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The Limited Phenomenal Infallibility thesis

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ABSTRACT
It may be true that we are epistemically in the dark about various things. Does this fact ground the truth of fallibilism? No. Still, even the most zealous skeptic will probably grant that it is not clear that one can be incognizant of their own occurrent phenomenal conscious mental goings-on. Even so, this does not entail infallibilism. Philosophers who argue that occurrent conscious experiences play an important epistemic role in the justification of introspective knowledge assume that there are occurrent beliefs. But this assumption is false. This paper argues that there are no occurrent beliefs. And it considers the epistemic consequences this result has for views that attempt to show that at least some phenomenal beliefs are infallible.

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1. Introduction

It may be true that we are epistemically in the dark about various things. Does this fact ground the truth of fallibilism? No. Still, even the most zealous skeptic will probably grant that it is not clear that one can be incognizant of their own occurrent phenomenal conscious mental goings-on. Even so, this does not entail infallibilism. Philosophers who argue that occurrent conscious experiences play an important epistemic role in the justification of introspective knowledge assume that there are occurrent beliefs.[1] But this assumption is false. I will argue that there are no occurrent beliefs. I will also consider an important epistemic consequence this fact has for views that claim some phenomenal beliefs are infallible.

Consider a familiar skeptical scenario: Suppose that Leslie lives in a nearly empty world and that all macroscopic occurrences that Leslie observes are entirely controlled by an evil demon. Let us add that

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[1]See e.g., Smithies (2019).

Leslie is utterly oblivious to the evil demon and its interventions. Suppose also that Leslie regularly undergoes experiences of watching mosquitoes flying in the night, glowing different colors. The glowing-red mosquitoes always fly from left to right, while the glowing-blue mosquitoes always fly from right to left. Let us stipulate that what causes these phenomenal experiences is the demon playing a game of billiards. Of course, this hidden truth about the glowing mosquitoes does not prevent Leslie from making highly dependable generalizations based on the color and regularity of the mosquitos' movements. Indeed, we can add that over the years Leslie has been able to develop a highly sophisticated theory explaining their movements based entirely on the observed phenomena. Leslie's explanations are clearly false. But what about the phenomenal character of what Leslie seems to *visually* see—that is, Leslie's phenomenal seeming to observe the movement of the glowing mosquitoes? When Leslie seems to see the glowing-red mosquitoes fly from the left to right and the glowing-blue mosquitoes fly from the right to left, is Leslie simply wrong about the 'apparent' contents of these conscious experiences?

Some philosophers argue that conscious experiences like Leslie's seeming to visually see glowing mosquitoes flying in the night are special because they involve phenomenal beliefs that cannot fail to be true, insofar as Leslie cannot be wrong about 'what it is like' to seem to see glowing flying mosquitoes. For instance, in 'Phenomenal Epistemology: What is Consciousness that We May Know it So Well?', Horgan and Kriegel (2007) defend a view that claims occurrent beliefs 'that are singular, present, phenomenal in mode of presentation, and bracketed', are infallible (128). They call this thesis 'Limited Phenomenal Infallibility' (LPI).[2] According to Horgan & Kriegel, if LPI is true, this would have important epistemic consequences, insofar as it would demonstrate that phenomenal knowledge is superior to all other forms of knowledge (123).[3] My goal is to present a *prima facie*, defeasible reason to think LPI is false or vacuous, insofar as it relies on the false assumption that occurrent beliefs exist.[4] The argument to be defended in what follows is simple but powerful. It can be stated as follows:

[2]For instance, Horgan and Kriegel (2007) p. 130 argue that even though unbracketed beliefs are fallible, one cannot be mistaken about occurrent conscious beliefs that have a phenomenal mode of presentation and are properly bracketed, insofar as 'they feel like this'.

[3]It is worth noting that Horgan and Kriegel (2007) do not explore these implications in detail but offer a promissory note to do so in future work. But the epistemic debates they likely have in mind are the following: Self-knowledge, introspection, internalism, foundationalism, reliabilism, and epistemic justification in general.

The MAIN ARGUMENT

(M1) If LPI is true, then occurrent beliefs exist.

(M2) Occurrent beliefs do not exist.

(M3) Therefore, LPI is false or vacuously true.[5]

Here is the plan for the paper. I begin by explaining the argument Horgan and Kriegel (2007) offer in support of LPI and why it requires that there are occurrent beliefs (Section 2). I defend the main argument against LPI by arguing that all genuine beliefs must be able to persist by enduring rather than perduring.[6] I call this the 'Endurance Condition' (Section 3).[7] I then consider various important objections (Section 4), prior to concluding (Section 5).

2. If LPI is true, then occurrent beliefs exist

The goal of this section is to show that (M1) is true. In order to establish this premise, I first need to explain what LPI means, and then make clear why, if LPI is true, occurrent beliefs must exist. In explaining what LPI means we need to make clear Horgan & Kriegel's understanding of 'phenomenal knowledge' because they claim that this sort of knowledge

[4]There are various internalistic accounts of foundationalism, which attempt to show that many if not all basic, perceptual beliefs are justified by the phenomenal way things seem or appear to a subject. According to phenomenal conservativism, all justification is ultimately grounded in a subject's phenomenally conscious seemings or the way things appear to the subject: See e.g.. Huemer (2001). According to a more recent version of this sort of internalistic foundationalism, phenomenal accessibilism, the scope of which beliefs are justified by one's phenomenally conscious seemings is more limited in scope, and this general principle about the justification must be combined with a phenomenal conception of evidence: See e.g., Smithies (2019). I take Horgan and Kriegel's (2007) Limited Phenomenal Infallibility thesis to be a representative version of these sorts views of phenomenal evidence and justification, one that attempts to identify a limited class of beliefs that could plausibly meet all the conditions specified as requirements for infallible phenomenal beliefs. Thus, if the argument presented and defended in this paper is successful, then it would likely generalize to these other accounts of phenomenal justification and evidence. So, what follows should not be interpreted merely as a philosophical intervention or response piece.

[5]Whether LPI is false or vacuously true depends on Horgan & Kriegle's (2007) p. 128 formulation of the view. If LPI is formulated as a conditional statement, then LPI will be vacuously true, since the antecedent will be false. But they also formulate LPI as positing occurrent beliefs labeled as 'SPPB phenomenal beliefs.' I will argue that according to this formulation, LPI is simply false because there are no such mental entities.

[6]Philosophers typically distinguish between two general ways that something might persist in or through time. An entity might persist in time by enduring, unchanged, wholly present, and without being composed of temporal parts. On the other hand, an entity might persist through time by perduring, insofar as such a thing changes and unfolds in a dynamic manner, and is composed of temporal parts.

[7]Roughly, the Endurance Condition says that (necessarily) if a subject S's mental state m is to count as a belief that *p*, then m must be able to endure beyond S's initial experience of judging whether *p* is the case. If S's occurrent belief that *p* is not able to endure, then *p* will not count as a genuine belief per se.

is better than other forms of knowledge precisely because it involves occurrent beliefs that are infallible. According to Horgan and Kriegel (2007), necessarily, phenomenal beliefs that are 'singular, present, phenomenal in mode of presentation, and bracketed' are true (123). Given this general characterization of the sorts of beliefs involved in phenomenal knowledge, LPI can be stated as follows:

> LIMITED PHENOMENAL INFALLIBILITY:
>
> Necessarily, if a subject S has a singular phenomenal belief $\mathbf{B}_{now}[e, p]$ at a time *t* whose singular and predicative constituents are the bracketed phenomenal modes of presentation *e* and *p* respectively, and if there is a time *t** that (i) is roughly simultaneous with *t*, and (ii) is such that S has the belief $\mathbf{B}_{now}[e, p]$ at *t**, then $\mathbf{B}_{now}[e, p]$ is true at *t** (128).[8]

But Horgan and Kriegel (2007) also characterize LPI simply in terms of the kinds of mental entities that are infallible. They claim that 'The restricted infallibility thesis is simply this: Necessarily, all SPPB phenomenal beliefs are true' (128). The first formulation of LPI is a conditional statement. So, if we accept this formulation of LPI and there are no occurrent beliefs, then LPI is vacuously true. The second formulation presupposes that there are occurrent beliefs, which are singular, present, phenomenal, and bracketed. Horgan & Kriegel label these sorts of mental items 'SPPB phenomenal beliefs' (128). But if this assumption is false, then LPI is simply false. So, on either formulation of LPI we will have good reason to reject the view. Notice also that LPI is characterized in terms of beliefs instead of knowledge. So, Horgan & Kriegel must assume that beliefs and knowledge are importantly connected, such that if some of our beliefs cannot fail to be true, then this will result in a species of our knowledge that is infallible.[9] But what exactly is the argument in support of this thesis?

The first step of their argument grants that most of our knowledge is fallible. But this does not mean that we can infer that all knowledge is fallible. To make an inferential leap from the fact that most of one's beliefs about one's own experiences are fallible to the further claim that no beliefs are infallible is unwarranted (Horgan and Kriegel 2007, 125). And

[8] I want to flag the appeal to the notion of being 'roughly simultaneous' between t and t* because this point will play an important role in showing why the beliefs required by LPI are occurrent beliefs rather than standing beliefs.

[9] Someone might object by arguing that what Horgan and Kriegel (2007) call 'Phenomenal Knowledge' might be reformulated in a way that does not require belief to be a necessary constituent of knowledge. Whether such a view is plausible would require an independent argument. I will address this issue in Section 4 below.

given the empirical evidence demonstrating the unreliability of introspection, I take this first step to be unassailable.[10] But this step alone is insufficient to demonstrate that there is infallible knowledge. What is needed is an additional step that will allow us to draw the conclusion that, at least in some cases, we cannot be wrong about what we believe—that is, a reason to believe that LPI is true.

The second step involves articulating a version of LPI that effectively avoids all plausible counterexamples. The general idea is that, if we put into place the right restrictions and limitations on what sorts of beliefs might plausibly count as infallible, then we can circumvent apparent problem cases. Horgan and Kriegel (2007) claim we need to 'formulate an increasingly restricted thesis of infallibility, ending with a thesis whose denial we take to defy credulity' (125). Let us consider the restrictions they place on LPI in order to make clear what is meant by the thesis and why they think it is true.[11]

First, Horgan and Kriegel (2007) claim that infallible phenomenal knowledge is restricted to 'beliefs about experiences and their phenomenal properties' (125). Second, they say that LPI is restricted to 'singular (logically atomic) beliefs whose singular and predicative constituents employ phenomenal modes of presentation—a singular phenomenal mode of presentation and a predicative phenomenal mode of presentation' (126). Third, LPI must be restricted to 'beliefs about *present* phenomenal experiences, as opposed to past or future ones' (126). Intuitively, these conditions are plausible, since beliefs about the future and those derived from memory are obviously fallible. So, these restrictions tell us that LPI applies to a very limited class of beliefs about certain phenomenal features of an experience.

But there is an important complication here that needs to be addressed. Plausibly, one could have a mistaken belief about their own mental goings-on via some non-phenomenal means. For example, when Mary, the brilliant neuroscientist, is trapped in the black and white room, we would lack a good reason to think that Mary's beliefs about her own future phenomenology of red objects are infallible.[12] This is because Mary is only able to think about the property of being red by some non-phenomenal means, presumably by deploying a

[10]For evidence and discussion of how introspection might be untrustworthy, see e.g., Schwitzgebel (2008).

[11]Horgan and Kriegel (2007) consider several other restrictions but I focus on those that are crucial to show that LPI requires occurrent beliefs. See e.g., Kriegel (2011), pp. 23–25 for discussion of other restrictions one might endorse.

[12]See e.g., Jackson (1982, 1986). See also Horgan and Kriegel's (2007), p. 126 discussion of this point.

description like 'the phenomenal property that is typically caused by visually seeing red objects'.

Given a case like this, one could argue that Mary can be wrong while thinking about her own experience's phenomenal character. As Horgan and Kriegel (2007) suggest: 'some modes of presentation are genuinely phenomenal and yet also essentially incorporate certain fallible presuppositions' (128). The strength of this objection is grounded in the general assumption that, at least for laypersons, people tend to be very poor at introspection. As Schwitzgebel (2008) has vividly suggested:

> Most people are poor introspectors of their own ongoing conscious experience. We fail not just in assessing the causes of our mental states or the processes underwriting them; and not just in our judgments about nonphenomenal mental states like traits, motives, and skills; and not only when we are distracted, or passionate, or inattentive, or self-deceived, or pathologically deluded, or when we're reflecting about minor matters, or about the past, or only for a moment, or where fine discriminations is required. We are both ignorant and prone to error. There are major lacunae in our self-knowledge that are not easily filled in, and we make gross, enduring mistakes about even the most basic features of our currently ongoing conscious experience (or 'phenomenology'), even in favorable circumstances of careful reflection, with distressing regularity. We either err or stand perplexed, depending—rather superficially, I suspect—on our mood and caution (247).

Consider a case where on the basis of introspective evidence, a subject comes to believe that *p*, but *p* is false. In such a case, it is reasonable to deploy a relation the subject's belief has to other beliefs in the subject's belief set. This allows us to correct for cognitive mistakes that a subject might make. Indeed, one might think that it is an important part of the causal-functional role that beliefs play in our folk psychological explanations of human behavior and reasoning that we can make revisions when appropriate.

However, these ruminations would pose a serious threat to LPI, since the relevant false belief would be importantly related to other background beliefs and presuppositions. Presumably, the subject would have sufficient access to these other beliefs in their belief set in order to correct for their mistake when needed. To avoid this problem, Horgan & Kriegel introduce the bracketing mode of presentation as a restriction that excludes all relations holding between the relevant belief in question and other background beliefs, which could constitute the problematic presupposition.[13] Horgan and Kriegel (2007) state:

> Let us introduce the idea of a bracketing mode of presentation of phenomenal character. Such a mode of presentation suspends any such presuppositions, so that their truth or falsity does not affect the content of the specific belief that employs such a mode of presentation. This is a mode of presentation that brackets out all relational information about the experience and its phenomenal character, including how experiences of this sort are classified by oneself on other occasions, what their typical causes are, etc. It focuses (so to speak) on how the experience appears to the subject at that moment (128).

Given this restriction is accepted, it follows that, if a subject has an infallible belief that *p*, then *p* must present itself to the subject as having both a phenomenal mode of presentation and a bracketed mode of presentation. Thus, according to Horgan and Kriegel's (2007) defense of LPI, we can hold that 'some modes of presentation are genuinely phenomenal' but still allow for the possibility that a subject's unbracketed beliefs might 'essentially incorporate certain fallible presuppositions' (128). This is the main step in the argument for LPI.

Once the class of beliefs have been restricted to those that are singular, present, phenomenal in mode of presentation, and properly bracketed, we are thereby in a position to show that some beliefs (i.e. SPPB phenomenal beliefs) are infallible. The bracketing constraint can, therefore, accommodate the worry that one's 'presupposition that various other specific experiences that one has had, or might have, also fall under the presently-deployed predicative mode of presentation' (128). Furthermore, it is this bracketing constraint that provides the resources to respond to all likely counterexamples, which is supposed to be the main obstacle to be overcome in providing a defense of LPI. Let us consider how this class of beliefs is able to handle such cases.

Horgan and Kriegel (2007) use a case, originally offered by Shoemaker (1996), as a kind of paradigm case to stand in for all likely counterexamples. They say:

> Suppose that, blindfolded, you are told that a particular spot on your neck is about to be cut with a razor … then an ice cube is placed on that spot. At the very first instant, you are likely to be under the impression that you are having a pain sensation—when in reality you are having a coldness sensation. That is, at that instant, you have a *present singular phenomenal belief* to the effect that you are having a pain experience (128; my emphasis added).[14]

[13]This bracketing constraint is crucial for Horgan and Kriegel's (2007) argument for LPI. If this constraint is accepted, then, arguably, we cannot reformulate LPI in terms of perduring mental items. This will be discussed in Section 4.

[14]Horgan and Kriegel (2007), p. 128 claim they have not seen a counterexample that would show that LPI is false but Shoemaker's Ice-Cube is as close as one might get.

Intuitively, this case should count as a plausible counterexample to LPI, since one falsely believes that they are undergoing the experience of pain. But according to Horgan and Kriegel (2007), this does not show that LPI is false because the bracketing constraint excludes all beliefs that are related to the subject's belief that 'I feel pain now' (130). So, in cases like Shoemaker's Ice-Cube case, the purpose of the bracketing constraint is to isolate the specific belief, or to 'abstract' it away from one's overall set of beliefs. Given that all relational features of the belief are bracketed away from the raw feeling of pain, even if one is mistaken about the classification of the belief as being about such and such, they will not be mistaken about how the belief feels—that is, they cannot be wrong about the phenomenal mode of presentation of the belief. If so, then counterexamples like Shoemaker's Ice-Cube case will ultimately fail to show that LPI is false.

Consider another case that has sometimes been adopted in attempting to show that one can be wrong about their own phenomenology: Chisholm's (1957) Speckled Hen case. In this case, the subject seems to have a visual perception of a hen with, say, 49 speckles but comes to believe that the hen has 48 speckles. Intuitively, such a case seems plausible. But Horgan and Kriegel (2007) claim that, 'this fact nowise undermines one's ability to form a belief that one's precept has this feature, where 'this feature' bracketingly denotes the phenomenology one is presented with, however bespeckled' (131). Someone might object by arguing that Horgan & Kriegel have not conjured up the right counterexample. And since the argumentative strategy they deploy at this point in their argument is supposed to show why we have good reason to reject any of the counterexamples one could offer, someone could always cook up a better case.

My suspicion, however, is that no matter what case one might envision, Horgan & Kriegel would simply redeploy the bracketing constraint in order to avoid the conclusion that LPI is false. As they suggest: 'arguments by counter-example are helpless against the simple move of revising down the scope of one's thesis' (2007, 125). Hence, attacking LPI by offering counterexamples is not an advisable strategy in attempting to show that LPI is false. My approach will be different. I shall argue that LPI requires that occurrent beliefs exist. But since there are no occurrent beliefs, we have good reason to reject LPI. To make this strategy salient, we first need to consider why LPI requires that there are occurrent beliefs. Let us consider this issue in a bit more detail.

What argument can be given to show that phenomenal knowledge, and thus LPI, requires occurrent beliefs that are phenomenally conscious? First, it seems reasonable that standing or dispositional beliefs are not phenomenally conscious.[15] As Bayne and Montague (2011) have pointed out: 'a point that is common ground among all parties to the debate: dispositional or unconscious states have no phenomenological character' (11). If this is correct, then Horgan and Kriegel's understanding of phenomenal knowledge should not be taken to refer to knowledge understood in terms of dispositional or standing states of the subject. So, phenomenal knowledge must refer to occurrent knowledge. But what would it mean for a subject to have occurrent knowledge that *p*?

For a subject like Leslie to have phenomenal knowledge that *p*, this would at least partly involve Leslie having the belief that *p*. One might wonder what sort of belief would be involved in phenomenal knowledge. The sorts of beliefs involved in phenomenal knowledge must be occurrent beliefs, since phenomenal knowledge is to be understood as occurrent knowledge. I take this to indicate that LPI requires occurrent beliefs. But to develop this point in more detail, it will be helpful to consider an example of the sort of phenomenally conscious experience that these occurrent beliefs are supposed to be about and concurrent with.

Consider your current phenomenally conscious experience. Presumably, right now you are reading these words on either a screen or a piece of paper. This is a diachronic event of some kind, since it involves the passage of time in your conscious experience of reading these words. According to Horgan and Kriegel (2007), in addition to there being 'something it is like' for you to undergo this particular event, there is also 'something it is like' associated with your belief states that are about this phenomenally conscious experience. These sorts of beliefs that are about and concurrent with your phenomenally conscious experiences are the right candidates for the class of beliefs that Horgan & Kriegel claim are infallible.[16]

Of course, it may be that you are wrong about whether there are any words before you, since you might be an envatted brain.[17] But, even if you

[15]See e.g., Horgan and Kriegel's (2008) p. 365 discussion of why it is obvious that dispositional states are not conscious. See also Mendelovici's (2018), p. 169 claim that it is implausible to think that standing or dispositional states can be phenomenally conscious.

[16]Horgan and Kriegel (2007) pp. 132–133 claim that phenomenal conscious experiences involving occurrent beliefs are 'self-presenting'. See also, Horgan (2012), p. 406 where to be self-presenting is described as 'the what-it's-likeness of phenomenal consciousness is something immediately given in experience'. It is worth calling attention to the fact whatever else might be meant by the claim that a belief can be self-presenting, clearly only occurrent beliefs can be self-presenting in the required way.

are mistaken about most things that you believe, it seems difficult to deny that you can be wrong about the phenomenal character of your conscious experiences. If this is correct, then occurrent beliefs that are singular, present, phenomenal in mode of presentation, properly bracketed, and whose contents are the phenomenal character of one's ongoing conscious experience are infallible.[18] And these SPPB phenomenal beliefs are about one's phenomenal conscious experiences, insofar as their contents are constitutively determined by the phenomenal character of one's conscious experiences. But since these SPPB phenomenal beliefs must occur 'roughly simultaneously' with the experience that constitutes their content, such that they are currently before the mind's eye, so to speak, it follows that such beliefs, if they exist, must be occurrent beliefs. As Horgan and Kriegel (2007) assert: 'since the phenomenal beliefs we are interested in are concurrent with occurrent phenomenal experiences, they must themselves be occurrent beliefs, rather than *dispositional* ones' (127; italics in the original). Thus, (M1) is true.

3. Occurrent beliefs do not exist.

The goal of this section is to argue in support of (M2) by showing that (necessarily) beliefs must be *able* to persist by enduring. Call this the 'Endurance Condition'. Here is what it says:

> THE ENDURANCE CONDITION:
>
> Necessarily, if the belief that *p* is to count as a genuine belief *per se*, then *p* must be *able* to endure beyond the initial moment that *p* was acquired into a subject's belief set.[19]

The idea is this: If it were literally impossible for some mental state to endure, then it is not clear how it could play the causal-functional role that we typically take beliefs to play in our folk psychological explanations of human behavior and reasoning. If we are to make intuitive sense of the

[17] See, e.g., Horgan and Kriegel's (2007), p. 130 claim that 'even if one is mistaken in how one initially classifies the experience under an unbracketed phenomenal mode of presentation—e.g., as an instance of painfulness, when allegedly it is actually an instance of coldness—one is not mistaken in judging that it feels like this'. For further discussion of similar sorts of cases, see e.g., Loar (2003) pp. 246–247; and Horgan and Tienson (2002), pp. 524–526.

[18] In a recent article, Horgan (2012) p. 410 makes the following clarification regarding these sorts of occurrent beliefs: 'they cannot be appearance/reality fallible because there is no appearance/reality gap that pertains to them.'

[19] Crane (2013), p. 164 suggests that an essential characteristic of belief is that it is a state that can persist. I interpret this as claiming that necessarily all genuine beliefs must be are able to persist. Hence, Crane (2013) should be read as endorsing what I am calling the Endurance Condition.

role beliefs are supposed to play in our folk psychological explanations of human behavior and reasoning, then it must be the case that beliefs *can* endure. This will serve as an overarching reason for why we should accept (M2).

Armed with this intuitive starting point, let us consider an argument in support of the Endurance Condition. The argument is stated as follows:

THE ARGUMENT FROM CAUSAL EXPLANATION:

(CE1) A fundamental feature of belief is the causal-functional role beliefs are supposed to play in our folk psychological explanations of human behavior and reasoning.

(CE2) A belief that *p* has this fundamental feature *only if* it is *possible* for a subject's belief that *p* to endure.[20]

(CE3) Therefore, it must be *possible* for a subject's belief that *p* to endure.[21]

Why should we accept (CE1)? Clearly the nature of belief is a controversial issue, which I will not attempt to resolve here. But one plausible proposal claims that beliefs should be understood as being able to be combined with other cognitive and psychological goings-on in order to cause an agent to act and reason in certain ways that are in accordance with their beliefs. I take this much to be relatively uncontroversial.[22] With this basic constraint regarding what is meant by belief on the table, let us consider one influential way of construing what a belief is.

It seems true that what a person believes is at least partly determined by what that person would likely say, think, and do given that certain conditions are satisfied in a given circumstance.[23] For instance, if Alex believes that 'grass is green', then in a situation where we asked Alex if she believes this, she would likely say yes.[24] If Jones believes that 'there is beer in the fridge', and desires to drink a beer, then, *ceteris paribus*, Jones will likely go to the fridge to get a beer. There are many other examples of this sort that we could deploy to develop this thought.

[20]Notice that it is only required that it is possible for the relevant mental item to endure, not that it *must* endure.

[21]Someone might objection by arguing that it is not clear what sort of possibility is required? For our current purposes, only nomological possibility is required but I do not defend this here.

[22]See, e.g., Baker (1987), chapter 7 where it is argued that a denial of our common-sense conception of the mind, which relies on folk-psychological explanations of human behavior and reasoning, is self-undermining.

[23]See, e.g., Baker (1995), p. 21.

[24]See, e.g., Crane (2013); Ryle (1949); Price (1969); Audi (1994); Baker (1995); and Schwitzgebel (2002, 2019a). For the purpose of our current discussion, what is important is that we construe beliefs as playing a causal-functional role in our folk-psychological explanation of human behavior and reasoning.

But, given that we commonsensically and pre-theoretically take beliefs to play an important causal-functional role in our folk psychological explanation of human behavior and reasoning in the way just suggested, one way of characterizing the nature of belief is to construe them as dispositional properties or states of a subject. So, at least provisionally, let us say: To believe that *p* is to be disposed to act or behave in certain ways given the appropriate triggering circumstances obtains.[25]

Let us also add the following qualification: A part of what it is to be disposed to act and behave in certain ways includes being disposed to reason (cognitively) and feel (phenomenally) as though *p* is the case. If Alex believes that *p*, then, *ceteris paribus*, Alex would be disposed to undergo a cognitive experience, episode, or event of judging that *p* when consciously entertaining whether *p* is the case. This allows us to individuate beliefs by the phenomenal conscious episodes or events they dispose their bearers to undergo given the appropriate circumstances obtain.[26]

But there is an important objection lurking here, which needs to be addressed in order to defend (CE1). Is (CE1) consistent with the claim that beliefs are dispositional states of a subject? One might think that it is at best awkward, if not false, to claim that there is a causal-functional role that enlarges the intuitive scope of genuine beliefs that are essentially dispositional states or properties of a subject.[27] This objection looks especially worrisome if, as many do, one rejects the claim that dispositions *per se* can be causally efficacious or relevant.[28]

Here is the problem: Suppose that causes are states or events of some suitable form. On this view, for a belief to be causally efficacious it must be a standing state of the brain or some kind of internal structural state of the relevant system. So, if beliefs just are dispositional states or properties, then beliefs are not causally efficacious in the way required by (CE1), since it would not be dispositions that are doing the causal work, it would be the internal structural states in the relevant system that are causally efficacious. If this is correct, then one would either be forced to deny (CE1) or give up the claim that beliefs are dispositional states. And according to the objection being considered, neither of these options are available for my account.

[25]See e.g., Schwitzgebel (2001, 2002, 2019a, 2019b)
[26]For a similar approach, cf. Smithies (2019), pp. 175, and Gertler (2011), pp. 77–80.
[27]I want to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this objection.
[28]See e.g., Prior, Pargetter, and Jackson (1982), Block (1990), Kim (1993b, 1993a), Jackson (1995, 1996), and Strawson (2004).

There are several ways to respond to this objection. It is worth calling attention to the fact that this objection assumes that causes must be construed in terms of states or events, such that dispositions cannot be causally efficacious. While this view may be endorsed by many, it is far from being obviously true, nor does it enjoy any kind of consensus in the literature on causation and the nature of dispositions.[29] Are there reasons to be skeptical of the view that dispositions cannot be causally efficacious? Yes. It is not an accident that reference to *and* talk of dispositions is, commonsensically, pre-theoretically, and philosophically ubiquitous in both our understanding and communicating about our understandings of the natural world and our place in it. But this would seem rather arcane, given just how widespread dispositional terms and predicates are in the physical, psychological, and social sciences—that is, scientific explanations of all sorts are rife with appeals to dispositions. But the mystery disappears if dispositions are causally efficacious. And given that these explanations are causal explanations, it is hard to see how one could hold that dispositions are causally inert without also denying that many of our scientific explanations are not causal explanations.[30] I take this to indicate that the objection can be avoided.

But even if one is still not convinced, the objection can be avoided because we need not deny that causes are states or events as the objection suggests in order to avoid the claim that there is an inconsistency involved in holding that (CE1) is true and dispositions are causally efficacious. All that is needed is to refine the causal role that dispositions are supposed to play—that is, even if causes are states or events, it is plausible that amongst the properties that are doing the causal work are dispositional properties. For instance, suppose that we put a white cube of sugar into water and this causes it to dissolve. The cube of sugar has the dispositional property of being dissolvable. Is this dispositional property of the sugar causally relevant—that is, is it doing any causal work? Surely there are properties of the cube of sugar that are not causally relevant. For instance, the cube's white color does not seem causally relevant. But, it would be quite peculiar to deny that the property of being dissolvable was at least amongst the causally relevant properties involved in the cube of sugar dissolving in the water.[31] Of course, one could always claim that it is not the sugar's disposition to dissolve that

[29]For a recent example, see e.g. McKitrick (2018); see also, Mumford and Anjum (2011).
[30]For a discussion on this point, see e.g., McKitrick (2018), pp. 178–179; see also, Baker (1995) chapter 4.
[31]I want to thank an anonymous colleague for discussion of this point.

is causally efficacious in a case like this. Rather, it is the disposition's categorical base that is causally relevant.

To my mind, this sort of objection would be plausible only if it ignores many important developments in the recent literature on the nature of dispositions that (i) admits dispositions as being importantly causally efficacious and relevant, which has been at least partly motivated by the fact that (ii) they are such a dominant feature in our scientific explanations.[32] This alone does not demonstrate that beliefs are dispositional states or properties. Nonetheless, it does provide another way to avoid the objection. Moreover, (CE1) does not entail that beliefs are inherently or essentially dispositional states or properties. All that is required is that such cognitive goings-on are available in some way to the subject after they have been formed and incorporated into their set of beliefs and cognitive architecture, if they are to play the causal-functional role we typically attribute to beliefs. The argument still goes through even if we grant that beliefs are standing states of the brain or central nervous system. So, if you prefer, you are free to interpret beliefs as standing states of some suitable form since doing so is consistent with (CE1). Therefore, the objection is unmotivated and can be avoided.

What about (CE2)? What argument can be given in support of this premise? Suppose that it were impossible for a subject's belief that *p* to endure—that is, suppose that (CE2) were false. What would follow? If a subject had no possible way to access the content of the belief at some later point in time, then the subject would be forced to, in some sense, reacquire the belief each time it was needed to explain their behavior. It is difficult to see how such a view would be theoretically advantageous, since it requires positing enormously complex cognitive mechanisms and processes, which we would otherwise not need. So, it may not technically be impossible for creatures such as ourselves to, in some sense, reacquire beliefs that cannot possibly endure each time they are needed in explaining our behavior and reasoning. But for creatures like ourselves, such a theory of mind is highly implausible.[33] And since we generally think that a subject's beliefs play a crucial role in the explanatory work of guiding actions, behaviors, and reasoning, amongst other things, we should conclude that it must be in some sense *possible* for a subject's beliefs to endure from one temporal-instance to another. Therefore, we should accept (CE2).

[32]See e.g., McKitrick (2018), pp. 178–179.
[33]See e.g., Crane (2013), p. 164–165.

Alternatively, suppose that the Endurance Condition itself is false. If it were the case that a subject's belief that *p* could not possibly endure from one temporal moment to the next, then the explanatory work that we typically attribute to a subject's beliefs would be surprising. Why is it, one might wonder, that most beliefs in fact do endure unless it is possible for all beliefs to be such that they are *able* to endure? In this sense, the argument is abductive—that is, we are simply appealing to the best explanation for why beliefs are able to be successfully deployed in our folk psychological explanations of a subject's behavior and reasoning. The best explanation is simply that they *can* endure. To see why this must be so, consider a case where Alex believes that 'grass is green'. Presumably, if Alex were to lose consciousness, perhaps she falls asleep, Alex would not have thereby lost that belief, though she would no longer be consciously entertaining or affirming the belief. If upon waking up we were to ask Alex if she believes that 'grass is green', she would likely respond by saying 'yes'. And *prima facie* the best explanation for this fact is simply that (necessarily) beliefs are such that they *can* endure.

Now, one might reasonably ask: Why should we think that beliefs *must* endure? That is, one might object by appealing to cases where one's belief that *p* never actually gets a chance to endure. As Pitt (2016) suggests:

> What if I consciously endorse the thought that *p* and then immediately forget that I did, and form no memory of the acceptance of it? Or quickly change my mind? Why should this not be a temporary conscious belief—especially if it shares the functional role characteristic of belief? If I consciously endorse it and act upon it, why should I not be believing it? Why can't there be temporary, non-persisting beliefs? («For a moment there, I believed that Trump might be a serious candidate. Fortunately, I came to my senses»). Beliefs *can* be stored for future use; but what is the argument that they *must be* stored? (123; emphasis in the original).

But this objection works only if the Endurance Condition claims that in order for a subject's mental state to count as a genuine belief, it *must* endure. But this is *not* what the Endurance Condition says is required for a mental entity to count as a genuine belief. It does not claim that beliefs must endure, only that it must be *possible* for a subject's mental state *m* to endure.

To get a better grip on this point, it will be helpful to compare the role belief is typically thought to play in our folk psychological explanations of human behavior and reasoning with the role that knowledge is supposed to play in such explanations.[34] For instance, we tend to think that, if Alex

knows that *p*, then Alex's knowledge will remain even when Alex falls asleep or is no longer consciously thinking that *p*. And this is at least partly explained by the role knowledge is thought to play in our folk psychological explanations of human behavior and reasoning. If Alex's knowledge that *p* is lost every time Alex falls asleep or consciously thinks about something else, then presumably Alex would have to recover that bit of knowledge whenever it is required in explaining her behavior and reasoning. But this simply is not how knowledge works for human knowers. Rather, if a subject knows that *p*, then *p* must itself be a mental state that can endure.[35]

Notice, however, that there is more here than a mere analogy between knowledge and belief, as they pertain to the Endurance Condition. An argument can be developed in support of the Endurance Condition on the basis of the endurance of knowledge states.[36] A subject's belief that *p* is identical to her knowledge that *p*, which is just to say that it is the very same mental state.[37] It is difficult to deny that a subject's knowledge that *p* must be *able* to persist by enduring, if it is to count as genuine knowledge. And arguably, the same applies for the subject's belief that *p,* if the subject's knowledge that *p* and belief that *p* are the very same mental state.[38] Hence, if a subject knows that 'grass is green', it follows that she thereby believes that 'grass is green'.

We can put this observation more formally in an argument for the Endurance Condition, which can be stated as follows:

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE ENDURANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

(EK1) Necessarily, if a subject's mental state *m* is to count as genuine knowledge, then *m* must be *able* to endure.

[34]See e.g., Crane (2013), p. 165.

[35]Someone might object here by arguing that if the subject happens to be such that they often wake up not knowing what they supposedly did at night prior to falling asleep, then we might be tempted to avoid describing them as not knowing what they did at all, while doing the relevant actions, if such a description violates some safety condition on knowledge. But this sort of objection assumes that the Endurance Condition says that *p* must endure, which is not what I claim. I do not claim that if *p* happens not to endure, as in this example, then we cannot attribute any sort of putative knowledge to the subject. Rather, I claim that if it is not possible for *p* to endure, then we cannot attribute knowledge of *p* to the subject. And it is not clear how this would violate any safety condition on knowledge.

[36]Crane (2013) p. 165 does not put this point in the form of an argument but merely offers it as an example.

[37]Of course, our concept of knowledge may include extra conditions.

[38]One could object by arguing that knowledge does not necessarily require belief. See e.g., Ryle (1949) who makes a distinction between knowledge-that and knowledge-how. It may be the case that only the former but not the latter form of knowledge is necessarily connected to belief. But since Horgan and Kriegel (2007) assume that there is an important connection between belief and knowledge, this issue can be reasonably ignored for our present purposes.

(EK2) A subject's belief that *p* and knowledge that *p* are the same mental state *m*.

(EK3) If a subject's knowledge that *p* must be able to endure, then a subject's belief that *p* must be able to endure (because they are the very same mental state).

(EK4) Therefore, a subject's belief that *p* must be able to endure.

I take it to be relatively uncontroversial that knowledge is either a dispositional cognitive state, or some form of standing state that can be stored in memory, insofar as knowledge must be able to endure for the reasons described above. And since we have good reason to think that a subject's belief that *p* and knowledge that *p* are essentially the same mental state, or at the very least they are necessarily connected, it follows that beliefs must be able to endure. If this is correct, then we have good reason to accept the Endurance Condition. What remains to be shown is why accepting the Endurance Condition gives us *prima facie* evidence in support of (M2).

The basic idea is this: What we generally call 'occurrent' beliefs are not enduring states. When we talk about an occurrent belief that *p*, what we implicitly mean is that one is undergoing an occurrence of some suitable form. Plausibly, then, an occurrent belief is an occurrence. But, phenomenologically speaking, an occurrence that a subject undergoes is not a state that can endure, it is an episode or event that unfolds over time and thereby has a kind of processive character.[39] So, we need to make a distinction between mental states that can persist by enduring in time and mental occurrences understood in terms of episodes or events that perdure.[40] To show how this can be done, let us adopt what Steward (1997) calls the 'temporal shape' of a thing.[41] Here is what Steward says:

> It is often observed that in merely giving the temporal dimensions of an existent thing—in specifying the beginning and end-points of its existence—one does not thereby determine its temporal character. For vastly more important than these temporal reference points, in determining the ontological category of

[39]See e.g., Jorba's (2015) astute discussion and criticisms of this intuitive starting point. See also e.g., O'Shaugnessy (2000); Tye and Wright (2011); and Kriegel (2013).

[40]Someone might object by arguing that it is not clear what the correct impersonal, objective metaphysics would be for a distinction between enduring and perduring entities to be plausible. But my appeal to the distinction between enduring and perduring entities does not require an answer to these sorts of impersonal, objective metaphysical issues, since I am only interested in a first-personal, subject ontology of conscious experience that takes seriously a subject's phenomenology. For further discussion of this sort of first-personal, ontological approach to metaphysical questions, see e.g., Paul (2017).

[41]See e.g., Steward (1997), pp. 72–74.

> any item, is the *way* in which that item fills the relevant period of time—whether it *persists through* the time, or *occurs* during the time, or *obtains throughout* the time, etc. Continuants, for example, persist *through* time and exist, as wholes, at every moment of their existence, whereas events occur *at* times or *during* periods of time, and are unlike continuants in having temporal parts. The difference which are indicated by these contrasting verbs and prepositions I call difference of temporal shape (1997, 73; emphasis in the original).

This appeal to a thing's temporal shape gives us a principled way to distinguish between states and events. On the one hand, states are the sorts of things that can endure, unchanged and wholly present throughout some arbitrary stretch of time: If Alex is 5 feet tall, then this is a state of Alex that is unchanged and wholly present from time t_1 to time t_2. And when such a state does in fact endure, it will do so unchanged and wholly present at every moment, insofar as states are not the sorts of things that can be composed of temporal parts.[42] But a subject's mental episodes or events are processive, unfolding, changing, dynamic, and diachronic. They are the sorts of things that cannot endure but are composed of temporal parts. Given Steward's (1997) distinction between enduring and perduring entities, I will utilize the following ostensive definition of 'Temporal Shape':

> Temporal Shape: X has a temporal shape if and only if the following conditions are satisfied: (i) X is dynamic; and (ii) X fills or occupies some arbitrary duration of time by being composed of temporal parts or stages.[43]

This way of thinking about the temporal shape of a thing has two components: For something to have a temporal shape, that thing must be, phenomenologically speaking, both dynamic (i.e. it must involve an element of perceived change), and the way or mode by which the relevant thing appears to persist through time must be in virtue of being composed of temporal parts. I take this to be an intuitive way to distinguish between states and events. If some mental entity X is a state, then it must be possible for X to persist by enduring in time, unchanged, wholly present, and by filling the relevant stretch of time by not being

[42] But see e.g., Jorba (2015) for an example of someone who argues that enduring states can have temporal parts. I will consider this objection in greater detail momentarily.

[43] While I cannot give a non-circular definition of 'temporal shape', this does not imply that the term is utterly unserviceable. The term has considerable phenomenological support, which suggest that it can be employed to better understand how things appear in a subject's conscious experiences. But the use of this term should not be taken to imply that any substantive objective metaphysical issues can be settled by appealing to these sorts of phenomenological considerations. Indeed, the term 'temporal shape' should be understood as a kind of term of art.

composed of temporal parts. And if some mental entity Y is an occurrent episode or event that a subject undergoes, then it must be the case that Y can unfold by perduring throughout some stretch of time in virtue of being dynamic (i.e. changing) and by being composed of temporal parts.

Someone might insist that a subject's occurrence of undergoing a mental episode or event can persist either by enduring or perduring—that is, it could be objected that mental events can also endure through time. What is not clear, however, is whether it makes sense to say that such processive mental episodes or events, which phenomenologically appear to unfold over time, can endure unchanged and wholly present without doing damage to our intuitive understanding of what amental event is. So, even granting that one may not share my intuitive understanding of mental events, it still is not clear what it would mean to say that mental events can endure unchanged and wholly present at every moment, save that we have arrived at a terminological dispute: Perhaps what I mean by 'event' is simply what my interlocutor means by 'state'.

This is a particularly important point to consider, since looming over the entire discussion of whether occurrent beliefs are to be understood in terms of states or events is whether this is merely a *façon de parler* problem. In response, let me first say that it is not an easy task to know precisely when a philosophical dispute counts as being merely verbal and when it is a substantive one, since our common idioms relevant for such matters are often vague. And arguably, many philosophical disputes can be recast so as to appear to be merely a verbal disagreement. But I have given a principled reason to distinguish between states and events on the basis of what Steward (1997) calls a thing's 'temporal shape'. And this gives us a plausible way to fix our reference and discussion on the same thing.[44]

Call the things in question X and Y. Let us say that X is the sort of thing that can endure unchanged, wholly present, and is not composed of temporal parts. And let us say that Y is the sort of thing that cannot endure unchanged, wholly present, and *is* composed of temporal parts. When I claim that genuine beliefs can endure and are not composed of temporal parts, this should be understood as saying that genuine beliefs lack a

[44]See e.g., Crane's (2013), p. 167 claim that 'what the of philosophy of consciousness needs, then, is the distinction between occurrences and persisting states'. Interestingly, Crane (p. 165) recognizes this worry and claims that 'it is misleading at best to use the term 'belief' for entities of both categories'. But, arguably, since we have *prima facie*, defeasible evidence for the claim that there are no occurrent beliefs, the burden of the argument is on the proponent of occurrent beliefs to show that this *is* only a verbal dispute.

temporal shape. Thus, Alex's belief that *p* will have a temporal shape of the X form.[45] And when I claim that alleged 'occurrent beliefs' are events that cannot endure unchanged, wholly present, and are composed of temporal parts, this should be understood as meaning that occurrent beliefs, if they exist, would have a temporal shape of the Y form. To put this point differently, if alleged occurrent beliefs are occurrences, then they are perduring mental entities, insofar as they have a temporal shape. This means that what we call 'occurrent beliefs' are not genuine beliefs, since it must be possible for genuine beliefs to endure, rendering them as lacking a temporal shape. It is not merely the fact that genuine beliefs can endure while conscious experiences are processive in character by perduring instead of enduring that matters for the arguments offered above. Rather, what really matters for the LPI thesis and nearby issues is the fact that genuine beliefs lack a temporal shape while what we call 'occurrent beliefs' have a temporal shape. Someone might insist that states and events are not radically different, but they still must do more than merely assert that events can endure.

To my mind, appealing to a thing's temporal shape gives us a plausible way to distinguish between states and events. This provides an answer to the question: Why does the Endurance Condition give us grounds to accept (M2)? Answer: States are the sorts of things that can endure, unchanged, wholly present, and are not composed of temporal parts. But events are the sorts of things that can perdure; they are dynamic and are composed of temporal parts.[46] So, in short, what we call 'occurrent beliefs' have a temporal shape, and genuine beliefs lack a temporal shape. Thus, alleged 'occurrent beliefs' are not enduring mental states. They are processive, perduring mental events that are dynamic and are composed of temporal parts. And given that such mental entities cannot endure, alleged 'occurrent beliefs' are not genuine beliefs, since they would contravene the Endurance Condition. If this is correct, then there are no occurrent beliefs, which means that (M2) is true. Thus, we have *prima facie*, defeasible evidence in support of the conclusion that LPI is either false or vacuously true.[47]

[45]Here the X form is that of states and properties—things that persist in time by enduring not perduring.

[46]It is worth mentioning that the distinction between states and events can do more theoretical work than merely show that there are no occurrent beliefs. For instance, Jenkins (2018) has convincingly argued that Williamson's (2000) anti-luminosity argument is limited in scope because it fails to demonstrate that events cannot be luminous.

[47]Recall that whether LPI turns out to be false or vacuously true depends on which formulation of the view is being considered. If the view is formulated as a conditional, then it is vacuously true. If the view is formulated as assuming that occurrent beliefs exist, then the it is simply false.

4. Objections.

In this section, I will consider and respond to several objections. In doing so, this will further strengthen the arguments I offered and partially defended in previous sections.

First Objection. Jorba (2015) offers an astute criticism of the distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities, suggesting that the distinction ultimately collapses (738).[48] Jorba's objection includes two key steps: The first step comprises of various suggestions that there is an incoherency involved in appealing to temporal parts in order to distinguish between mental entities that perdure rather than endure.[49] And I take it that the incoherency resides in the very notion of what a temporal part is. If so, then one might leverage this difficulty in order to call into question whether the distinction itself will ultimately collapse. The basic problem at the core of Jorba's objection is this: When philosophers appeal to temporal parts, this is generally taken to be analogous with spatial parts. As Jorba states: 'From the idea that an object can be said to be extended in space if it occupies a certain region, an object can be said to persist through time by occupying an interval of time' (737). But it is not difficult to conceptually distinguish within an enduring entity certain divisible sub-extents. And this suggests that enduring entities can also have temporal parts. As Jorba (2015) says: 'This incoherency … is rooted in the very analogy with the spatial dimension' (737). Thus, the first step in Jorba's criticism of the distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities is that there is something incoherent about the appeal to temporal parts because it is not clear what a temporal part is.

The second step in the objection is a move from the claim that the notion of a temporal part is in a philosophically significant sense incoherent to the further claim that due to this incoherence, enduring mental entities can also have temporal parts. Here is what Jorba (2015) says:

> … if we can attribute a certain temporal duration, being as minimal as it is, then we have a temporally extended event within which we can distinguish temporal parts. Thus, the very distinction between perduring and enduring …

[48] I want to thank an anonymous referee for bringing this objection to my attention.

[49] Jorba's (2015) main objection relies on Hofweber and Velleman (2010) p. 39. But Jorba (2015) cites Sider (2001) and McKinnon (2002) in support of skepticism about distinction between enduring and perduring stuff. Still, Jorba (2015) seems to recognize that this distinction is both theoretically important and problematic, independent of questions about how things persist. For the purpose of this paper, I want to remain as neutral as possible regarding the objective metaphysics of this distinction. But for further discussion and reasons for skepticism, see e.g., Hawley (2001). And for a defense of the distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities, see e.g., Steward (1997).

> falls apart. Following this reasoning, if achievements also have temporal parts, given that they are considered to be instantaneous events, what then distinguishes them from activities that don't go on for very long? (738).

Putting these two steps together, then, Jorba's objection can be stated as follows: (i) There is something incoherent about the notion of a temporal part; (ii) if there is something incoherent about the notion of a temporal part, then enduring entities can be conceived of as also having temporal parts; (iii) if enduring entities can be conceived of as also having temporal parts, then there is no sense in which there is a meaningful distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities; (iv) therefore, there is no meaningful distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities.[50]

There are three plausible ways to respond to Jorba's objection, which I now want to discuss. First, even if it is true that the notion of a temporal part is in some important sense incoherent, this does not support the claim that enduring entities can have temporal parts as Jorba's objection requires. Indeed, quite the opposite would follow: If temporal parts are incoherent, then, at best, we cannot know whether enduring entities can have temporal parts. If this is correct, then this should lead us to be skeptical of the claim that enduring mental entities can have temporal parts. Of course, if it is true that the notion of a temporal part is incoherent, then this would also give us reason to be skeptical of the claim that perduring entities can have temporal parts. And if we have good reason to be skeptical of whether perduring entities can have temporal parts, then the distinction might break down all the same. But this would not be because enduring entities might also have temporal parts; it would simply be the logical result of the fact that it is not clear what we mean by temporal parts.

Second, while I would maintain that we do have some phenomenological understanding of what a temporal part is (at least from a first-personal, subjective point of view), let us grant for the sake of the argument that from an impersonal, objective metaphysical perspective, there may be good grounds to be skeptical of what a temporal part is.[51] But this does not automatically mean that the distinction is

[50]To be fair, Jorba (2015) can be read as an extended argument against the distinction between enduring and perduring entities as it would apply to mental content and mental kinds. So, it is not quite right to say that Jorba's argument 'requires' that what we mean by temporal parts being incoherent, means that we cannot know anything about such things. Instead, a charitable reading of Jorba (2015) is one that interprets it as offering several objections to the endurance/perdurance distinction along a variety of axis.

doomed to fall apart. Let me explain: In addition to the sort of impersonal, objective ontological approach to the endurance/perdurance distinction that I am granting might be dubious, we can also explore the distinction from a first-personal, subjective ontology that is structured and conceptualized in terms of an agent's subjective temporal experience.[52]

Arguably, this first-personal ontological approach to the distinction is entirely consistent with an impersonal, objective ontological perspective. This is because, even if the distinction, understood from an impersonal, objective metaphysical point of view does collapse, this would not entail that from a first-personal, subjective point of view the distinction also collapses. If this is right, then it is not clear what reasons could ground skepticism about the distinction construed from the first-personal, subjective ontological point of view. Therefore, Jorba's objection only applies to the impersonal, objective ontological version of the endurance/perdurance distinction. The objection simply does not apply to the distinction construed from a first-personal, subjective ontological point of view.[53]

Third, the arguments defended in the previous sections do not rely on the notion of temporal parts alone to make a distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities—it hinges on the notion of temporal shape.[54] And recall that temporal shape appeals to both temporal parts *and* our phenomenology of change. So, it is not only in virtue of having the appearance of being composed of temporal parts that we can say mental episodes and events are processive, perduring entities, it is also in virtue of being dynamic and changing that we can make the relevant phenomenological distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities. Indeed, having temporal parts is only a necessary condition for temporal shape. And even if an enduring entity can in some meaningful

[51] Jorba (2015) cites e.g., Sider (2001) and McKinnon (2002) in support of the claim that the distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities breaks down.

[52] Someone might object by arguing that this approach looks obviously circular. See e.g., Jorba (2015), pp. 741–742. But for a plausible way of construing this approach from a first-personal, ontological view, see e.g., Paul (2017).

[53] It is worth calling attention to the fact that in criticizing Tye and Wright's (2011) appeal to the mere appearance of a processive character or phenomenology of temporal structure, Jorba (2015), p. 739 recognizes that one could respond to the objection in the way I have suggested here. Jorba's own response to Tye & Wright simply points out that they fail to offer an independent argument in support of their phenomenological approach to the endurance/perdurance distinction. But this is misguided. Arguably, our phenomenology is temporally structured, which I would argue provides *prima facie*, defeasible support for the first-personal, subjective ontological approach endorsed here. If so, then the burden of argument is on the proponent of Jorba's approach to show what is wrong with the approach I have proposed to the endurance/perdurance distinction.

[54] Recall that our ostensive definition of Temporal Shape says: X has a temporal shape if and only if the following conditions are satisfied: (i) X is dynamic; and (ii) X fills or occupies some arbitrary duration of time by being composed of temporal parts or stages

sense be said to be composed of temporal parts, it is not clear that it can also have a phenomenology of change, since they are taken to be wholly present at every moment they exist.[55]

Indeed, Jorba seems to recognize this appeal to the qualitative feature of appearing to be dynamic and changing as one way that someone could respond to the objection that the distinction falls apart. Here is what Jorba (2015) says:

> … the difference between enduring and perduring episodes can be seen in another way: enduring episodes as those that exist at numerically different times and they are *qualitatively* the same at those different times, while perduring episodes would involve some qualitative changes of the episode at these different times (738; emphasis in the original).

Jorba then goes on to argue that appealing to the appearance of being dynamic and changing will not help. For Jorba, the problem is that when we consider paradigmatic examples of perceptual episodes like listening to or singing a melody, such mental items 'can also be *qualitatively* the same during a certain period of time (a certain note), thus being equal in this respect to thought' (738; emphasis in the original). But it is not at all obvious that the hearing of a melody or even hearing a single note being played without change over some arbitrary stretch of time would show that such perduring mental items would be essentially unchanging.

Consider, for example, how O'Shaughnessy (2000) attempts to show that perduring mental entities are dynamic and changing in nature, while enduring mental entities are not:

> Characteristically the contents of experience are in flux, being essentially occurrent in nature. Then being as such occurrent we can say, not merely that it continues in existence from instant to instant, but that it is at each instant occurrently renewed. Indeed, the very form of the experiential inner world, of the 'stream of consciousness', is such as to necessitate the occurrence of processes and events at all times. The identity-conditions obtaining are those appropriate to events and processes—in contradistinction to those governing states (43; emphasis in the original).

If O'Shaughnessy is right in claiming that conscious experience is necessarily in flux, then it would follow that even if the relevant musical

[55]But see e.g., Boyle (2011) for an example of someone who argues that states and properties can be understood as active and dynamic. While I am skeptical of this approach to enduring mental entities, I will not pursue this issue here. I mention this point here only because the reader might disagree and this is an interesting place in the literature where one could locate an attempt to make this view of enduring entities plausible.

note does not itself change, the event in which the note is experienced by a subject does change. It is dynamic and changing at least insofar as it is constantly being renewed.

But maybe there is a problem with this example.[56] Perhaps we could change the example to one where a subject's conscious experience is such that they visually perceive nothing but a single color that fills their entire visual field over some arbitrary stretch of time: from t_1 to t_n. Given a case like this, one might try to argue that some perduring mental entities lack any qualitative change. If so, then Jorba could still maintain that the distinction collapses, insofar as perduring mental entities would be equal to enduring mental entities, at least in this regard. But even cases like this involve temporal shape, insofar as one's visual field is constantly being renewed in the way suggested above (O'Shaugnessy 2000, 42–43). In order for Jorba's objection to work, it must be shown that there is a plausible phenomenological case where it is not possible for one's first-personal, subjective experience of some duration of time to be experienced as seeming to be dynamic or changing. Indeed, Jorba (2015) seems open to the claim that appealing to this sort of perduring, processive character of an agent's occurrent conscious experience can be understood 'as providing a negative criterion and a useful test for recognizing experiential processive episodes' (742). But why should we think that anything stronger than this is needed for genuine beliefs? We do not need anything stronger than this useful test to help identify and distinguish phenomenal episodes of different sorts. So, it is reasonable that this useful test will be sufficient for us to identify and distinguish mental episodes and genuine beliefs too. Thus, Jorba's (2015) objection can be avoided.

Second Objection. Even if I am right in claiming that there is a phenomenological distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities, insofar as the latter but not the former has a temporal shape, one still might wonder why should we think that all beliefs *must endure* in order to be acted upon in the relevant sort of way.[57] For instance, one could argue that it is possible to consciously entertain or affirm the content of one's belief that 'there is beer in the fridge' while walking to the fridge in order to procure their beer. Indeed, one may even privately whisper to themselves the sentence 'there is beer in the fridge' repeatedly

[56]Someone might think that there could be very small but no less important musical properties that might potentially cause unnecessary problems in such a case.

[57]This would in effect be an argument against (CE2) in the Argument from Causal Explanation offered in Section 3.

throughout the time that it takes them to reach the fridge.[58] In this way, then, it seems reasonable to think that one could use this content in their reasoning about the beer and the fridge, and this mental content would presumably be playing some sort of role in their behavior. It might even be the case, as Jorba (2015) suggests, that there is a necessary relation (of some suitable form) that holds between a cognitive agent's standing or dispositional belief state and their occurrent, conscious episode of entertaining of the content of the relevant belief that *p* (745-748). If so, then why should we think that a genuine belief *must* endure to be acted upon in the relevant way?

In response, let me first reiterate that the Endurance Condition does not claim that a mental entity *must actually* endure in order for it to count as a genuine belief. Rather, the Endurance Condition only says that it *must be possible* for the relevant belief to endure.[59] I have already offered various reasons for why we should think that this is true; I will not repeat them here. However, for the purpose of clarity, we may ask the further question: How many beliefs are there in a case where someone is entertaining or affirming the belief that 'there is a beer in the fridge' while walking toward the fridge? If the claim is that there are two beliefs (i.e. an enduring belief state and a perduring occurrent belief), with the very same content, then, arguably, our theory of mind and its ontological posits would be progressively enlarged in such a way that would need independent support.

I am skeptical of expanding our mental ontology in this way for several reasons. First, doing so would introduce a kind of causal overdetermination problem, which we could otherwise avoid. For instance, if there are two beliefs (i.e. a standing/dispositional belief *and* an occurrent belief), then one may reasonably wonder which belief is causally relevant in explaining the agent's behavior? If, however, our claim is that there is only one belief, then it would seem as though the belief itself must undergo an important sort of change—that is, the belief would sometimes be an enduring state and at other times it would be a perduring occurrence of some suitable form. But it is not clear what sort of cognitive mechanism(s) would be involved in making an enduring mental entity become a perduring mental entity. And we cannot simply assert that there is a cognitive mechanism; we would need independent support

[58]I want to thank an anonymous referee for making it clear why this sort of objection still needs a cogent response at this stage in the paper.

[59]Someone might objection by arguing that it is not clear what sort of possibility is required? For our current purposes, only nomological possibility is required but I do not defend this here.

for such a claim. But it is not clear why we should think that a standing or dispositional thing can become an occurrent or processive thing such that the relevant mental content is still action guiding in the required way.

The second problem is that, even if there is a plausible way to make sense of the cognitive mechanism(s) responsible for the switching between enduring and perduring sorts of things, there would be an implausible sort of 'cross categorical' feature involved in claiming that enduring entities can change into perduring entities. To put this point a bit differently, there cannot be a metaphysical change, which happens intra-categorical, of an entity of one category into an entity of another category. Indeed, this is a metaphysical issue regarding enduring and perduring entities, not merely an epistemological issue about the relevant mechanism(s) that would be required for such a metaphysical change to happen.[60]

If, however, we reject the view that there are occurrent or processive beliefs in favor of my claim that genuine beliefs must be able to endure, then we are free to endorse the view that says when you are mumbling to yourself the sentence 'there is beer in the fridge' while walking toward the fridge to get a beer, you are consciously *entertaining* or *calling to mind* the content 'there is beer in the fridge' without positing additional beliefs or assuming that beliefs are the sorts of things that can become occurrent or processive. Therefore, the Endurance Condition does not require that the relevant belief *must* endure; it only requires that it is *possible* for the relevant belief to endure. And this arguably leaves open the possibility that the content 'there is beer in the fridge' might be consciously entertained or called to one's mind (e.g. when you privately mumble the sentence to yourself). But this would fall short of counting as doxastic if, for instance, one is mumbling these words simply because they like to hear themselves mumble. In such a situation, the episode or event of privately whispering to yourself is not an occurrent belief but an occurrence of entertaining, affirming, or simply calling to mind the content of the relevant belief. Indeed, if the belief could not endure, then, arguably, you would not be able to call the content 'there is beer in the fridge' to mind while walking toward the fridge to secure your beer.[61] Thus, I take this to avoid the objection.

Third Objection. Suppose that beliefs are nothing but certain dispositions to entertain or affirm some content *p*, whereas an occurrence of

[60]I want to thank an anonymous colleague for helping me think about this point.
[61]It is worth mentioning that my interlocutor might not deny this point. See e.g., Smithies (2019).

judging whether *p* is nothing but a mental episode of entertaining, affirming, doubting, or calling to mind the content *p*.[62] Given this characterization of the relevant distinction between enduring and perduring mental entities, it could be argued that the occurrence of judging that *p* is nothing more than the realization of the disposition to entertain the content *p*. If so, then one might object that, insofar as entertaining the content *p* is a perduring and processive occurrence, then there is no substantive reason to think that a belief cannot be occurrent because it cannot endure.

This is an interesting proposal and it might be plausible. But it is important to make clear that there is a difference between dispositional states and their manifestations/realizations. To treat the manifestation/realization of a disposition as itself an 'occurrent' belief would be a category mistake; it would conflate dispositions with their manifestation/realizations. As Crane (2013) correctly puts this point: '… an occurrent belief cannot be the *very same thing* as a dispositional belief, any more than a breaking can be the very same thing as an instance of fragility' (163; emphasis in the original).[63] So, unless we amend the above proposal to make it clear that an occurrence of judging or entertaining the content *p* is not itself an occurrent belief, then the objection can be avoided. But as soon as we make this clarification to the proposal, then the objection loses its force. Therefore, one can accept the proposal that a belief is nothing more than a disposition to undergo an occurrent episode or event whereby a subject calls to mind the content *p*. Indeed, we may even think that there is a kind of necessary connection between this sort of dispositional state and its manifestation/realization.[64]

Fourth Objection. Someone might object by arguing that even if, strictly speaking, the LPI thesis that Horgan and Kriegel (2007) defend is either false or vacuously true, still (i) the view might be reformulated in a way that is compatible with the denial of occurrent beliefs, and (ii) such a reformulated position might be no less epistemically significant than it would be if there are no occurrent beliefs.

To get a better grip on the force of this objection, consider essentially indexical beliefs, which Perry (1979) calls beliefs regarding 'propositions of limited accessibility' (15). Call these 'PLA-beliefs'. These PLA-beliefs

[62]See e.g., Kriegel (2013), p. 17. See also Peacocke (2000) and Smithies (2019) for similar accounts.
[63]Indeed, Crane uses this observation in arguing that there are not two different beliefs, a dispositional belief and an occurrent belief, but a single content that is attached to either a dispositional belief or manifested in an unfolding, processive, and perduring mental event or episode rather than an enduring mental belief state.
[64]See e.g., Jorba (2015), pp. 746–747.

have the following form: 'Alex is making a mess'.[65] One might think that the beliefs identified by Horgan & Kriegel as being infallible are instances of this limited class of PLA-beliefs. If so, then it may be reasonable to reformulate LPI in terms of PLA-beliefs. Or, perhaps, these short-lived PLA-beliefs could be understood as occurrent judgings rather than occurrent beliefs. On this proposal, only a limited class of occurrent PLA-judgings are infallible.[66]

This proposal may have some theoretically significant returns but I am skeptical of whether it will help in offering a plausible reformulated version of LPI. The problem is that Perry's (1979) notion of a proposition of limited accessibility refers to a very specific problem regarding beliefs involving essentially or ineliminable indexical terms.[67] But Horgan and Kriegel (2007) claim that the phenomenal beliefs that LPI says are infallible are not to be construed as essentially indexical and do not contain ineliminable indexical terms, though they admit that we may be forced to use indexical language to express such beliefs.[68] So, on the one hand, Horgan and Kriegel (2007) seem to rule out these sorts of PLA-beliefs when they introduce the bracketing constraint.[69] The idea is that even though such beliefs or occurrences of judging occur only briefly, unless properly bracketed, the contents of these sorts of PLA-beliefs might still be connected to other background beliefs, judgments, and presuppositions, which could potentially raise problems for the alleged infallibility credited to LPI.

On the other hand, Horgan (2012) explicitly excludes PLA-beliefs because one could still make a kind of conceptual error, partly as the result of the PLA-belief (or act of judging) being unbracketed and thereby allowing for certain conceptual connections to background beliefs, judgments, and presuppositions. As Horgan (2012) says:

> This kind of fallibility stems not from any appearance/reality gap concerning the object of one's judgment (viz., the phenomenal color-character of one's current experience), but rather from the possibility that one is conducting judgmental introspection not by exercising full-fledged conceptual competence but rather

[65]See e.g., Perry (1979), pp. 15–16.
[66]For a discussion of the distinction between occurrent belief and judgments, See e.g., Schwitzgebel (2010, 2019a).
[67]See e.g., Perry (1979), pp. 15–16.
[68]See e.g., Horgan and Kriegel (2007), p. 129; see also Horgan (2012), p. 411.
[69]It is worth noting that Horgan & Kriegel only rule out empty (i.e., trivially true) indexical terms. In doing so, they appeal to Evans's (1982) understanding of empty indexical terms and calls such terms 'E-empty' indexical terms for 'Evans-emptiness'. For their discussion of this point, see e.g., Horgan and Kriegel's (2007), p. 129.

> in a way that embodies a lapse in conceptual competence—a performance error (408).

Given Horgan's characterization of these sorts of short-lived beliefs, the reason why unbracketed occurrent phenomenal beliefs with contents of limited accessibility (i.e. PLA-beliefs) are fallible is because it is still possible, though it may be unlikely in most circumstances, for the subject to make some form of conceptual error of classification or labeling.

But someone could reply by claiming that the argument for LPI can always be run in terms of singular, present, phenomenal in mode of presentation, and bracketed occurrences of judging or entertaining the content *p* like 'this sensation is feeling like this'. And since an act of entertaining the content 'this sensation is feeling like this' is not an empty indexical, Horgan & Kriegel might simply reject the claim that LPI cannot be reformulated in terms of occurrent episodes of judging, entertaining, affirming, doubting, or simply calling to mind the content *p*.

In response, let me first make clear that this proposal assumes that beliefs are not necessary for knowledge because it attempts to show that one could have a kind of phenomenal infallible knowledge if the way that we specify LPI involves conceptually replacing the relevant occurrent *belief* that *p* with a cognitive act of *judging* or *entertaining* the phenomenal content *p*. Of course, this approach to knowledge is itself highly controversial and I cannot explore whether such a position is either true or plausible here. But it is worth recognizing because such a view would require an independent argument for why knowledge does not require belief. Additionally, whether LPI can be plausibly reformulated in terms of perduring phenomenal mental episodes of judging or entertaining a content like 'this sensation is feeling like this' is a claim that also requires its own independent argument. While I do not want to rule out the possibility that such an argument can be plausibly developed, until such an argument is offered, my response to this objection stands.

Finally, I want to suggest that the real problem with reformulating LPI in terms of singular, present, phenomenal in mode of presentation, and bracketed occurrences of consciously judging, entertaining, affirming, doubting, or simply calling to mind the content *p* is that the very notion of a bracketing constraint seems to be deeply at odds with these sorts of human cognitive occurrences.

Let me explain: One of the main reasons for introducing the bracketing constraint was to rule out the possibility that one might make certain conceptual errors because the content is conceptually connected to

background beliefs, judgments, and presuppositions. But when we focus on these sorts of short-lived occurrences of judging or entertaining the content *p* (e.g. 'this sensation feels like this'), it is no longer clear how the bracketing constraint could rule out the sorts of problematic connections to background information and presuppositions that it was designed to rule out. And it is not at all clear how we might apply the bracketing constraint to something that is perduring, unfolding, changing, and processive in phenomenal character like an occurrence of a mental episode or event. But if the bracketing constraint loses its force (as it seems it would), then this could theoretically provide the resources for a plausible counterexample to LPI. So, unless one can make a cogent case for what is meant by a bracketed occurrence of judging or entertaining the content *p*, my response to the objection under consideration stands.

5. Conclusion

To summarize: It was shown that in order for some mental phenomena to count as cases of genuine belief, it must be possible that such mental goings-on are *able* to endure. But since what we call an 'occurrent belief' is really an episode or event that has a temporal shape (i.e. it is dynamic and perdures rather than endures), it will not count as a genuine belief. And given that Horgan and Kriegel's (2007) LPI thesis requires that there are occurrent beliefs, this suffices to show that LPI is either false or vacuously true.

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