



Prime Cuts and the Method of Recombination

Episteme

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Abstract

Whether some condition is equivalent to a conjunction of some (sub-) conditions has been a major issue in analytic philosophy. Examples include: knowledge, acting freely, causation, and justice. Philosophers have striven to offer analyses of these, and other concepts, by showing them equivalent to such a conjunction. Timothy Williamson offers a number of arguments for the idea that knowledge is 'prime', hence not equivalent to or composed by some such conjunction. I focus on one of his arguments: the requirement that such conjuncts must be freely recombinable. Although there has been a great deal of discussion of Williamson's arguments, the flaw I describe has gone unnoticed. Williamson's argument is expressed in terms of conditions, and cases of the condition. Does the condition include specific information, or is the specific information only part of the case? His argument equivocates between more and less general specifications of the conditions. Once this distinction is clarified, his argument can be seen to be vitiated by this conflation. Neither option yields a sound argument for Williamson's desired conclusion.

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