

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