

**What is Epistemic Entitlement?  
Reliable Competence, Reasons, Inference, Access**

Peter J. Graham  
University of California, Riverside

Version: December 20, 2018

Forthcoming in *Virtue Theoretic Epistemology: New Methods and Approaches*

Edited by Christoph Kelp and John Greco (Cambridge University Press)

**Abstract**

Tyler Burge first introduced his distinction between epistemic entitlement and epistemic justification in ‘Content Preservation’ in 1993. He has since deployed the distinction in over twenty papers, changing his formulation around 2009. His distinction and its basis, however, is not well understood in the literature. This chapter distinguishes two uses of ‘entitlement’ in Burge, and then focuses on his distinction between justification and entitlement, two forms of warrant, where warrants consists in the exercise of a reliable belief-forming competence. Since he draws the distinction in terms of reasons, this chapter brings his account of reasons altogether in one place. The chapter introduces a decision-procedure for classifying warrants as justifications or entitlements. The distinction between justification and entitlement is not the same as the inferential vs. non-inferential distinction. The chapter distinguishes inference from processing, thinking, reasoning, and critically reasoning. Burge’s new formulation of the distinction was driven by the recognition of non-accessible modular reasons. Three kinds of access are distinguished.

**Keywords**

Tyler Burge, Entitlement, Justification, Reasons, Warrant, Epistemic Competence, Reliabilism, Inference, Access

In contemporary epistemology, the term ‘entitlement’ has caught on, having been used by Robert Brandom, Tyler Burge, Fred Dretske, Christopher Peacocke, Michael Williams, and Crispin Wright, among many others, though often for very different purposes, as you might imagine.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter is about Tyler Burge’s distinction between entitlement and justification. His distinction falls within his overall “entitlement” framework. His framework cuts across all of his writings in epistemology and informs, and is informed by, his philosophical and empirically informed investigations into the natures of our various cognitive capacities, including perception, interlocution (testimony), memory, reasoning, critical reason, self-knowledge and reflection. Burge’s writings on these topics sprawl across a number of papers, many of them collected in his *Cognition Through Understanding* (Oxford, 2013), with a number still to be collected, especially his papers on perception.<sup>2</sup>

Because I’ve written and talked about his views in epistemology, people often ask me about his distinction between entitlement and justification. I could refer them to a number of his articles, but they report finding Burge a challenging read and would like something a little easier going that pulls everything together in one place. That’s what I’ll try to provide here.<sup>3</sup> You’ll let me know if I’ve pulled it off.

Our interest is not merely scholarly. Burge’s approach is a live contender. Expounding his approach will raise issues currently in contention, including the role of reasons, the nature of inference, and the internalism/externalism divide. Understanding Burge’s path through the territory should deepen our own understanding of these issues and more.

To understand Burge’s distinction between entitlement and justification, you need to know that he systematically uses ‘entitlement’ in two different senses. In the first, we have an *entitlement to rely* on a belief-forming competence. This is an entitlement that attaches to our reliance on the

competence *in general*. In the second, we have *entitlements for beliefs*, entitlements to hold or form *particular* beliefs through exercises of a competence. Here the entitlement attaches to the belief formed or sustained by the competence on the occasion. When Burge distinguishes between entitlement and justification, he primarily has this second sense in mind.<sup>4</sup>

You also need to know that by around 2009 he changed his mind on how to draw the distinction. In ‘Content Preservation’ (1993) and ‘Perceptual Entitlement’ (2003a) he relied on *access* to draw the distinction between entitlement and justification. He has since dropped accessibility as a distinguishing feature. If you think you know Burge’s *current* formulation from reading those two papers, think again.

The chapter goes as follows. In §1 I explain what Burge means he means when he says we have a general entitlement to rely on a belief-forming competence. In §2 I explain the reliabilist element in his account of warrant. In §3 I explain his distinction. He draws the distinction in terms of *reasons*. And so §3 includes a long discussion of his account of reasons. Readers interested in the role of reasons in epistemology should be especially interested in this material. In §4 I provide a diagnostic decision-tree and apply it to four representative cases to cement our mastery of the distinction. In §5 I explain why Burge’s distinction is not the inferential vs. non-inferential warrant distinction. I there offer a brief taxonomy of various kinds of psychological processing, including inference. Readers following recent debates about inference should find this section worthwhile. In §6 I explain why Burge changed his mind.

## **1 Our Entitlement to Rely on a Competence**

This section addresses what Burge means when he says we have a general right or entitlement to rely on a belief-forming competence.

Burge argues we enjoy entitlements to rely on interlocution, perception, memory, deduction, self-knowledge, reflection, and so on. When he does, he has both a negative and a positive point in mind.

Burge's negative point expresses agreement with the externalist movement in epistemology. According to the externalist, higher non-human animals, very young children, and even ordinary epistemologically unsophisticated adults, have plenty of knowledge and warranted beliefs, especially perceptual knowledge and warrant.

The externalist adopts a non-skeptical stance, assuming the correctness of these ordinary judgments. Given our ordinary concept of knowledge, we can know that higher non-human adults, young children and ordinary adults possess a great deal of knowledge.

The externalist also observed that animals, small children, and some ordinary unreflective adults do not know—or even cannot know—that their belief-forming processes are reliable routes to external reality. Higher non-human animals, small children, and some unreflective adults lack meta-justifications in favor of the reliability of their belief-forming competencies.

The externalist then concluded that knowledge and warrant—especially perceptual knowledge and warrant—cannot require the ability to represent one's belief-forming competences and abilities, or the ability to argue for their effectiveness. Knowledge and warrant in general cannot require meta-justifications.

This is then a *negative* point about what knowledge does not require. For many routes to knowledge, knowledge does not require meta-justifications. Epistemology *studies* knowers. Knowers in general don't have to be nascent epistemologists *to be* knowers.

Burge claims we know this negative point a priori. We reflect on our ordinary concept of knowledge, on cases involving animals and young children, our practices of knowledge and knowledge attribution, and come to see that meta-justifications are not required for ordinary warrant and knowledge.

Burge's first use of 'entitlement' then signals agreement with the externalist movement. To say we have an *a priori entitlement to rely* on our belief-forming competencies is to say we don't need a meta-justification establishing the effectiveness of our competencies for warranted reliance and knowledge.

But to make this negative point is only to go so far. Many so-called "moderate internalists" or "mentalists" in epistemology can accept this negative point, but without embracing the externalist (especially the reliabilist) program *tout court*. Burge goes further.

Burge's *positive* point is then that our general entitlement to rely on a competence "resides in" (1999b: 355; 2011b: 942; 2013b: 34) or "rests on" (2013b: 35) the reliability of the competence in normal conditions. To say that we have an entitlement to rely on a competence is then to say that the competence on which we rely is a reliable belief-forming competence. I shall say more about this momentarily.

These points so far are now largely familiar in contemporary epistemology, as many philosophers have taken the externalist turn and see our warrant and knowledge as arising from exercises of reliable competencies instead of sophisticated meta-justifications.

Burge's papers in epistemology then take up our "entitlement to rely" on various belief-forming competencies. 'Perceptual Entitlement' (2003a) is about perception. 'Content Preservation' (1993) is about memory and testimony-based beliefs. 'Comprehension and Interpretation' (1999b) is about linguistic understanding. 'Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge'

(1996) is about self-knowledge. Other papers take up reasoning, reflection, intellection, and further explore the epistemology of memory.

In each case, Burge takes up two tasks:

- (i) First, **argue** a priori, by reflecting on cases and our practice, that we don't need a meta-justification for warranted beliefs that arise from exercises of the competence. Which is just to say that we have an a priori prima facie entitlement to rely on the competence. We can formulate these entitlements to rely on the competence in the form of a principle. For example, *we are a priori prima facie entitled to take the deliverances of perception at face value*. We might call this the Perception Principle.
  
- (ii) Second, **give an account** or **rationale** for why it should be that the competence is a good route to truth and knowledge. That is, **explain why** it is that the competence is reliable in normal conditions when functioning normally. Burge sometimes calls these accounts or rationales “justifications” for the principles just mentioned, for they explain the major part of the underlying entitlement to rely on the competence, viz. the reliability of the competence. They explain why reliance on the practice is “rationally justified” (1993: 244; 2011c: 266, n. 18). This is Burge's positive point as applied to the competence in question. The rationale can be a priori or empirical; the reliability of the competence can have an a priori or empirical basis. Which answer is correct depends on the details of the case. To say that our general entitlement to rely on a competence is a priori—his negative point that a meta-justification is not required for

warrant—is then not ipso facto to say that the reliability of the competence wherein our entitlement resides is a priori. Again, it depends on the details of the case.

Let's look at three cases to make this more concrete:

*Perception.* For (i), in 'Perceptual Entitlement' and elsewhere Burge repeats externalist considerations against requiring meta-justifications for perceptual warrant. The "Perception Principle" is true.

For (ii), though Burge once argued that perception is necessarily reliable in normal conditions (1996, n.11; 1997: 294; 1999b: 357), he now holds that it is only empirically true that perception is reliable in normal conditions (2010a: 299-300; 2011c: 202 n. 89). The *underlying rationale* for the Perception Principle is empirical: our entitlement to rely on perception has an *empirical* basis.

*Deduction.* Here Burge means our competence with simple deductive inferential rules. For (i), in various places Burge argues we do not need to propositionally represent the inference rule or the reliability of the rule to have an inferential competence to reason in accord with the rule. Our entitlement "resides in [our] actual competence to make the relevant deductive transitions, not in an ability to understand and represent the rule governing the competence" (2011b: 492). A "Deduction Principle" is true: *we have a prima facie entitlement to transition from premises to conclusions through deductive reasoning.*

For (ii), Burge argues a priori that our competence with deductive reasoning is necessarily truth-preserving when functioning normally. The underlying rationale for a Deduction

Principle is a priori: unlike perception, our entitlement to rely on deduction has an *a priori* basis; deductive reasoning is truth-preserving *by* its nature.

*Interlocution.* For (i), Burge argues in ‘Content Preservation’ that we do not need to represent the communication channel and have independent grounds for believing it is reliable; we do not need reasons to believe that our interlocutors are sincere and competent to form prima facie warranted beliefs through interlocution (1993: 235-9, 2011c: 264-271).<sup>5</sup> To make his case, he focuses on children, language-learning, and our ordinary practice. Burge’s so-called “Acceptance Principle” is true: *a person is entitled to accept as true something that is presented as true and that is intelligible to him, unless there are stronger reasons not to do so* (1993: 237). This makes Burge an anti-reductionist about interlocution.

For (ii), Burge surprisingly argues that interlocution is a priori necessarily reliable in normal conditions when functioning normally. The underlying rationale for the Acceptance Principle is a priori: unlike perception but like deduction, our entitlement to rely on interlocution has an *a priori* basis; unlike perception but like deduction, interlocution is necessarily reliable in normal conditions.<sup>6</sup>

We can now see what it would be to deny that we have an entitlement to rely on a belief-forming process: either deny that the process is a reliable competence or deny that the competence produces warranted beliefs without a meta-justification of its reliability. Without an entitlement to rely on a belief-forming competence, a belief formed on the process would have to get its warrant from some other source, if warranted at all.

Sellarsians deny the Perception Principle: for perceptual warrant we must possess a meta-justification supporting perceptual belief. The “inferential internalist” denies the Deduction Principle: for warranted belief through inference, we need to be aware of our inference and its truth-preserving power. The “reductionist” about testimony denies the Acceptance Principle: for warranted testimony-based belief, we need independent reasons to believe the speaker is sincere and competent. Burge, of course, disagrees with all three.

This should provide enough context to understand Burge’s first, *general* sense of ‘entitlement’. With this understanding under our belts, we can now turn to Burge’s second, *particular* sense of ‘entitlement’. On this second use, entitlement is a species of warrant. So to understand his second use of the term, we should first address what he means by ‘warrant’.

## **2 Warrant is a Good Route to Truth**

Given what I have said so far that our general entitlement to rely on a competence resides in the reliability of the competence, it should come as no surprise to learn that for Burge warrant for beliefs formed through the exercise of a belief-forming competence should arise from the reliability of the competence. This makes Burge a reliabilist about warrant, but not just any kind of reliabilist.

Burge holds a teleological, competence, proper functionalist account of warrant. Burge anchors his account in a teleological, normative framework. The representational function of belief is truth. The representational function of a belief-forming competence is to form true beliefs. A belief-forming competence that is reliable in normal conditions when functioning normally meets *natural norms*—standards for doing well in meeting or furthering functions—a priori associated with the

competence's representational function. A competence that is functioning normally and reliably serves true beliefs in normal conditions meets a standard for doing well in furthering its representational function. Warrant then consists in meeting such a norm, for warrant is a good route to truth and knowledge. Warrant arises through the exercise of a reliable belief-forming competence that is reliable in normal conditions when functioning normally; a competence that is reliable in normal conditions when functioning normally is a good route to truth and knowledge. Even so, warrant does not suffice for knowledge. There are warranted true beliefs that fall short of knowledge. Some warranted beliefs are even false.<sup>7</sup>

Burge is clearly not a simple reliabilist. Sheer matter of fact reliability is not sufficient for warrant. Warrant requires a reliable competence; no competence, no warrant. An accidentally reliable "clairvoyant" power does not confer warrant. Nor is sheer matter of fact reliability necessary for warrant. Warrant does not automatically lapse outside of normal conditions. A massively deceived brain-in-a-vat might still enjoy warranted beliefs. Provided the competence is reliable in *normal conditions*, an exercise of a competence confers prima facie warrant when functioning normally in *any* conditions.<sup>8</sup>

Burge's view of warrant then lies near "virtue reliabilist," "competence," and "proper functionalist" views that now populate much of the literature.<sup>9</sup> Burge (2003a) himself noted similarities with Sosa's "virtue reliabilism" and Plantinga's "proper functionalism."

Here's how Burge's idea works for perception. Perception is a competence to accurately represent objects and their attributes in the physical environment. The competence was formed and individuated through past patterns of interaction between the perceptual system and its subject-matter. The patterns begin with objects and their attributes in the environment; continue through a medium such as light; impact sensory receptors that in turn trigger processing within the perceptual

system; eventuate in perceptual representations that in turn guide behavior in the organism's environment. These past patterns then partly explain the formation and nature of the perceptual system.

These patterns specify what counts as *normal* functioning and *normal* conditions. Normal functioning is working or operating the way the system worked or operated when it was formed, when it came to be what it is. *Formative* functioning determines *normal* functioning. Normal conditions are then those kinds of conditions where the system, in working or operating normally, came to be what it is, where it acquired the capacity to represent environmental objects and attributes. *Formative* environments determine *normal* environments.<sup>10</sup>

Higher animals, especially humans, then form (mostly true) perceptual *beliefs* though *conceptualizations* of (mostly accurate) perceptual representations, a non-inferential transition that reformats the perceptual representation into a perceptual belief.<sup>11</sup>

Warrant for perceptual beliefs then arises from the normal exercise of our competence to form perceptual beliefs. Reliable in normal conditions when functioning normally, perception is a good route to truth. The formative *patterns* ground a non-accidental explanatory *path to success*. When perceptual belief formation manifests competence, it runs along this path.

Imagine a flow chart that describes the steps in the normal functioning of the perceptual system and the transition to perceptual belief. Consider a scene of objects and properties distributed in the individual's environment. Light bounces off of the objects and enters the eye. The perceptual system transforms the information through various channels. The modular processing of the perceptual system produces a perceptual representation, a state of the whole individual. The system processes; the individual sees. If the flowchart describes a good, reliable route to forming true beliefs in normal conditions, then beliefs formed along this flowchart enjoy prima facie warrant.

When a perceptual belief is occasioned along this path, the belief is formed on a *good route to truth*.

All forms of warrant—not just perceptual warrant—involve reliability in normal conditions.<sup>12</sup> For all cognitive competences (interlocution, deductive and inductive reasoning, memory, introspection and self-knowledge, reflection, etc., not just perception), warrant runs on such paths, on good, reliable routes to truth. Different competence, different formative patterns; different formative patterns, different pathways; different pathways, different route to truth. That's Burge's account of warrant.

### 3 The Reasons Criterion

We can now proceed to Burge's distinction between two kinds of warrant: entitlement and justification. Burge sees the distinction in both psychological and epistemological terms: there is, Burge's thinks, an important difference between two kinds of warrant because there is an important psychological difference in the ways we form and sustain beliefs. What then is the basis for the difference?

Burge originally drew the distinction in terms of *accessible reasons*. Justifications were warrants involving *accessible reasons* for belief; entitlements were warrants that did *not* involve accessible reasons. But more recently he has changed his mind. We will see why in §6.

He now draws the distinction solely in terms of the presence or absence of *operative reasons* in the particular exercise of the belief-forming competence. Justifications arise from exercises of good, reliable routes to truth that involve *reasons*, accessible or not. Entitlements arise from exercises of good, reliable routes to truth that do *not* involve reasons.

- Justifications = warrants involving reasons
- Entitlements = warrants without reasons

Imagine a flowchart (as it were) describing the exercise(s) of the good route to truth—the particular exercise(s) of the competence(s) forming or sustaining the belief. Are there reasons involved? If yes, the warrant for the belief is a justification. If no, the warrant for the belief is an entitlement.<sup>13</sup> Following Mikkell Gerken, let's call this the Reasons Criterion.<sup>14</sup>

But what are reasons? We won't understand Burge's distinction until we understand his conception of reasons.

Unsurprisingly, Burge has a complicated conception. For the sake of completeness, and for having most of the details of Burge's view of reasons in one place, I'll list all the points in his conception that I know. Most important for our purposes, however, are the last two. They tell us exactly what counts as a reason when it comes to grounding his distinction.

We'll see right away that he takes the notion of reasons seriously. For Burge, unlike many other epistemologists, 'reason' is not merely a commonly used synonym for 'ground', 'basis', 'evidence', or 'justifier'. 'Reason' has a narrow use in Burge's hands.

Here are the details:

- Reasons are defined by their role. Reasons are actual and potential answers to 'why' questions. Why did the professor go home? Because he needed to do his laundry. That was his reason. Reasons are actual or potential steps in explanations. That is their *job, role, or function*.<sup>15</sup>

- Answers to ‘why’ questions are necessarily propositional. Only something propositional can complete a ‘because’ clause or answer a ‘why’ question. This is a matter of the logical grammar of reasons. (2011b: 490) This is a familiar point in the reasons literature.
- Hence non-propositional states and entities cannot be reasons. This excludes perceptions (though representational, they are non-propositional) and sensations (for they are frequently not even representational, let alone propositional).<sup>16</sup> (2003a: 529; 2005b, 2010a, 2013a.)
- This also rules out worldly states, objects and events. “A thunderbolt or a sea otter cannot be a reason...Nature *grounds* reasons. It provides entities and situations representations of which can form a reason...Nature is not a text and is not made up of propositions or reasons” (2011a: 192-3).
- What then is the ontology of reasons? Reasons are abstract propositional representational contents of psychological states, marked with a certain mode, such as belief, judgment or intention. (2011a: 193; Audi 2001: 52-55)<sup>17</sup>
- What then is it to *have* a reason? Having a reason involves thinking the reason, having a psychological state with that propositional content and mode. (2011b: 489-490) Burge thereby respects the distinction between *there being reasons*, on the one hand, and *having reasons*, on the other.
- Normative reasons are then a subset of explanatory reasons. Normative reasons *explain why* someone *should* believe or intend something.<sup>18</sup>
- Reasons to believe are theoretical reasons. Theoretical reasons explain why one *should believe* something. Theoretical reasons are normative reasons to form or sustain a belief. (2011a: 193).<sup>19</sup>

- Being a believer entails having some reasons. This is because the capacity to have beliefs requires engaging in some deductive reasoning, and deductive reasoning combines with premises to provide reasons for conclusions. So a believer will have some beliefs that play this role, if they have any beliefs at all.<sup>20</sup>
- Reasons are the basic units in reasoning. (2011a: 193) Reasons “enjoin thinking...in accordance with them” (1998: 392). Reasons are elements in reasoning, in belief-formation, maintenance and revision.
- Some animals can reason deductively and so have reasons. For example, some animals can reason from the belief that the food is either in the red cup or in the blue cup, that the food is not in the red cup, and then conclude that the food is in the blue cup. This requires competence with logical constants, and so the capacity for deductive reasoning. (2003a: 505, n 1).<sup>21</sup>
- The rationalizing explanation need not be second-order or meta-representational. A “reason is commonly not a meta-representational consideration that makes reference to shoulds, beliefs, intentions, or representational contents. Reasons can be about object-level matters. They are reasons by virtue of their potential use in supporting and explaining the “why” of conclusions” (2011a: 193, n. 78).<sup>22</sup>
- Hence the steps comprising the explanation can be in the individual’s psychology, even if the individual cannot give the explanation. Having potential steps in explanations in one’s psychology is one thing. Being able to give the explanation is another. Some non-human animals have reasons, but they cannot give explanations for the belief-worthiness of their beliefs. (1999a: 109; 1998: 391, 397)

- Reasons differ from critical reasons. Critical reasons evaluate reasons. Critical reasons are about reasons; they represent reasons as such, as reasons. Critical reasoning requires meta-representational abilities and epistemic concepts. Animals and small children have reasons and can reason. They lack critical reasons and cannot critically reason.
- There are two broad categories of theoretical reasons. Firstly, they are (or involve) the contents of self-evident propositional attitudes (e.g. *cogito* thoughts or basic logical or mathematical thoughts), for the reason for the belief-worthiness of the attitude is contained within the attitude itself.
- Secondly, theoretical reasons are warranted premises in deductive and inductive arguments that combine with a competence with the inference rule to explain the belief-worthiness of the conclusion for the individual. The warranted premise is not a reason in isolation, but only in conjunction with a competence with a rule.

That's Burge's account of reasons. The earlier points in the bullet-list help lead up to and make sense of the last two points in the list, the points we need to have under our belt to understand Burge's distinction, for they delimit the class of theoretical reasons: theoretical reasons are either understood contents that self-evidently warrant belief, or other warranted beliefs that combine with a competence with a deductive or inductive inference rule to provide a rationalizing explanation of the belief-worthiness of the conclusion for the individual (2011e: 367). They are steps in the individual's mind—steps at the object-level—that enter into explanations of the belief-worthiness of what they are reasons for.

Returning to the justification versus entitlement distinction, justifications are then warrants involving reasons (when a reason is operative in the good route to truth). Entitlements are warrants

without reasons (when there is no operative reason in the good route to truth). If self-evident, or derived from deductive or inductive reasoning, the warrant is a justification. Otherwise it is an entitlement. That's the Reasons Criterion.

To classify the warrant for a belief, again imagine the flowchart describing the good route to truth. Ask if there are any operative reasons in the flowchart. If there are, the *overall* warrant for the belief is a justification. If there are none, then the *overall* warrant for the belief is an entitlement.

Besides calling an *overall* warrant for a belief a justification when an operative reason is involved, Burge also calls operative reasons *themselves* justifications. It is perfectly fine to call operative reasons *justifications*, for when we ask someone for the justification for their belief, we are often asking for the argument that supports their belief (their reasons). We are not asking whether the overall warrant is a justification. (That's a question for the professional epistemologist.) But even so I find this dual use confusing. My terminological preference would be to reserve 'justification' and 'entitlement' for kinds of warrants that attach to beliefs, and to reserve 'reasons' and 'non-reasons' for elements in the exercise(s) of the competence(s) that contribute to the warrant for the belief. Reasons *serve* justifications. Everything else serves entitlements. We would then only use 'justification' for warrant that results when operative reasons are involved, and simply call operative reasons 'reasons' instead of also calling them 'justifications,' as Burge often does. That way we're only using 'justification' for one thing: a kind of warrant. And when ordinary people ask one another for their "justifications" for their beliefs, we'll take that ordinarily to mean asking for their reasons.

What about entitlements? Does Burge ever call the other elements in the exercise(s) of the competence(s) that are not operative reasons *entitlements*? No. Instead he calls them *contributions* to an entitlement. A perceptual representation is not an entitlement, but a *contribution* to an

entitlement. Perceptual representations do *not* entitle perceptual beliefs; they *contribute* to entitlement. They are a *part* of a good route to truth; they are not a good route *all on their own*. They are not the epistemic *grounds* for perceptual belief; at best they are just one factor.

Many overall warrants involve a mix of *contributions* to entitlements and justifications *as elements*. In such cases, the *overall* warrant is a justification, despite the complexity of the good route to truth. (2013b: 42; 2011a: 196; 2011b: 492; 2011c: 275, n. 29) When it comes to justifications as total warrants, there are always elements that are not operative reasons in the good route to truth. Contributions to entitlement are ubiquitous.

I'd like to introduce another terminological innovation. Instead of using 'entitlement' in both a general sense (as in our entitlement to rely on a belief-forming competence in general) and in a particular sense (for the kind of warrant a particular belief enjoys, depending on the presence of reasons in the good route to truth), I propose using 'epistemic right to rely' or 'epistemic license' for the general sense, and reserving 'entitlement' for the particular sense. That way we are only using 'entitlement' for one thing: a kind of warrant.

To sum up, in this and the previous section we have expounded two important ideas. The first is that warrant arises from the exercise of a reliable belief-forming competence (a good route to truth and knowledge), a competence that is reliable in normal conditions when functioning normally. The second is that there are two kinds of warrants: entitlements and justifications, where the distinction turns on reasons.

These two ideas are orthogonal. You can conceive of warrant as Burge does, but without seeing much point to the role of reasons in epistemology. Hilary Kornblith (2015), I imagine, sees things this way. Or you can agree with Burge about the importance of reasons in epistemology, agree it

grounds an important distinction between two kinds of warrant (you can even use ‘justification’ and ‘entitlement’ to mark the difference), but reject a competence, virtue reliabilist account of warrant. Crispin Wright (2004a, 2014) and Fred Dretske (2000), for example, might fall in here.

Of the two ideas, which one is more *fundamental*, as it were? In my estimation, the fundamental notion for Burge is reliable competence. Fundamentally, Burge is a teleological reliabilist, competence theorist about warrant. The difference between the two kinds of warrant turns on reasons; their commonality turns on competence. Burge’s view isn’t fundamentally an “entitlement” theory (whatever that might mean, taken in abstraction), but fundamentally a teleological reliabilist, proper functionalist, competence theory of epistemic warrant.

In a recent paper Kurt Sylvan and Ernest Sosa have also argued for the incorporation of (possessed normative) reasons into a competence account of knowledge. Like Burge, they argue that some beliefs are properly based on reasons. “[We] agree that one species of justified belief may require possessing sufficient epistemic reasons” (Sylvan and Sosa 2018: 555). Here they agree with Burge that a species of warrant (“justified belief”) turns on reasons. They also agree that some beliefs are not warranted by reasons. Hence they seem to agree with Burge’s distinction, though they don’t use his nomenclature. They furthermore agree that reliable epistemic competence, at root, is doing the work, even when reasons are involved. “[E]pistemic reasons...ground one species of justified belief, but competences are the real foundation” (Sylvan & Sosa 2018: 555). Although they don’t mention Burge, they’ve got their fingers on the same set of issues.

#### **4 A Decision-Tree and the Scope of Entitlement**

In this section I will run through a decision tree and four examples to crystalize our understanding. The fourth example will raise an interesting issue about the nature of inference that we will subsequently pursue.

Here's the decision-tree. Start with a warranted belief. Then go through these steps:

### STEP ONE

Is the warranted belief warranted through self-evidence?

- If yes, the overall warrant is a justification.
- If no, go to step two.

### STEP TWO

Is there some other warranted propositional attitude that is a part of the warrant, a part of the good route to truth?

- If no, the overall warrant is an entitlement.
- If yes, go to step three.

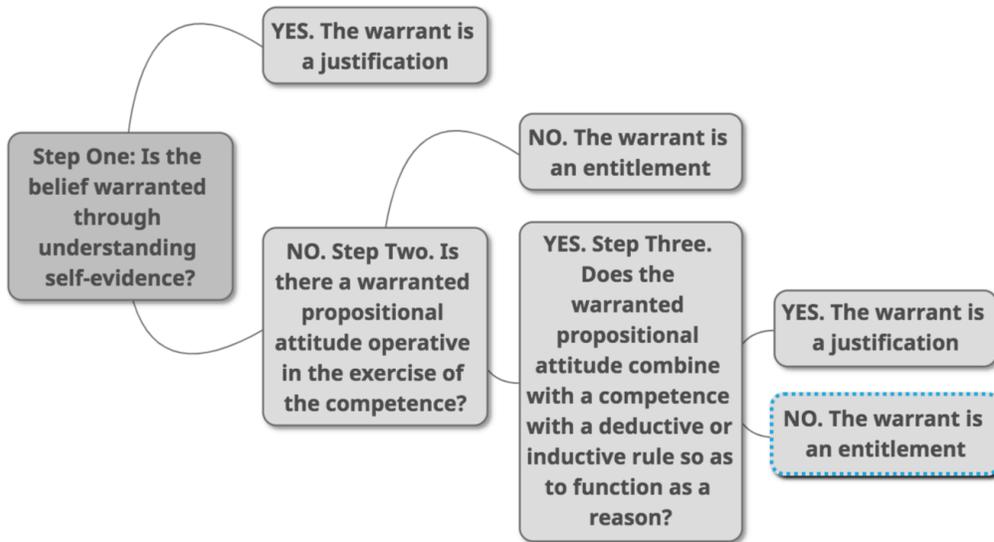
### STEP THREE

Does the other warranted attitude combine with an inferential competence with an inference rule to help provide a rationalizing explanation of the credibility of the conclusion for the individual?

Does the other warranted attitude *function as a reason* for the individual?

- If yes, the overall warrant is a justification.
- If no, the overall warrant is an entitlement.

Here are the three steps in a flowchart:



These three steps should cover every case.

Let's now run through four cases. The first three appear throughout the Burge corpus on warrant. The fourth appears in one paper in particular, 'Epistemic Warrant: Humans and Computers' (2011b).

**CASE ONE: *Cogito* Thoughts and Simple Self-Evident Thoughts**

An individual thinks the thought I exist or I am thinking, or the thought that 2+2=4, and thereby believes the thought through understanding its content. These beliefs are self-evidently warranted. “[The *cogito* proposition], as thought on the occasion, is self-evident in the sense that it constitutes a reason for itself...” (2013b: 18).<sup>23</sup> By *STEP ONE*, the warrant is a justification. Since no inference is involved, the warrant is a *non-inferential justification*.<sup>24</sup>

**CASE TWO: Perceptual Beliefs**

An individual forms a perceptual belief that<sub>1</sub> is a sphere through the exercise of a reliable perceptual competence that involves conceptualizing the perceptual representation that<sub>1</sub> sphere.

Apply *STEP ONE*. Is the belief self-evident? No. Move to *STEP TWO*.

Apply *STEP TWO*. Is there a warranted propositional attitude involved in the flowchart describing the exercise of the competence? No. The perceptual representation is not a warranted propositional attitude: perceptual representations are non-propositional. No other propositional attitude is involved in the formation of the perceptual belief. Since conceptualization (in Burge's sense) is not inference, *a fortiori* the transition to perceptual belief does not involve competence with a deductive or inductive inference rule. By *STEP TWO*, the warrant is an entitlement. (Hence the title of Burge's 2003 paper, 'Perceptual Entitlement'.)

### **CASE THREE: Deductive Inference**

Suppose an individual forms the warranted belief that the streets outside are dangerous from the warranted premise beliefs that it is raining freezing rain outside and that if there is freezing rain on the streets, then the streets are dangerous through an exercise of her deductive reasoning competence with *modus ponens*.

Apply *STEP ONE*. Is the conclusion self-evident? No. Move to *STEP TWO*.

Apply *STEP TWO*. Are there warranted beliefs in the warrant? Yes. The premises are other warranted beliefs. Move to *STEP THREE*.

Apply *STEP THREE*. Do the warranted premise beliefs combine with a deductive or inductive inference rule to constitute a reason? Yes. The two warranted premises clearly combine with a deductive reasoning competence with *modus ponens* to provide a rationalizing explanation

of the credibility of the conclusion for the individual.<sup>25</sup> The other warranted attitudes function as reasons for the individual. Hence by *STEP THREE* the warrant is a justification.<sup>26</sup>

#### CASE FOUR: Associative Inference

Burge presents the following example in ‘Epistemic Warrant: Humans and Computers’ (2011b: 393-5). An intelligent, non-human animal forms the warranted perceptual belief there is danger over there from the warranted belief there is that kind of motion over there. Somehow the animal “knows” that motion of that kind signals danger. But the animal does not make this transition via a connecting premise belief if there is motion of that kind at a location, then there is danger at that location. The individual does not represent the connection. Instead the psychological transition is the result of evolution by natural selection “hammering in” the reliable connection into the animal’s psychology, producing a reliable truth-preserving psychological competence, so that the animal automatically infers from the perceptual belief to the conclusion belief. The competent *transition* from the perceptual belief to the conclusion is a truth-preserving *associative inference*. The transition does not involve a competence with a deductive or inductive inference rule. Nevertheless, the conclusion is warranted, for the belief is formed on a good, reliable route to truth.

Apply *STEP ONE*. Is the conclusion self-evident? No. Move to *STEP TWO*.

Apply *STEP TWO*. Is there a warranted belief involved in the warrant? Yes, the perceptual belief. Move to *STEP THREE*.

Apply *STEP THREE*. Does the premise belief combine through deductive or inductive reasoning—with a competence with a deductive or inductive inference rule—to provide a rationalizing explanation for the individual of the belief-worthiness of the conclusion? No. The animal moves from “p” to “q” without an inference rule that would help explain the belief-

worthiness of the conclusion for the individual. Hence the perceptual belief does not function as a reason for the animal. “It is not a rationalizing premise within the individual’s psychology” (2011b: 495).

Why does Burge say this? He says the transition is “dumb and non-rationalizing” even though it is part of a good route to truth. “Only an explanation of why” the associative competence “is in place explains and rationalizes the belief-worthiness of the conclusion, given the premise” (2011b: 494). But that explanation is not in the individual’s psychology, and so not a part of an explanation of the reasonability of the conclusion for the individual. The premise belief might be a reason for the supra-psychologist who knows why the associative competence is in place, but not for the animal itself. For the animal, the inference from the premise to the conclusion fails to constitute “some sort of explanation for the acceptability of the conclusion...[T]he premise and the transition fail to “combine to go some way toward providing an (object-level) explanation for the inferrer of why the conclusion is credible” (2011b: 493). The warranted perceptual belief is then not a reason for the conclusion for the animal. Hence there is no reason in the warrant, in the animal’s good route to truth. The warrant for the conclusion is then not a justification but an entitlement, an *inferential* entitlement.<sup>27</sup>

Burge then conjectures that cases like this last one may be more common than we might have thought:

It seems to me that more of our elementary induction may take this form than we philosophers are inclined to think. Patterns of inference are hammered into us by evolution. The principles that they instantiate and that explain them may yield little insight into why the conclusion is rationalized, made sense of, or explained by the premises. (2011b: 495).

Burge says that he believes that his account of these cases “provides insight into the status of blind, but competent, truth-tracking, associative inference” (2013b: 43). It seems to me that these cases should not be restricted to patterns “hammered in” by evolution but should include learned associations as well. Learned associations connecting propositional attitudes would then also involve non-rationalizing transitions from warranted premises (“input” beliefs) to warranted conclusions (“output” beliefs), where the total warrant is not a justification but an entitlement.<sup>28</sup> Given that associative inference may be more common than we’ve been led to think after the cognitive revolution, the scope of entitlement may be much broader than we might otherwise have been inclined to judge.

That’s the three-step decision-tree applied to four cases. If I’ve succeed you should now have a thorough understanding of Burge’s current conception of the distinction between entitlements and justifications.

## **5 What is Inference?**

A number of authors have assimilated Burge’s distinction to the distinction between inferential (mediated) and non-inferential (immediate) warrant: justifications are inferential warrants, and entitlements are non-inferential warrants. Here is Ram Neta:

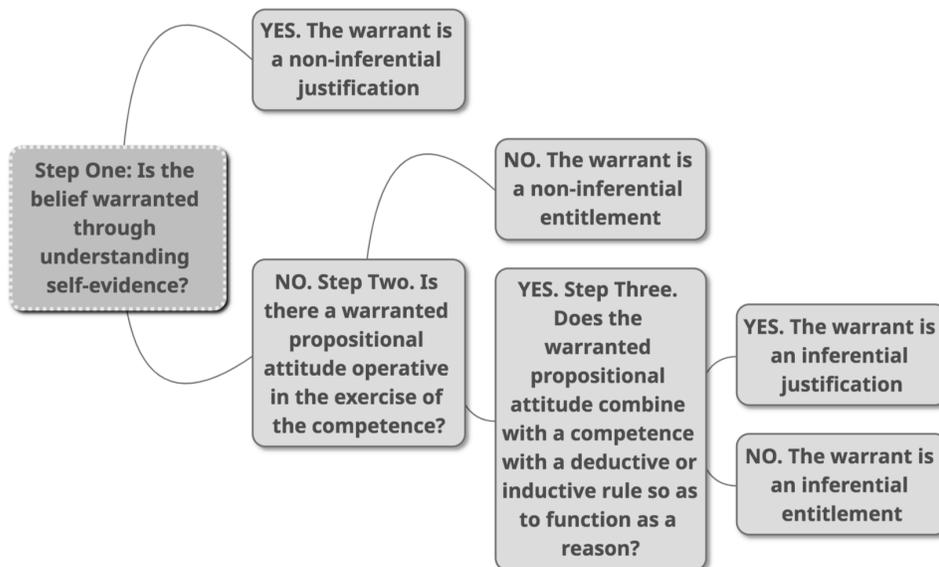
“If a believer is warranted in believing that P on the basis of an inference to her conclusion that P, then, for Burge, this is sufficient for the believer’s warrant for P to be a justification...[I]nferential warrants...are all justifications” (Neta 2010: 197).

And here is Crispin Wright:

Burgean justification is restricted to...reasons... Burge's preference is to restrict the idea of reasons for belief to cases where beliefs are formed/sustained inferentially. The Burgean notion of entitlement is enlisted in an attempt to explain how non-inferential but empirically based belief can be in rational good standing. (Wright 2014: 223).

Given what we've seen already, this assimilation is mistaken. Our four cases show that the inferential vs. non-inferential distinction is orthogonal to the justification vs. entitlement distinction. There are inferential and non-inferential justifications, and there are inferential and non-inferential entitlements.

An updated flowchart makes this clear:



Burge's distinction isn't about the presence or absence of *inference*; it's about the presence or absence of *reasons*.

But what, you may be wondering, is Burge's account of *inference*?

Some philosophers (psychologists too) have a very broad conception, where any processing or transitioning in an individual's psychology involves inference. On this very broad conception, the processing of visual stimuli into various stages by the perceptual system counts as inferential processing.

At the other extreme, some other philosophers have a very narrow conception, where inference involves the conscious, deliberate drawing of a conclusion from a set of premises according to an inference rule, where the individual is aware of, or can easily become aware of, both the inference rule and his or her "taking" the premises to support the conclusion according to the rule.<sup>29</sup>

Burge rejects the narrow view. (2013b: 28) But that does not mean that Burge accepts the broad view either: not every transition "in the mind" is an *inferential* transition; perceptual processing is not inferential processing.<sup>30</sup> So where, in between these two extremes, does Burge place inference?

At a minimum, Burge insists, inferential transitions must be from a propositional mental state (such as a belief) to another propositional mental state (typically another belief). "*Inference*, as I use the term, is processing that connects propositional contents" (2013b: 35-6, n. 21).<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, an inferential transition must be along a warranting pattern: "[A]ny transition from one or more propositional attitudes to another, according to some warranting transition pattern, is propositional inference" (2011b: 493).

Inference is not so broad so as to include any mental processing. Nor is it so narrow so as to include only self-conscious, reflective reasoning. It even goes beyond deductive and inductive

reasoning so as to include associative inference. It may even include non-conscious, modular inference, as we'll see further along.

This, of course, is not a full-blown theory of inference (far from it). Even so, given Burge's remarks, as a conjecture we might propose the following taxonomy of psychological processes, where the narrower forms are all instances of the broader forms, but not vice versa:

- Processing from any cause to any (kind of) mental state as output.
- Processing from any mental cause to any mental output.
- Processing from any mental cause to a propositional attitude as output. (Conceptualization is processing a perceptual representation into a perceptual belief.)
- *Thinking*: Processing from propositional attitudes (thoughts) as input to propositional attitudes (further thoughts) as output.
- *Inference*: Processing from propositional attitudes as input to propositional attitudes as output according to a warrant-conferring or preserving competence or pattern.
- *Reasoning*: Processing from propositional attitudes as input to propositional attitudes as output according to a competence with deductive or inductive rules. The premise inputs function as reasons for the conclusion output.
- *Critical reasoning*: Conscious processing from propositional attitudes as input to propositional attitudes as output according to a competence with deductive or inductive rules, with conscious awareness of the premises as reasons for the conclusion.
- *Reflective critical reasoning*: Conscious processing from propositional attitudes as input to propositional attitudes as output according to a competence with deductive or inductive

rules, with conscious awareness of the premises as reasons for the conclusion, and conscious awareness of the inference rule as such.

The broadest view of inference would identify it with any cause of any mental state. The narrowest view would identify it with reflective critical reasoning. Burge places inference in between thinking and reasoning. What then is inference? Inference is *warranting* thinking. Reasoning, on the other hand, is *justifying* thinking. That's why not every inferential warrant is a justification.

## 6 Why Did Burge Change his Mind?

If that's Burge's current conception of the distinction between entitlement and justification, then what was his former conception, and why did he change his mind?

Here is how Burge originally posed the distinction in 'Content Preservation':

Justifications...involve reasons that people have *and have access to*. These may include self-sufficient premises or more discursive justifications. But *they must be available in the cognitive repertoire* of the subject....Entitlements are...warrants that need not be...accessible to the subject. (Burge 1993: 458, emphases added)

And here is what he said in 'Perceptual Entitlement':

Justification is warrant by reason that is *conceptually accessible on reflection* to the warranted individual...Entitlement...contrasts with the internalist form of warrant—justification. (Burge 2003a: 504-5, emphasis added; cf. Burge 1999b: 346; 352).

Let's call this the Accessible Reasons Criterion.

Three points stand out:

- (1) Like the Reasons Criterion, this is a reasons account of *justification*. Justification arises from operative *reasons* in the exercise of the competence. However, it adds an *access* requirement, unlike the Reasons Criterion. The reason must be *accessible* to serve justifications. Justifications arise from *accessible* reasons. The Reasons Criterion says nothing about access.
- (2) The Accessible Reasons Criterion does not explicitly say that entitlements arise from elements in a good route to truth that are not operative reasons. Instead it says that contributions to entitlements need not be accessible to the individual. Inaccessible reasons (if they are possible) could then serve entitlements. The Accessible Reasons Criterion thus conflicts with the Reasons Criterion when it comes to entitlements.
- (3) The Accessible Reasons Criterion also suggests that one might understand Burge's distinction by assimilating it to an access version of the internalism vs. externalism distinction. Justification is just *access-internalist* warrant, and entitlement is just *access-externalist* warrant. Burge's "innovation" would then be to give each side in the controversy their own notion. This way of glossing Burge's distinction is familiar in the

literature. Burge frequently glossed his distinction this way himself. But this gloss, we will see, is importantly misleading.

Why did Burge drop the Accessible Reasons Criterion? We will find our answer in his reflections on the possibility of modular reasons and modular reasoning.

‘Modular’ means occurring in a psychological module, a sub-system of the human mind, that is generally fast, automatic, whose operations are unconscious and opaque to the central, non-modular systems of the whole individual. Many modular sub-systems output to the whole individual.<sup>32</sup> A good example is perception. Perceptual processing of perceptual information is sub-personal, modular processing. It is fast, automatic, unconscious and opaque to the individual. The output of the system is a perceptual representation, a state of the whole individual. Processing language may be another example. The output is a state of the individual, a representation of the syntax and semantics of the utterance. But the inputs and intermediate stages are sub-personal. (Burge 2011c: 277-8; 2011e)

Modular reasoning may or may not be possible. But one candidate—that Burge may or may not accept—is pragmatic processing to recover speaker meaning. (Sperber and Wilson 2002)

Regardless, Burge certainly considers the possibility of modular reasons. By 2011, if not before, he imagined the possibility of sup-personal propositional attitudes that are unconscious and opaque to the whole individual but are nonetheless potential steps in explanations of the belief-worthiness of conclusions for the individual. He imagined the possibility of modular reasons.

Are modular reasons accessible to the individual? If “accessible” means “can be represented by a higher-order, reflective, introspective ability” then modular reasons are clearly not accessible. Call this the *narrow, reflective sense* of access.

Here is another sense. A psychological state is accessible if and only if it is possible input to further non-modular psychological processing—inferential or otherwise—by the whole individual. In this sense, the perceptual beliefs of animals and small children are accessible, for they are inputs to reasoning and inference by the whole individual. Call this the *moderate, whole individual sense* of access. Are all modular reasons (reasons internal to the module) accessible to the individual in this sense? Obviously not.

Here is still another, even broader, sense of *access*. A psychological state is accessible if and only if it is possible input to further processing of any kind—modular or non-modular—inferential or otherwise—by one or more of the psychological systems or capacities of the individual, sub-personal or personal. Put crudely, a state is accessible iff it is “in” any part of the individual’s psychology that can be the input to any other part. Call this the *rather broad, “in the mind” sense* of access.<sup>33</sup> Are modular reasons accessible in this sense? Obviously yes.

We then have three senses of access:

- Narrow: Accessible to the individual through conscious, whole individual introspective reflection
- Moderate: Accessible to the individual through conscious, whole individual thinking
- Broad: Accessible to any part of the mind through any psychological operation

If Burge were to keep the access criterion on reasons serving justifications, he’d then have three choices:

1. Only reasons that are *narrowly* accessible serve justifications. All other warranting elements serve entitlements. Young children and animals without introspective reflective access lack justifications. Entitlement, not justification, is then the type of warrant for the warranted premises in deductive arguments in the minds of animals and very young children. Animals and very young children have reasons but not *justifications*. Animals and small children are inside the space of reasons but outside the space of justifications.
2. Reasons that are *moderately* accessible serve justifications. Self-evident beliefs and the *non-modular* warranted premises in deductive arguments in the minds of animals and small children are then warranted by justifications. Their non-modular reasons serve justifications. Their modular reasons (if they have any) do not. Their modular reasons serve entitlements.
3. Reasons that are *very broadly* accessible serve justifications. The non-modular and modular warranted premises in deductive arguments in sub-systems and in the central processing of animals and very young children can then serve justifications.

Which sense of ‘access’ does Burge adopt? Burge finds the very broad sense of access possible, but not to his liking. The narrow sense is of course possible, as evidenced by its popularity. Even so, Burge favors the moderate view. Accessible for Burge then means *within the central system*, “accessible” to the *whole individual*. Accessible then means consciously thinkable.

Burge is then forced to make a choice when drawing the entitlement versus justification distinction. Should he keep the access criterion understood in terms of moderate access? This would have the advantage of including animals and small children in the space of justifications, consistent with his intent. But it would have the disadvantage of excluding operative modular

reasons from serving justifications, even though structurally they seem to be no different from reasons: they play the same role as potential steps in explanations.<sup>34</sup>

Which way should Burge go? Accept the moderate sense of access *and keep the access requirement* on reasons serving justifications, or accept the moderate sense of access *but drop the access requirement* altogether?

Burge chose the latter (2013b: 27). Justifications involve operative reasons, *regardless of access*. Reasons are potential steps in rationalizing explanations of the belief-worthiness of conclusions for an individual, whether conscious or unconscious, accessible or inaccessible. Why should it matter whether they are accessible to reflection, in the central parts of cognition, or tucked away in modular sub-systems? A quote sums this up:

I...think that a functional-structural conception [of justification] is more basic than a conception in terms of accessibility to consciousness. As I now use the terms, justification consists in warrants by reasons; an individual has a justification only if a relevant reason is present in an individual's psychology; entitlements are warrants that do not consist, even partly, in reasons...If there are modular reasons, they are justifications in the individual's psychology, although not...accessible. (2013b: 27-8)

That's why Burge changed his mind.

I hope by now you have mastered Burge's two uses of 'entitlement', the structure of his approach in epistemology, and his distinction between two forms of warrant in terms of the presence or absence of operative reasons.<sup>35</sup>

Why make all of these distinctions? Why use these words—‘warrant’ ‘reason’ ‘justification’ and ‘entitlement’ – in these particular ways? The fundamental reason, I believe, is to make sure we track differences in different epistemic kinds, especially the ways those different kinds track fundamental differences in psychological kinds. Epistemology should respect our best philosophy of mind, just as our best philosophy of mind should respect our best epistemology.<sup>36</sup>

## References

- Audi, Robert 2001. *The Architecture of Reason*. Oxford University Press.
- Bergmann, Michael 2006. *Justification without Awareness*. Oxford University Press.
- Boghossian, Paul 2003. "Epistemic Analyticity: A Defense," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 66:15-3.
- Boghossian, Paul 2014. "What is Inference?" *Philosophical Studies* 169: 1-18.
- Brandom, Robert 1994. *Making it Explicit*. Harvard University Press.
- Brandom, Robert 2000. *Articulating Reasons*. Harvard University Press.
- Burge, Tyler 1993. "Content Preservation," *The Philosophical Review* 102: 457-488.
- Burge, Tyler 1996. "Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 1-26. Reprinted in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 1997. "Interlocution, Perception, and Memory," *Philosophical Studies* 86: 21-47. Reprinted in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 1998. "Reason and the First Person" in Crispin Wright, Barry C. Smith, and Cynthia Macdonald (eds.), *Knowing Our Own Minds: Essays on Self-Knowledge*. Oxford University Press. Reprinted in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 1999a. "A Century of Deflation and a Moment of Self-Knowledge," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*. Reprinted in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 1999b. "Comprehension and Interpretation," in L. Hahn (ed.), *The Philosophy of Donald Davidson* (Chicago: Open Court). Reprinted in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 2003a. "Perceptual Entitlement," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 67: 503-548.
- Burge, Tyler 2003b. "Logic and Analyticity," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 66: 199-249.

- Burge, Tyler 2003c. "Perception," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 84: 157-167.
- Burge, Tyler 2005. "Disjunctivism and Perceptual Psychology," *Philosophical Topics* 33: 1-78.
- Burge, Tyler 2010a. *Origins of Objectivity*. Oxford University Press.
- Burge, Tyler 2010b. "Origins of Perception," *Disputatio* 4: 1-38.
- Burge, Tyler 2010c. "Steps Toward Origins of Propositional Thought," *Disputatio* 4: 39-67.
- Burge, Tyler 2011a. "Self and Self-Understanding: The Dewey Lectures 2007," *Journal of Philosophy* 108: 287-383. Reprinted in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 2011b. "Epistemic Warrant: Humans and Computers," first published in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 2011c. "Postscript: 'Content Preservation'," first published in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 2011d. "Disjunctivism Again," *Philosophical Explorations* 14: 43-80.
- Burge, Tyler 2011e. "A Warrant for Belief in Other Minds" first published in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 2013a. *Cognition Through Understanding: Self-Knowledge, Interlocution, Reasoning, Reflection: Philosophical Essays, volume 3*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burge, Tyler 2013b. "Introduction," in Burge 2013a.
- Burge, Tyler 2019. "Entitlement: The Basis of Empirical Warrant," in Peter J. Graham and Nikolaj J.L.L. Pedersen (eds.), *Epistemic Entitlement*. Oxford University Press.
- Call, Josep 2004. "Inferences about the Location of Food in Great Apes," *Journal of Comparative Psychology* 118: 232-241.
- Call, Josep 2006. "Descartes's Two Errors: Reason and Reflection in Great Apes," in S. Hurley and M. Nudds (eds.), *Rational Animals?* Oxford University Press.
- Carruthers, Peter 2006. *The Architecture of the Mind*. Oxford University Press.
- Casullo, Albert 2007. "What is Entitlement?" *Acta Analytica* 22: 267-279.

- Comesana, Juan & Matthew McGrath 2014. "Having False Reasons" in Clayton Littlejohn and John Turri (eds.), *Epistemic Norms*. Oxford University Press.
- Dretske, Fred 2000. "Entitlement: Epistemic Rights without Epistemic Duties?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 (3): 591-606.
- Fantl, Jeremy and Matthew McGrath 2009. *Knowledge in an Uncertain World*. Oxford University Press.
- Fodor, Jerry 1983. *The Modularity of Mind*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Gerken, Mikkel 2013. *Epistemic Reasoning and the Mental*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gerken, Mikkel 2018. "The New Evil Demon and the Devil in the Details" in Veli Mitova (ed.), *The Factive Turn in Epistemology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gerken, Mikkel 2019. "Epistemic Entitlement: Its Scope and Limits," in Graham and Pedersen 2019.
- Graham, Peter J. 2006. "Liberal Fundamentalism and Its Rivals," in Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *The Epistemology of Testimony*. Oxford University Press.
- Graham, Peter J. 2010. "Testimonial Entitlement and the Function of Comprehension," in Alan Millar, Adian Haddock & Duncan Pritchard (eds.), *Social Epistemology*. Oxford University Press.
- Graham, Peter J. 2012a. "Epistemic Entitlement," *Nous* 46: 449-482.
- Graham, Peter J. 2012b. "Psychological Capacity and Positive Epistemic Status," in Jill Henderson (ed.), *The New Intuitionism*. Continuum Press.
- Graham, Peter J. 2014. "Warrant, Functions, History," in Abrol Fairweather and Owen Flanagan (eds.), *Naturalizing Epistemic Virtue*. Cambridge University Press.

- Graham, Peter J. 2018a. "Formulating Reductionism about Testimonial Warrant and the Challenge of Childhood Testimony," *Synthese* 195: 3013-3033.
- Graham, Peter J. 2018b. "Sincerity and the Reliability of Testimony: Burge on the A Priori Basis of Testimonial Warrant" in Eliot Michaelson & Andreas Stokke (eds.), *Lying: Language, Knowledge and Ethics*. Oxford University Press.
- Graham, Peter J. 2019. "Why Should Warrant Persist in Demon Worlds?" in Graham and Pedersen 2019.
- Graham, Peter J. and Nikolaj J.L.L. Pederson (eds.) 2019. *Epistemic Entitlement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Graham, Peter J., Nikolaj J.L.L. Pedersen, Zachary Bachman, Luis Rosa 2019. "Introduction and Overview: Two Entitlement Projects," in Graham and Pedersen 2019.
- Greco, John (2010), *Achieving Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Hatfield, Gary 2002. "Perception as Unconscious Inference," in Dieter Heyer and Rainer Mausfeld (eds.), *Perception and the Physical World: Psychological and Philosophical Issues in Perception*. New York: John Wiley: 115-43.
- Hyman, John 2015. *Action, Knowledge, & Will*. Oxford University Press.
- Kelp, Chris 2011. "In Defense of Virtue Epistemology," *Synthese* 179: 409-33.
- Kornblith, Hilary 2012. *On Reflection*. Oxford University Press.
- Kornblith, Hilary 2015. "The Role of Reasons in Epistemology," *Episteme* 12: 225-239.
- Littlejohn, Clayton 2018. "Reasons and Theoretical Rationality," in Daniel Star (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Rationality*. Oxford University Press.
- Lyons, Jack 2009. *Perception and Basic Beliefs: Zombies, Modules, and the Problem of the External World*. Oxford University Press.

- Mandelbaum, Eric 2017. "Seeing and Conceptualizing: Modularity and the Shallow Contents of Perception" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, online.
- Majors, Brad 2015. "What Entitlement Is," *Acta Analytica* 30: 363-387.
- Majors, Brad and Sarah Sawyer 2005. "The Epistemological Argument for Content Externalism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 19: 257-280.
- McHugh, Conor and Jonathan Way 2016. "Against the Taking Condition," *Philosophical Issues* 26: 314-331.
- Mercier, Hugo and Dan Sperber 2017. *The Enigma of Reason*. Harvard University Press.
- Millikan, Ruth 1984. *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories*. The MIT Press.
- Neta, Ram 2010. "Can A Priori Entitlement be Preserved by Testimony?" in Alan Millar, Adrian Haddock & Duncan Pritchard (eds.), *Social Epistemology*. Oxford University Press.
- Peacocke, Christopher 1996. "Entitlement, Self-Knowledge and Conceptual Redeployment," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 96: 117-58.
- Peacocke, Christopher 2004. "Explaining Perceptual Entitlement," in Richard Schantz (ed.), *The Externalist Challenge*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Plantinga, Alvin 1993. *Warrant and Proper Function*. Oxford University Press.
- Pollock, John 1986. *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Pollock, John and Cruz, Joseph 1999. *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, second edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Pritchard, Duncan 2012. "Anti-Luck Virtue Epistemology," *Journal of Philosophy* 109: 247-79.
- Quilty-Dunn, Jake and Eric Mandelbaum 2018. "Inferential Transitions," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 96: 532-547.

- Rescorla, Michael 2009. "Chrysippus' Dog as a Case Study in Non-Linguistic Cognition," in R. Lurz (ed.), *The Philosophy of Animal Minds*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rescorla, Michael 2015. "Bayesian Perceptual Psychology," in Mohan Matthen (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Perception*. Oxford University Press.
- Rescorla, Michael 2016. "Bayesian Sensormotor Psychology," *Mind & Language* 31: 3-36.
- Robbins, Philip 2017. "Modularity of Mind" *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/modularity-mind/>>.
- Schroeder, Mark 2008. "Having Reasons," *Philosophical Studies* 138: 57-71.
- Shieber, Joseph 2015. *Testimony: A Philosophical Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Sosa, Ernest 2015. *Judgment and Agency*. Oxford University Press.
- Sperber, Dan 2001. "In Defense of Massive Modularity," in E. Dupoux (ed.), *Language, Brain, and Cognitive Development*. The MIT Press.
- Sperber, Dan and Diedre Wilson 2002. "Pragmatics, Modularity, and Mindreading," *Mind & Language* 17: 3-23.
- Sylvan, Kurt and Ernest Sosa 2018. "The Place of Reasons in Epistemology," in Daniel Star (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*. Oxford University Press.
- Williams, Michael 2008. "Responsibility and Reliability," *Philosophical Papers* 37: 1-26.
- Wright, Crispin 2004a. "On Epistemic Entitlement: Warrant for Nothing, and Foundations for Free?" *Aristotelian Society* supp 78: 167-212.
- Wright, Crispin 2004b. "Intuition, Entitlement and the Epistemology of Logical Laws," *Dialectica* 58: 155-75.

Wright, Crispin 2014. “On Epistemic Entitlement (II): Welfare State Epistemology,” in Dylan Dodd and Elia Zardini (eds.), *Scepticism and Perceptual Justification*. Oxford University Press.

---

<sup>1</sup> Boghossian 2003; Brandom 1994, 2000; Burge 1993, 1996, 2003a, 2013a, 2019; Dretske 2000; Peacocke 1996, 2004; Williams 2008; Wright 2004a, 2004b, 2014. Very few of these authors have the same thing in mind by ‘entitlement’.

<sup>2</sup> Unnamed references throughout are to Burge’s works. For papers collected in Burge 2013a, page numbers are to the 2013 printing.

<sup>3</sup> Other papers taking on this task are Casullo 2007; Majors 2015; and Gerken 2019. See also Graham, Pedersen, Bachman and Rosa 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Burge does not highlight the difference between his two uses, though he marks them on occasion. Sometimes he calls one a *general* entitlement and the other a *particular* entitlement. See Burge 2003a: 506, 513, 531; 2011c: 275, n. 29; 2011e: 369-370. 2013b: 4; forthcoming. See also Majors 2015, sec. 7.

<sup>5</sup> I have addressed issues surrounding the Acceptance Principle in my 2006, 2010, 2018a and 2018b and elsewhere. For an excellent book-length treatment, see Shieber 2015.

<sup>6</sup> I critically examine Burge’s case for this in my 2018b.

<sup>7</sup> 2003a, 2003b, 2010, forthcoming.

<sup>8</sup> See Burge forthcoming for his fullest treatment of “clairvoyance” type cases. See Burge 2003a for his fullest treatment of “demon-world” cases. For discussion whether warrant should persist in demon-world cases, see Gerken 2018 and Graham 2019.

---

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Bergmann 2006, Greco 2010, Kelp 2011, Plantinga 1993, Pritchard 2012, and Sosa 2015, among many others. I have developed the view that epistemic warrant consists in the normal functioning of the belief-forming competence when the competence has forming true beliefs reliably as an etiological function. See Graham 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> This point applies both to competences acquired in virtue of species membership (e.g. the human visual system) and competences acquired by the individual through individual learning. For more on this way of specifying normal conditions and normal functioning, see Millikan 1984, Majors & Sawyer 2005, Graham 2012a, Gerken 2013.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Conceptualization’ is Burge’s term of art for the process whereby perceptual representations are reformatted into propositional form (turned into perceptual beliefs). Conceptualization is neither inferential nor meta-representational. It does not involve a higher-order act of applying concepts to percepts. Conceptualization reformats perceptual attributives into concepts (propositional attributives), reformatting the perceptual representation into propositional form. The subject matter thereby remains the same throughout: physical objects and their properties. A perceptual belief is then, for the most part, the perceptual representation reformatted. See Burge 2003a: 524-526, 2005b, 2010b, and forthcoming.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Perceptual Entitlement’ (2003a) makes it clear *perceptual* warrant requires reliability. Here are passages from his 2007 Dewey Lectures that make it clear that *all forms* of warrant require reliability: “A propositional state or occurrence is warranted, on a given occasion, if and only if it is the result, on that occasion, of the exercise of a representationally well-functioning propositional competence that provides a representationally reliable, epistemically good route to veridicality, allowing for the natural limitations of the competence with respect to its subject matter, and limitations of the information available to it” (2011a: 199-200). “To explain any epistemic warrant,

---

one must explain what makes a warranted state an objectively good route to truth, given an individual's background competencies. Being a good route implies reliable veridicality in normal conditions" (2011a: 187).

<sup>13</sup> Here is Burge from the introduction to his 2013 collection of papers, *Cognition Through Understanding*. "A *justification* is a warrant that consists partly in the operation or possession of a reason. An individual is justified if and only if the reason is operative or relied upon in the individual's psychology. An *entitlement* is a warrant whose force does not consist, even partly, in the individual's using or having a reason" (2013b: 3-4).

<sup>14</sup> Gerken 2019. Gerken argues against Burge for a rival criterion he calls the *Reason Criterion*. On this conception, justifications are warrants that arise from exercises of the faculty of reason; entitlements are warrants that do not. I intend to discuss Gerken's view elsewhere.

<sup>15</sup> Witness John Hyman: "[T]he basic function of a reason is to explain something—in other words, to make something intelligible or understood—and more particularly to explain why something is the case. This is why there are reasons why but no reasons how, what, which, when, where, or who...[T]he primary function of a reason is, as it always is, to explain why something is the case" (Hyman 2015: 134-5).

<sup>16</sup> John Pollock (1986) and Christopher Peacocke (2004), among others, recognize the non-propositional character of perceptual representations, but even so call them *reasons* for perceptual belief. Pollock calls perceptual representations "half-doxastic" on the grounds that they are representations and committal like beliefs, but different in being non-propositionally structured. Pollock proposes to call perceptual representations "reasons" while acknowledging "this that is stretching our ordinary use of the term 'reason'" (Pollock 1986: 176). Burge sees the stretch as a "grammatical" mistake. Non-propositional states are *ipso facto* not reasons. Note well that for

---

Burge perceptual experiences (conscious perceptual representational states) are genuinely *representational* though *not* propositional (see especially Burge 2003a, 2010). Propositional representations are a species of representational content; propositional contents do not exhaust the category of representational (intentional) contents.

<sup>17</sup> This makes Burge a “propositionalist” (of sorts) about reasons, as opposed to a “statist” or a “factualist.” Other propositionalists include Schroeder 2008; Fantl and McGrath 2009; and Comesana and McGrath 2014. For a recent review of the ontology of reasons and their role in epistemology, see Littlejohn 2018.

<sup>18</sup> It is common to classify justifications (normative reasons) as a species of explanations (explanatory reasons). “[R]easons in general are explanations, and...a justification is a particular kind of explaining, namely, an explanation of why something is right or just...a justification *is* an explanation” (Hyman 2015: 135-6).

<sup>19</sup> Theoretical reasons are “potential steps in...explanations that, in effect, show why one should believe...something” (2011a: 193). They “provide a kind of explanation of the credibility of what they are reasons for” (2011b: 490)

<sup>20</sup> “...having beliefs requires being able to carry out [deductive] inferences, and the relevant inferences must sometimes support beliefs. Inferentially supported beliefs are justified, or are at least backed by beliefs [reasons] that are capable of justifying them” (2003a: 504-5, n. 1).

<sup>21</sup> See Burge 2003a, 2010a, and for qualifications, see Burge 2010c. “I think that some non-human animals engage in deductive inference. They have perceptual beliefs, memories, and some simple logical constants. They think according to simple rules of inference. They believe no logical truths, lack a concept of logical validity, and lack a concept of truth. They make valid inferences without understanding what they are doing. *Whether this is empirically so about some non-human animals,*

---

*this level of understanding seems conceptually possible*” (Burge 2003b: 233, emphasis added).

Here Burge *disagrees* with mainstream Sellarsians who seem to think that though animals are “intelligent” in various ways, animals lack deductive inferential abilities and so lack propositional attitudes. For empirical evidence suggesting that some animals have deductive abilities, see Call 2002, 2004. For discussion, see Rescorla 2009 and Graham 2012b.

<sup>22</sup> “The explanation need not be in meta-representational terms. It is not essentially about belief or truth. It is fundamentally at the same level as the belief: p because r, where p is the content of the belief and r is the reason” (2011b: 490, n. 3).

<sup>23</sup> For critical discussion of Burge on this point, see Gerken 2018, section 2.2.

<sup>24</sup> “Even though it is **immediate** [non-inferential], the self-knowledge that is illustrated in the pure, self-verifying instances of *cogito* is warranted by **justification**... [S]elf-knowledge of this sort is warranted through a justification...[these thoughts] are...reasons for themselves. (2013b: 18, bold added)”

<sup>25</sup> Her competence with *modus ponens* is not a premise in her reasoning. In general, inference rules, on pain of regress, are not themselves premises in reasoning. The rules, though most adults can learn and reflect on them and consciously apply them, need not even be represented or representable within the individual’s psychology for the individual to have a competence to reason deductively. For some discussion of reasoning in accord with a rule in this kind of sense, see Gerken 2013 and Quilty-Dunn and Mandelbaum 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Since the warrant for the premises involve perceptual warrants (entitlements), and since the individual’s competence with *modus ponens* is not a reason (it is not a warranted propositional attitude), the warrant for the conclusion belief involves a mix of operative reasons and elements that are not operative reasons. As noted, this is not at all surprising.

---

<sup>27</sup> “[In “Empirical Warrant: Humans and Computers”] I...discuss...cases [of inference] in which [the premises are not reasons]. I center on empirically warranted inferences. I assume that the **inference** tracks likely connections in nature. So it supports the truth of the conclusion. But the **inferential transition** does not follow a rule that provides any insight at all into the nature or existence of the connection. [So the premise is not a reason.] Still, the...premises and inferential transition **entitle** one to the conclusion.” (2013b: 43, bold added, material in brackets added)

<sup>28</sup> If Mercier and Sperber are right, cases like this should be ubiquitous in human cognition generally, not to mention non-human, animal cognition. See Mercier and Sperber 2017: 87, 90, 120, 132.

<sup>29</sup> A paper by Boghossian (2014) sparked renewed interest in understanding inference. Boghossian leans toward the narrow view. (I conjecture that he does so partly because he holds an access-internalist, responsibilist view of warrant. So for inference to warrant a conclusion, one needs to “have access” to what one is doing when making an inference, viz. “taking” the premise as a reason for the conclusion.) For persuasive criticisms of Boghossian, suggesting a broader view, but perhaps not as broad as Burge’s, see Quilty-Dunn and Mandelbaum 2017. See also McHugh and Way 2016. For a general critical discussion of arguments from philosophers for the narrow view, see Kornblith 2012.

<sup>30</sup> “Being non-inferential does not mean not involving processes...Similarly, immediacy does not entail lack of processing. A representational state is immediate if it is not the product of an inference: (2013b: 35-6, n. 21). As noted already, Burge rejects the view that processing by the perceptual system involves inference. The inputs and outputs of the perceptual system are not propositional. Perceptual processing does not involve deductive, inductive, or abductive inference,

---

though it can be modeled as if it does. For more discussion of perceptual processing, see Hatfield 2002; Hohwy 2013; Burge 2010b, 2019; Rescorla 2015, 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Prior to his 2010 book and his papers circa 2011, Burge often used ‘inference’ closer to his current use of ‘reasoning’: transitioning in thought according to a deductive or inductive rule that functions to transfer warrant from the premises to the conclusion. For instance, see Burge 2003c: 431-2.

<sup>32</sup> Fodor 1983; Burge 2003c: 158, 2010a; Lyons 2009; Robbins 2017. For a different view of modularity, see Sperber 2001; Carruthers 2006; Mercier and Sperber 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Incidentally, this is very close to Pollock’s sense of access. A state for Pollock is internal iff accessible, and accessible iff the potential direct input to belief formation. See Pollock and Cruz 1999: 133.

<sup>34</sup> Burge reports (2019, n. 20) that when he wrote ‘Perceptual Entitlement’ he believed that reasons were necessarily consciously thinkable, so accessible; inaccessible reasons were not possible. So extensionally speaking, given that assumption, the Reasons Criterion and the Accessible Reasons Criterion would have been equivalent. But given the possibility of modular reasons, they are not equivalent.

<sup>35</sup> You may be wondering to what extent is Burge an “internalist” given his new formulation. There are often “internal” mental states as elements in good routes to truth, whether the eventual warrant is an entitlement or a justification, after all. Should we then call both species “internalist” forms of warrant? Hardly. For both kinds are kinds of *warrant*, and warrant requires reliability, something any so-called “internalist” in epistemology is sure to reject. Though not a simple reliabilist about warrant, as we’ve seen, Burge is a teleological, competence reliabilist about both kinds of warrant for all that. Burge is not seeking a rapprochement between internalism and

---

externalism; he's declaring victory for one side. See especially Burge 2019, §I. For a discussion of whether some forms of warrant are (roughly) internalist, see Majors 2015: §7, and Gerken forthcoming.

<sup>36</sup> I have presented earlier versions of some of this material to audiences at Yonsei University in South Korea, Radboud University in The Netherlands, and National Cheng Chi University in Taiwan. I am grateful for helpful comments on those occasions. For comments and conversations that led to substantial improvements, I am grateful to Zachary Bachman, Mikkel Gerken, John Greco and Eric Wiland.