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## **Knowledge of Need**

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### **Abstract**

Some of the duties of individuals and organisations involve responsiveness to need. This requires knowledge of need, so the epistemology of need is relevant to practice. The prevailing contention among philosophers who have broached the topic is that one can know one’s own needs (as one can know some kinds of desires) by feeling them. The article argues against this view. The main positive claims made in the article are as follows. Knowledge of need, in both first-person and second-person cases, is a type of knowledge-that with no basic epistemological source. Needs, like medical conditions, have signs and symptoms. Knowledge of these, with inference, results in knowledge of need. Finally, it is argued that need is akin to, but not a special case of, metaphysical necessity de re. Some implications of this for the epistemology of need are explained.

**Keywords:** need, felt need, epistemology, de re necessity, metaphysics, dispositions

**I. The claim that needs are ethically and politically important provokes philosophical questions outside moral philosophy.**

The task of rational ethics is, it seems to me, to provide the man of practical sagacity with a surer foundation for his insight by *deepening our knowledge of human needs* and clarifying the ideals which arise in the course of our efforts to satisfy them.<sup>1</sup>

Needs are objective because *it is a discoverable matter of fact* what needs a person has...<sup>2</sup>

With advocates of ‘needs-centred ethics’,<sup>3</sup> I think that the concept of need has a central role to play in normative ethics, political philosophy and policy-making.<sup>4</sup> There are questions in *moral philosophy* that an advocate of such a view should address, such as the following. How do needs give rise to moral normativity? Why do needs have the moral weights (as against each other and as against other morally relevant factors) that they do? The advocate of the centrality of need in normative and applied philosophy also requires a more general *philosophy of need*. The moral philosophy and the general philosophy are connected. In particular, if we make the normative claim that agents have duties to take needs into account before acting, and when formulating policies, then (on the assumption that needs claims are factual) we presume that those agents can have *knowledge* of needs.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this article is mainly to attempt to answer two epistemological questions that arise when this presumption is made. How can one know what one needs? How can one know what another needs? In addressing the first question, that of first-person knowledge of needs, this article will take issue with the view, prevalent in recent philosophical writing on need, that one can *feel* one’s own needs. Contrary to this, it will be

contended, one's knowledge of one's own needs, like one's knowledge of the needs of others, has no basic source.<sup>6</sup>

The connected questions of what it is to need and of how forms of needing can be classified are relevant to our epistemological inquiries. In ordinary language, we use the noun 'need' both to talk about our *needs* and to refer to their *satisfiers*.<sup>7</sup> It is the first sort of usage that is of interest here. When A needs X, it is A's needing X, rather than X itself, that is the need (in the sense that interests us). The metaphysical question of what it is for A to need X is one in answer to which I offer some suggestions and analogies, pursuing their bearing upon the epistemology of need.

An *absolute* need is a need that a being has regardless of its own goals and of the goals of others.<sup>8</sup> The need of a plant for sunlight is an absolute need. *Relative* needs depend on goals. If I want to be able to play a musical instrument, then I need to practice. Without the musical aim, there is no need to practise.<sup>9</sup>

Though I cannot here examine the nature of the relationship, needs ascriptions are related to conditionals. The relationship falls short, I think, of the former being *reducible* to the latter.<sup>10</sup> In his classic article 'Claims of Need', Wiggins quotes Anscombe's remark that to claim that an organism needs a given environment is 'to say that it won't flourish unless it has it'. Feinberg makes the similar remark, again quoted by Wiggins, that 'to say that S needs X is to say simply that if he doesn't have X he will be harmed'. Wiggins amends the Anscombe/Feinberg account by insisting that the conditionals in question 'be governed by "necessarily"'.<sup>11</sup> Wiggins writes that what one absolutely needs one '*cannot get on without*'.<sup>12</sup> As he and others have observed, the idea of needing involves both necessity<sup>13</sup> and dependency.<sup>14</sup> Building on these points, I suggest that to ascribe an absolute need to an organism involves taking it to be incapable of surviving unimpaired

without something. If there are needs-involving facts,<sup>15</sup> I think they are more akin to dynamically modal facts (related to sentences of the form ‘ $x$  can/must  $V$ ’) than to occurrent facts (related to sentences of the form ‘ $x$  Vs’).<sup>16</sup> On the account I am outlining, the modality involved in needing is explicitly taken to be de re rather than de dicto. (I return to that point in Section IV below.)

Among the absolute needs of human beings, some are *vital* needs and others are *agency* needs.<sup>17</sup> I will shortly explain the distinction. A taxonomy of need is provided in Figure 1 below.

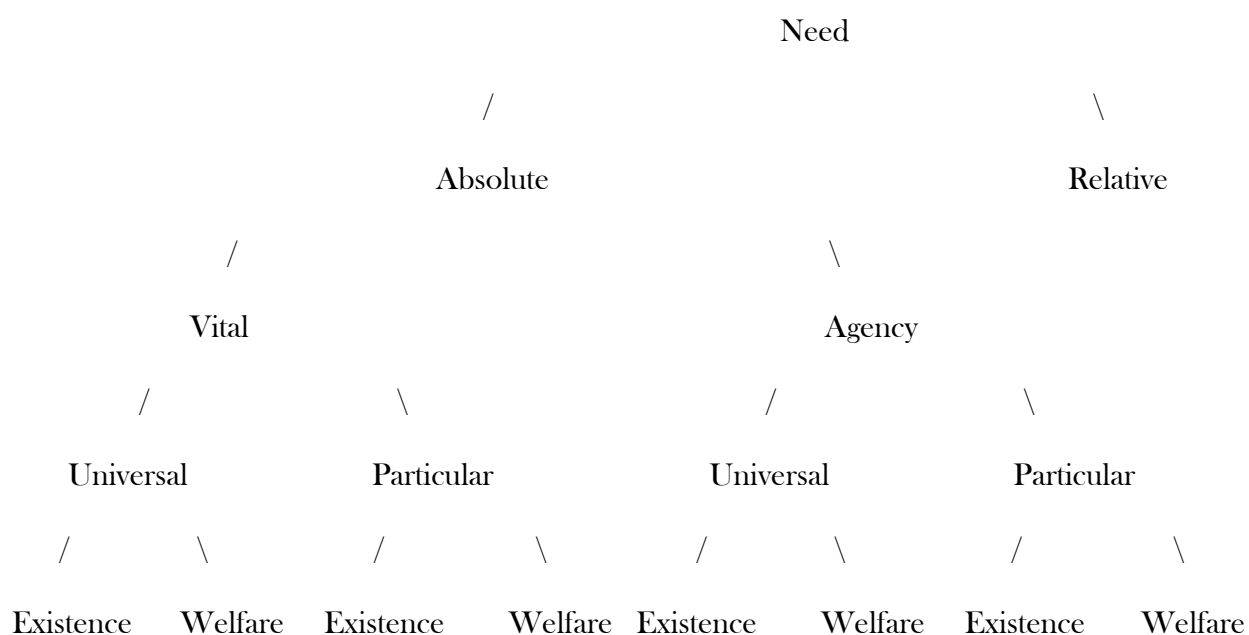


Figure 1: A taxonomy of need

We may distinguish between *universal* needs and *particular* needs.<sup>18</sup> In the case of a human being, its universal vital needs are the needs, such as the need for food, water or shelter, that it has merely in virtue of being biologically human rather than, say, in virtue of being a moral agent. An organism’s universal vital needs are essential to it: it could not have existed without having them.

Particular human vital needs are vital needs that one human being may have which another does not, such as the need for an operation, kidney dialysis or a diet abnormally high in omega-3 oils.<sup>19</sup>

Particular human needs arise from contingencies not shared with all other members of one's species and which relate to one's genetic make-up, environment and life history. Discussion of particular needs will arise in the arguments that follow. Some of my arguments will also rely on the common-sense assumption, which goes undefended here, that non-conscious organisms have vital needs.<sup>20</sup> We may also distinguish between *existence* needs and *welfare* needs. Existence needs are those, such as the human need for nutrition, which, if not met, will result imminently in the perishing of the entity that has them. Welfare needs include these, but also needs the non-satisfaction of which presents a harm (rather than, or falling short of, a threat to survival). An example would be the need for sufficient vitamin D which, if not obtained, can result in rickets.<sup>21</sup>

Human beings also have agency needs.<sup>22</sup> These are related to our capacity to be moral agents: creatures capable of deliberating, choosing what to do and having their own ideas about what is good. Any need the non-satisfaction of which would diminish, prevent, or destroy a being's (actual or potential) agency capacities is an agency need. A need the non-satisfaction of which would tend to diminish an agency capacity is an agency-welfare need. A need the non-satisfaction of which would tend to prevent or destroy agency capacities in a being which has, or is capable of developing, such capacities is an agency-existence need.

One further distinction is relevant. Needs can be classified as *dispositional* and *occurrent*. A dispositional need is a need which must be satisfied every so often and not necessarily *right now*. It is in the dispositional sense that one needs sleep even just after waking from a good, and fully satisfying, night's sleep.<sup>23</sup> One is in a situation of occurrent need when one has a dispositional need that (whether or not it is actually being satisfied) currently requires to be satisfied if one is not to

suffer detriment.<sup>24</sup> I am not now in occurrent need of sleep, but I was after successive overnight bus trips.

Knowledge of vital existence needs (among others) is necessary, I think, if individuals and corporations are to act rightly. Though I must leave meta-ethical argument aside, I deny that knowledge of vital existence needs is, *per se*, a type of *moral* knowledge. Given the connection of welfare needs with the idea of harm, knowledge of them seems to be a case of axiological knowledge (i.e., knowledge of value).<sup>25</sup> In addressing the epistemology of need here, however, I hope to restrict my concern to areas of epistemology falling outside meta-ethics and value theory. Since agency needs may be thought to involve normative ideas about what makes for a good person, it is easier for me to attempt that if I address only vital needs (thus omitting non-vital agency needs) in what follows. Nevertheless, I consider vital needs to include those welfare needs that are not distinctive of agents, and so (given that they are welfare needs) not to be totally independent of axiological issues.

## II. One does not simply *feel* one's needs.

How, then, does one know one's vital needs? The philosophical literature on need contains little in the way of epistemology, but the prevailing suggestion about first-person knowledge of need is that one can feel one's needs. On this view, first-person knowledge of need is, in the first instance, knowledge by acquaintance. The following quotations are illustrative.

[O]ne can feel a need, as one can feel a desire...for something such as food, warmth, love or comfort; one can feel a need, but not a desire, which one does not really have.<sup>26</sup>

...all needs felt by humans to be real must be considered as real...<sup>27</sup>

One who feels himself growing faint, where that condition is caused by the need for oxygen, may be said to feel that need. (This is just the normal pattern of simple ‘non-epistemic’ perception.) Needs may in this way enter into consciousness.<sup>28</sup>

*Felt human needs* are...strong motivational forces that take the form of a physically felt lack or emotional and ethical aspiration, *and which have direct causal relation to and consequences for human functioning.*<sup>29</sup>

Let us call the idea that a person can know his or her own needs by *feeling* them ‘the phenomenological thesis’. The exponent of this thesis takes (at least some) needs to be phenomenal.<sup>30</sup> The thesis gives us an immediate answer to the question of first-person knowledge of need. One knows (at least some of) one’s own needs by feeling them. I will argue that the phenomenological thesis is false: needs are *not* (and *cannot be*) felt. The positive epistemology of need I outline later in this article does not *require* the denial that needs are felt. It only requires that even if needs are non-epistemically felt, one does not feel *that* one is in need.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, I do present arguments against the claim that needs are non-epistemically felt. Moreover, my view of the metaphysics of need has implications for that claim.

Michael Williams writes that ‘If you are in pain, you *just know* it. The question “How do you know?” has no clear application here.’<sup>32</sup> Now if this is right and if needs were, like pains, *felt*, then the question ‘How do you know?’ would be without clear application when one is in need. I

do not think the question lacks clear application. In fact, I will argue, needs are not themselves *experienced* (though they are known partly by empirical means). The relationship of needs to feelings is perhaps akin to the relationship between a disease and the pain that is its symptom. This theme will be pursued later.

For beings with the capacity to suffer, being in occurrent need of something but lacking it often involves suffering. This is part and parcel of common-sense. Nevertheless, unlike the suffering which may result from unmet need, needing is not *per se* a type of *experience* or *mental episode*. Needs are neither essentially mental nor essentially dependent on the mental. This is also part and parcel of common-sense, though some philosophical doctrines jar with it.

The main topic of epistemological concern here is vital human need. Vital needs are absolute, and cannot be felt.<sup>33</sup> My felt experiences, such as pains or itches, are immediately evident to me. Even if (at least some) desires are like this too, needs are not like this. One can have a need and yet have no awareness of this. It might be claimed that some needs can and do generate conscious desires.<sup>34</sup> Even if this claim is right, the needs themselves are not to be confused with the desires they generate. Suppose that hunger and thirst are need-generated feelings and the desires to which they give rise, for food and drink, are need-generated desires.<sup>35</sup> We cannot say that the desire just is the feeling here, since I may be hungry but not want to eat (if, for example, I am on a fast or preparing myself for surgery).<sup>36</sup> Moreover, needing involves necessity and, as modern philosophy generally holds, the epistemology of necessity does not lend itself to any phenomenological analysis. (The connection between need and modality is pursued later.)

What, though, are the arguments for the phenomenological thesis? I have found none in the literature. Writers who adopt the thesis just assert it. I can think of three arguments that might be offered, but none of them are good. First, it may be claimed that needs are, like desires, a type



of mental state. All mental states can be felt, so needs can be felt. Both premises are dubious, but showing the falsehood of the first is enough to show the argument to be unsound. Needful beings include some beings, such as trees, without mental lives: the argument's starting point just gets the metaphysics of need wrong.<sup>37</sup> Second, the appeal to ordinary language may be invoked. In everyday talk we indeed speak of *feeling* needs, but this, of itself, packs little philosophical punch. It is part of the business of philosophy to recover insights from ordinary language which technical discussion can neglect, but it is also part of its business to help us avoid errors which can arise from taking too seriously, or interpreting too superficially, our ordinary (and often philosophically slipshod) use of language. Third, the phenomenological thesis may be invoked because, in asserting that a patient can feel his or her own needs, we secure (with certain ancillary assumptions) the conclusion that the patient is best placed to determine what he or she needs. This conclusion may be considered politically desirable, since it may be used to oppose the charge that the appeal to need in practical philosophy is paternalistic or carries the risk of paternalism.<sup>38</sup> At best, however, this gives us a motive, rather than a good reason, to accept the phenomenological thesis. We can see why someone might find it useful or desirable that the phenomenological thesis be true, but we have not been presented with good grounds for actually believing it.

Organisms that are without phenomenal consciousness, which are vastly more numerous than those with it, do not feel their needs. In sentient beings, some needs are indirectly manifested in feelings. Depending on the complexity of the mental life of a sentient being, its needs may be indirectly manifested in desires, in feelings and in other psychological states. A need itself, however, cannot be felt even by a higher organism.

When Al says 'I need a drink' on sight of a pub during a long walk in the country, what he says may well be true and may well be warranted by the features of his experience at the time. He does

not, however, feel that he needs a drink. Rather, he feels very thirsty. This feeling of thirst either is or causes an occurrent urge to drink.<sup>39</sup> He may believe, on the basis of this urge, that he needs a drink. The need to drink is distinct from the feeling of thirst, the urge to drink and the belief that one needs to drink.<sup>40</sup> A person in occurrent need of water may need *not* to drink, for example, if the person has a stomach injury. They will still feel the urge to drink, and may believe that they need to drink, even although ingesting water by drinking is not among their occurrent needs.<sup>41</sup> So, from the supposition that urges associated with a need are felt, it does not follow that the need itself is felt. Now suppose that Al has knowingly been taking medicine which he knows has the side-effect of causing thirst. In this circumstance, the urge may not give rise to the belief that he needs a drink.

Consider the following arguments:

- (1) Al is feeling pain. Therefore, Al is in pain.
- (2) Al is feeling thirsty. Therefore, Al is thirsty.
- (3) Al is feeling in need of a drink. Therefore, Al needs a drink.
- (4) Al is feeling thirsty. Therefore, Al needs a drink.

(1) and (2) are modally valid. In other words, in (1) and (2), the truth of the premise is not co-tenable with the falsehood of the conclusion. Whether or not (3) is valid depends on how we interpret ‘feeling in need of a drink’. If it is supposed to be a more wordy way of saying ‘feeling thirsty’, then (3) is, like (4), invalid. If ‘feeling in need of a drink’ is meant, on the other hand, to serve as an endorsement of the idea that needs are sometimes felt (rather than merely being *manifested* in feelings) then, for reasons spelled out below, I deny that the premise expresses a

metaphysical possibility. On my account, having the feelings that can indirectly manifest a need does not *imply* having the need (although it can, as we shall see later, be *indicative* of the need). Feeling pain, by contrast, does imply being in pain: indeed, it is (at least) constitutive of the pain. It might be suggested that needs cannot be felt introspectively because, while introspection cannot give rise to erroneous belief, one can feel that one has a need without actually having it. No such suggestion features in my argument. I claim neither that introspection cannot give rise to erroneous belief nor that the fallibility of a method of arriving at beliefs about one's needs would preclude it from being a means of arrival at knowledge of one's needs.

One's knowledge that one is in pain is non-inferential. In order to arrive at the belief that he is in pain, Al does not need to apply modus ponens upon his belief that he is feeling pain and the conditional that if he is feeling pain then he is in pain. So long as he is a normal human being whose faculties are working properly, his awareness of the feeling cuts straight to the belief that he is in pain: there is no need for inference. One's beliefs about one's needs are not normally like this and are never, I think, like this in the first instance.<sup>42</sup> For example, Bea may be well-informed about her medical needs and about the feelings that manifest them. This may result in her acting to meet the need. She may know, immediately upon feeling short of breath (and without inference) that she needs to take oxygen. The connection between her feeling short of breath and knowing that she needs to take oxygen arises from habituation, rendering inference unnecessary. When I claim that knowledge of need is not, in the first instance, non-inferential, I mean that the background information about her medical knowledge which has enabled this habituation must itself be known via inference (on Bea's part or on the part of a third party).

The advocate of the view that needs can be felt must provide an example of a need that is felt and must not, when providing such an example, confuse needs with feelings, urges or mere

desires. As far as I know, no advocate of the view that needs can be felt has so far avoided such confusion. My conjecture is that it cannot be avoided, and that the view that needs can be felt is a wrong turning in the philosophy of need.

Introspection is a capacity the exercise of which gives rise to a kind of knowledge of one's own mental states.<sup>43</sup> These states may be phenomenal, as in the case of sensations like pain, or non-phenomenal, as in the case (perhaps) of certain propositional attitude states.<sup>44</sup> Since needs are not felt, needs cannot be feelings of which we have introspective awareness. Nor is it the case that needs are propositional attitudes. Wiggins has argued, I think convincingly, that “need” is not...an intentional verb’.<sup>45</sup> While his argument shows that needs are not propositional attitudes, we may add the following considerations. As a matter of grammatical form, one needs *y* or one needs *to V*; one does not need *that p*. ‘I need that...’ is not a well-formed sentential operator: for no well-formed sentence concatenated with it will the result be a well-formed sentence.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, all organisms, not just minded organisms, have needs.

If the line that has been followed so far is correct, then neither perception nor introspection is a basic source of first-person knowledge of needs. So, what are the normal sources of first-person knowledge of needs? My suggestion is that there is no basic source of first-person knowledge of needs. Instead, the normal sources of first-person knowledge of need are, as in the third-person case, *testimony* and *inference*. I contend that considerations about the metaphysics of needs underwrite this view. Knowledge of needs is a type of knowledge-that. This makes knowledge of need vulnerable to global scepticism if anything is vulnerable to global scepticism. Looking on the bright side, it also enables us, I think, to make some headway in providing a more promising epistemology of need than has so far been contained in the literature. To date,

philosophers of need have largely –and in my view unsatisfactorily– rested content with the phenomenological thesis.

**III. Since needs, like medical conditions, have signs and symptoms, inference is involved in the acquisition of knowledge of need.<sup>47</sup>**

When a doctor makes an accurate diagnosis, the doctor’s acquaintance with the patient and the doctor’s knowledge of how to meet medical needs are not sufficient to constitute knowledge of the medical needs of the patient. To know how to meet *that* patient’s medical needs the doctor must know *what is wrong* with that patient and *what might be done about it*. The doctor may then be able correctly to judge, for example, that the patient needs to cut down on alcohol consumption. This is a case of knowledge-that (arrived at inferentially). Knowledge of need is not immune to the scepticisms generally in the air around propositional knowledge. Nevertheless, it is that (if anything) which is *distinctive* about claims to knowledge of needs, as against, say, claims to scientific or historical knowledge, that gives the philosopher of needs a local job to do in epistemology. Taking the wind out of the sails of the global sceptic is, if it can be done, a task for general epistemology or perhaps for meta-philosophy. Even if that cannot be done, we still have to live our lives. Life, including ethical life (with its claims to knowledge of need), goes on. With this, I return to my main question: *if we can* know what we need then *how* can we do so?

From what sources does first-person knowledge of needs arise and how does it arise? Supposing that there are need-generated feelings and desires, such as hunger and wanting to eat, we can take it that a person’s own awareness of (some of) these is indicative, to them, of a need. This awareness is not *constitutive* of the need and nor does it *entail* that the person has the need.

In the case mentioned earlier of Al and the medicine, Al does not believe that he needs a drink because, despite his feeling of thirst, he has a defeater for that belief: his knowledge that he has taken a medicine which causes that feeling to arise when drink is not required. A person may justifiably infer that they need a drink if they feel thirsty and have no defeater.

A feeling that I have can be a *sign*, to me, of a need.<sup>48</sup> If I report to you that I have the feeling, then this can be, to you, a *symptom* of my having a need. When a need (for example, for drink) is manifested by a phenomenal *sign* of the need (such as a feeling of thirst), experiencing the sign does not entail having any knowledge whatever of the *satisfier* of the need. My awareness of a recurrent pain in my knee tells me nothing –in the absence of adequate medical knowledge– about what I need in order to alleviate or cure my ailment. In this circumstance my pain may be a sign that I need something, but not of what it is that I need.<sup>49</sup> (Similarly, the pain can be a sign to me that I have a medical condition, but this differs from its being a sign of the medical condition that I have. When I report the pain, for example to a doctor, it becomes a symptom of my condition.) Unlike in the case of thirst, where the sign, with inference, can be taken to provide a *functional* specification of what I need (namely drink, which is a functional stuff), my awareness of the pain in my knee may not even provide me with a functional specification: I cannot say that I need a pain-killer, or corrective surgery, or to do some therapeutic exercises. In this circumstance, all I can say is that something is wrong with my knee and that I may need something to put it right.

If testimony is genuinely a source of knowledge, then some first-person knowledge of needs is by testimony. There are clear cases in which an expert, such as a doctor, can correctly and knowledgeably inform a patient of a need of the patient, such as the need for dialysis or a kidney transplant, about which the patient was hitherto ignorant. If patients knew their own needs and were best able to determine them, the need for doctors would be lesser. Partly in view of the

objectivity of need, I think that answering the question of how we account for third-person knowledge of needs is central to the case of first-person knowledge of needs too. It seems that all knowledge of need involves inference.

From a third-person perspective, *particular* needs and desires are identified (if they are identified at all), via inference from at least one of the following two sources: testimony and observation of body and behaviour. When I tell my doctor about headaches I am having, I report a symptom. When the doctor examines areas of my neck and head, the doctor is looking for signs. Symptoms are reported, signs are observed.<sup>50</sup> The symptoms that the patient reports to the doctor guide the doctor regarding the areas of the body that are examined and the checks on those areas that are conducted, with a view to diagnosis.<sup>51</sup> Need-generated feelings (such as hunger and thirst) are symptoms of, but not identical with, occurrent needs.<sup>52</sup>

Under normal circumstances, I rightly take Al's report that he needs a drink at face value. When we have no reason to believe that a speaker is trying to deceive us and they tell us what they want, we rightly believe them. In the case of everyday first-person need-reports, as in the case of first-person desire-reports, the speaker is normally a better authority than the person addressed. Where needs differ from desires is that Bob may know that Al needs something that Al does not know that Al needs. (Indeed, Al may even think that he needs not to have that which Bob knows him to need.) The bodily states and/or behaviour of an organism can be signs, to the observer with the requisite ancillary knowledge, of the needs of the organism even when the organism itself is unaware (or incapable of being aware) of its need.

If what has been said so far is right, then the normal sources of *both* first-person *and* third-person knowledge of need are *testimony* and *inference*. It is in the nature of needing that this be so. My being in need contrasts, for example, with my being in pain. Pain is *felt* and, thereby, one's

knowledge that one is in pain has a basic epistemological source. Need is neither felt nor known by a basic epistemological source.

**IV. In its metaphysics and epistemology, need is in some ways similar to and in others different from metaphysical necessity de re.**

The metaphysics of need is relevant to the epistemology of need. In her recent work, Reader characterises needs as de re necessities (i.e., essentialist *necessities for*)<sup>53</sup> and points, more generally, to the potential fruitfulness of bringing together the philosophy of needs and the philosophy of modality.<sup>54</sup> I think the necessity involved in needing is natural but not metaphysical.<sup>55</sup> The claim that absolute needs are necessities *for* is not paradoxical. This point can be explained by reference to the logically stronger notion of de re metaphysical necessity. For example, take the claim that it is necessary for Socrates to be human. The ‘for’ here does not indicate an *end*. Rather, the de re necessity arises from Socrates’ being the very being that he is. It is expressive of his essence.

Unlike Reader,<sup>56</sup> however, I do not take de re necessities that are expressive of essence to be needs. With Reader,<sup>57</sup> I take it that for some beings, some of their needs may go unmet without the immediate perishing of the needful being. I go further than Reader, in that I hold that it is in the nature of needing that a need can go unmet without the immediate perishing of the being that has it.

If it is metaphysically necessary for Socrates to be human then it follows, by the principle that necessity implies actuality, that Socrates is human. On the other hand, for example, if Socrates needs to eat (a circumstance which can be expressed more ambiguously by saying that it is



necessary for Socrates to eat), it does not follow that he is eating or that he does eat. Reader writes that the conditions necessary for the existence of a thing are needs and that the necessity that a triangle have three sides is a 'necessarily met' need.<sup>58</sup> I deny that the needs of a being are the same as the conditions necessary for its existence. First, it is necessary for a triangle to have three sides, but this is not a need. Only a being that can perish or deteriorate can have a need. Triangles (as opposed to accidentally triangular objects, such as a triangular piece of cheese) if they exist at all, can neither perish nor deteriorate. Second, a feature that is ontologically, rather than (merely) causally, necessary for the continued existence of a contingent object is not a need of that object.<sup>59</sup> This means that not all de re necessities of an object are needs of that object. That which is ontologically necessary for my continued existence is something the lack of which is sufficient for my (simultaneous) demise. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that I am essentially physically composed. If I cease to have physical parts then I cease to be. Having physical parts is not, however, one of my needs. So long as I exist, I cannot fail to have physical parts. I think it is part of the logic of the concept of need that any need can go unsatisfied: whatever I need I can lack and yet exist. Those who confuse needs with lacks<sup>60</sup> have, despite that mistake, hit on an insight: whatever is needed can be lacked. So, even if having physical parts is of my essence, it is not one of my absolute needs since it is not something I could lack and yet continue (for any period, however short) to exist. Now of course I cannot *forsake* my absolute needs: I might choose not to *satisfy* them, but I cannot choose not to *have* them.<sup>61</sup> What I absolutely need does not have to be of my essence, however, since I can have absolute needs that arise from my particular circumstances, as against from my being the kind of being that I am. The need for nutrition may be essential to all organisms, but the distinction between need and metaphysical necessity de re remains. Even if some needs are of the essences of the beings that have them (such as the need for nutrition being

essential to all organisms), not all needs are, and not everything that is of the essence of a being is a need of that being.

Granting that needs are de re necessities, even though not all de re necessities are needs, let us consider how de re necessities are known. Contemporary approaches to this problem take off from Kripke's work on the epistemology of a posteriori necessity. On Kripke's view, we acquire necessary a posteriori knowledge by means of applying modus ponens upon a modal (and a priori) major premise and a non-modal (and empirical) minor premise. As a result, we get a conclusion that is both modal and a posteriori. For example:

1. If water is H<sub>2</sub>O then water is necessarily H<sub>2</sub>O.
2. Water is H<sub>2</sub>O.
3. So, water is necessarily H<sub>2</sub>O.<sup>62</sup>

The central epistemological question now becomes how knowledge of the modal major premise is acquired.<sup>63</sup> On Kripke's view, it is known by such methods as rational intuition and philosophical analysis. The key point, for current purposes, is that cases (other than by testimony) of knowledge of de re modality result partly from inference on the part of the agent with the knowledge. In claiming that needs are felt, the proponent of the phenomenological thesis is supposing that needs can be known on the basis of experience alone, *without inference*. If needs are de re necessities, then the phenomenologist about needs is offering us an epistemology for some de re necessities (albeit, if I am right in what I claim above and below, non-metaphysical de re necessities knowledge of which need not depend on an a priori major premise) that is non-standard and which has not been well articulated.

There remains a significant difference between knowledge of de re metaphysical necessities and knowledge of needs. In the former case, it seems that the modal major premise is (or ultimately depends upon another modal major premise that is) a priori and known by rational intuition. In the case of those needs that are not metaphysical necessities, the modal major premise is, I suggest, the result *not* of rational intuition but of inductive generalisation over cases. The following section elaborates on this suggestion.

#### V. Inductive knowledge is a necessary condition for knowledge of needs.

...do I not...justifiedly believe that the roses will not flourish without a lot of water? The commonsense view is that I both justifiedly believe and know this about roses, and that I can know it either through generalizing—a kind of reasoning—from my own observations, or from testimony, or both....

...my belief that roses will not grow well without abundant water does not arise directly from...perception, memory, introspection [or] a priori intuition... It is...*inductive* because it is from (and held) on the basis of a generalisation *from* something more basic, in this case what I learned from perceptual experiences with roses.<sup>64</sup>

Moving beyond the merely general to the modal, roses *cannot* flourish without water. If we construe an inductive argument as one in which the premises are intended to make the conclusion more likely than its negation, then the sort of induction that involves *generalisation* is only one sort of induction. Moreover, an inductive argument that introduces a modal generalisation goes further

than an inductive argument that introduces a non-modal generalisation. That roses do not flourish without water makes probable, but does not entail, that they cannot.

What sort of warrant, if any, do we have for adding the modality? We know by inductive generalisation that roses do not flourish without water. Inference to the best explanation leads to the stronger conclusion that roses need water to flourish (i.e., that they are incapable of flourishing without it). It is rational for us, in the face of the evidence, to favour that which is rendered probable by it. So, it is rational for us to believe –in the absence of known defeaters– that roses cannot flourish without water.<sup>65</sup>

The link between the observable phenomenon, namely the perishing or deterioration of roses when they are deprived of water, and the modal claim, namely that they need (or cannot flourish without) water, is similar to the link between the observable events describable as manifestations of dispositions (such as the dissolution of a spoonful of salt in a jug of water) and the dispositional, modality-involving claim related to it (such as that salt is water-soluble). As in the case of dispositions, needs have manifestations (or signs) and it is through these that they are known. Both the manifestation of a need and the manifestation of a disposition have stimulus-conditions. When these are present and environmental conditions are normal, manifestation events or processes occur.<sup>66</sup>

I suggest, then, that that needs are dynamical modalities metaphysically akin to capacities, powers and dispositions. Modalising, explanation and induction are tied together.<sup>67</sup> Assuming, for the sake of argument, that there could be a non-modal account of the world, an account of the world that includes dispositional and ability claims is explanatorily more powerful than a non-modal account of the world.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the supposition that there are modal facts is explanatory with respect to why we modalise. Modalising has a point in that belief about what is

and is not possible guides us in what we do and what we do not attempt to do (and in what we ought and ought not to attempt to do). Given that knowledge of need, if there is any, requires inductive knowledge, the positive epistemologist of needs cannot be an inductive sceptic. The positive epistemology I offer makes the following suggestions concerning particular needs and occurrent universal needs. In the case of an organism other than oneself, one can know, partly on the basis of experience and partly extra-empirically, that it has a given need. In the case of oneself, sensations, perception and introspection can give one defeasible grounds for holding that one has a given need, as can the testimony of a competent judge. In both cases, inductive inference is involved either on one's own part or on the part of a third party. Inductive inference is involved because knowledge of particular need and of occurrent universal need is arrived at primarily via diagnostic reasoning. The conditionals that feature in good diagnostic reasoning are known inductively.<sup>69</sup> If we ever really know claims of the form 'A needs *x*' or claims of the form 'A needs to *V*', then inductive scepticism is false. If inductive knowledge is impossible, then needs statements are never known to be true. Given that knowledge of need is propositional and that it requires inductive knowledge, a practical philosophy that puts concern with need at its centre takes us, via the more general philosophy of need, to a point at which metaphysics and ethics have implications for each other. Sceptical and anti-realist views about induction and necessity cannot be kept within the remit of metaphysics, but would instead, if true, threaten what the needs-centred ethicist takes to be some of the claims at the core of ethics. Conversely, if, as seems so, we can attain knowledge of needs then these sceptical and anti-realist views are under threat. It would be an exercise in wishful thinking if we were to read conclusions in metaphysics and epistemology from desiderata in ethics, but it seems plain that we do (sometimes) know what we, or others, need and the belief that we can attain knowledge of needs underwrites much of our practice, including

our ethical, political and medical practices. Though I hope to have made a start, there is more to be said, I think, in explaining *how* we can have knowledge of need. If we seek a practical philosophy that puts concern with needs at, or close to, its centre, that is theoretical question which is very relevant to our practical philosophy.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice Ginsberg, 'Basic Needs and Moral Ideals', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 49 (1949), pp. 195-214, p. 199, my italics.

<sup>2</sup> Garrett Thomson, 'Fundamental Needs' in Soran Reader (ed.), *The Philosophy of Need* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 175-86, p. 175, my italics.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Gillian Brock and Soran Reader, 'Needs-Centered Ethical Theory', *Journal of Value Enquiry* 36 (2002), pp. 425-34.

<sup>4</sup> See further the contributions to Reader (ed.), *The Philosophy of Need*.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Gillian Brock, *Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> Basic sources of knowledge I take to include perception, introspection and a priori intuition, while non-basic sources include inference and testimony. Here I follow, for example, Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> Compare Alan R. White, *Modal Thinking* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), p. 104; Garrett Thomson, *Needs* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Compare David Wiggins, 'Claims of Need' in *Needs, Values, Truth* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 1-57, pp. 7-10. For a contrary conception of absolute need, see P.M.S. Hacker, *Human Nature: The Categorical Framework* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 130-4. For Hacker, absolute needs do not depend on the '*contingent goals*' (p. 132, my italics) of the organism. However, Hacker holds that all needs are relative to ends (pp. 128, 136).

<sup>9</sup> Compare this distinction between absolute and relative need with the distinction made by Thomson, *Needs*, pp. 2-9, between non-instrumental and instrumental needs. Many analytic philosophers who have

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written about need hold that all needs are instrumental. With Thomson, I disagree with their view, though I will not argue against it here other than to say, after G.E.M. Anscombe, ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’, *Philosophy* 33 (1958), pp. 1-19, p. 7, that it jars with the common-sense view that organisms without mental lives have needs that are not merely conferred upon them by organisms with mental lives.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Mumford, *Dispositions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 10 remarks that ‘tendencies, capacities and incapacities, powers and forces, potentialities and propensities, abilities and liabilities’ are related to dispositions. My suggestion, upon which I hope to elaborate elsewhere, is that absolute needs are forms of incapacity which belong in this list. Compare my remark on needs ascriptions and conditionals, in the main text, with Mumford’s remarks that ‘there is a connection between [dispositional ascriptions] and conditionals...but it...is not one of equivalence’ (p. 37) and that ‘conditionals are only...inexact gestures towards the properties that sometimes make them true’ (p. 91). See further *Dispositions*, Chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>11</sup> All this material is contained in Wiggins, ‘Claims of Need’, p. 7, note 10 (but see also p. 10). The other sources are Anscombe, ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’, p. 7 and Joel Feinberg, *Social Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 111. On yet another account, that of Antony Flew, *The Politics of Procrustes* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus, 1981, e.g., p. 121), needs ascriptions are viewed as covert conditionals because they are taken to be hypothetical imperatives. This is inconsistent both with the view (which I share with the other authors, Flew apart, cited in this note) that some needs are absolute and with the view of the relationship between needs ascriptions and conditionals rejected above.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Claims of Need’, p. 9. Compare Thomson, *Needs*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1015a20; White, *Modal Thinking*, Chapter 8; Wiggins, ‘Claims of Need’; Thomson, *Needs*, Chapter 1; Reader, *Needs and Moral Necessity*, Chapter 4. In some languages, such as Portuguese and Spanish, the distinction between needs and necessities is not semantically marked.

<sup>14</sup> Wiggins, ‘Claims of Need’, p. 16; Soran Reader, ‘The Other Side of Agency’, *Philosophy* 82 (2007), pp. 579-604; John O’Neill, ‘Need, Humiliation and Independence’ in Reader (ed.), *The Philosophy of Need*, pp. 73-97.

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<sup>15</sup> I agree with William E. Stempsey, *Disease and Diagnosis: Value-Dependent Realism* (Hingham, MA : Kluwer, 1999), p. 89, that there *are* needs-involving facts. As should be clear, I disagree with his claim (p. 94) that needs ‘are analyzable in terms of particularly urgent desires’. Also, Stempsey (p. 95) apparently adopts the position, which I reject, that all needs are relative to ends or desires.

<sup>16</sup> At the suggestion of P.T. Geach, G.H. von Wright, *An Essay on Modal Logic* (The Hague: North-Holland, 1951), p. 28, called ‘dynamic’ such modality as is ‘connected with the notions of...*ability* and...*disposition*’.

<sup>17</sup> I use the word ‘vital’ in relation to those needs that are had in virtue of being a living being. The conception of vital need I adopt below, after Thomson’s conception of non-instrumental need, is different to that of Lawrence A. Hamilton, *The Political Philosophy of Needs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 23 in that what Hamilton calls ‘vital needs’ are all universal. In my taxonomy, vital needs branch into the universal and the particular. Moreover, Hamilton’s ‘particular needs’ are all social (p. 31).

<sup>18</sup> Compare Wiggins, ‘Claims of Need’, pp. 19-20; Soran Reader, *Needs and Moral Necessity* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 66-7, 79-82.

<sup>19</sup> Compare the observations of Paul Bloomfield, *Moral Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 37 on nutritional goodness.

<sup>20</sup> Hacker, *Human Nature: The Categorical Framework*, pp. 128-37 is also with common sense on this. I take it that all and only objects that can perish are needful beings, but that there are no such objects as needs. I do not have room here to argue in detail for a non-objectual construal of needs talk. I take the noun NEED<sub>n</sub> to be eliminable in favour of the verb NEED<sub>v</sub> (where the capitalized and subscripted words signify lexemes: see Frank Palmer, *The English Verb* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Longman, 1988), pp. 9-10). I deny that there are any such objects as needs, just as I deny that there are any such objects as necessities, possibilities and abilities. These denials do not make me an anti-realist about need, modality or ability.

<sup>21</sup> The account of vital need I am defending requires, in the words of Thomson, ‘Fundamental Needs’, p. 178, that ‘harm cannot be constituted by the non-satisfaction of desires or preferences’. On the distinction



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between existence needs and welfare needs, compare Reader, *Needs and Moral Necessity*, pp. 54-6 after Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1015a20-b15. On existence needs, compare Stampe, 'Need', p. 139.

<sup>22</sup> On agency needs, see further and compare Brock, *Global Justice*, pp. 63-75. Hamilton, *The Political Philosophy of Need* also employs the phrase 'agency needs' but for him agency needs are 'ethical and political objectives that relate to human functioning and the performance of valued social tasks within valued social roles' (p. 35). For Brock and me agency needs are not to be *defined as* 'ethical and political objectives'. Rather, they concern conditions on the possibility of the existence of agency or its effective exercise.

<sup>23</sup> Compare Thomson, *Needs*, p. 12. Thomson's dispositional/occurrent distinction, of which my own is a modified version, is different to that of Reader, *Needs and Moral Necessity*, p. 71, since Reader defines occurrent need in terms of lack.

<sup>24</sup> After Thomson, *Needs*, p. 12; 'Fundamental Needs', p. 175.

<sup>25</sup> I am grateful to one of the referees for raising this issue. A distinction, similar to the one I assume, between axiological and normative matters is important to the account of the relationship between needs and morality defended by Ragnar Ohlsson, *Morals Based on Needs* (Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America, 1995), e.g., pp. 53, 66.

<sup>26</sup> White, *Modal Thinking*, p. 114.

<sup>27</sup> Agnes Heller, 'Can "True" and "False" Needs be Posited?' in *The Power of Shame: A Rational Perspective* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 285-299, p. 287.

<sup>28</sup> D.W. Stampe, 'Need', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1988), pp. 129-160, p. 139. Compare p. 140: 'Merely feeling a need - the simple and direct sensation of a need - is a relatively straightforward phenomenon.' On Stampe's view, given its 'non-epistemic' status, first-person perception of need is by acquaintance.

<sup>29</sup> Hamilton, *The Political Philosophy of Needs*, p. 12.

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<sup>30</sup> Des Gasper, *Needs and Basic Needs: A Clarification of Meanings, Levels and Different Streams of Work* (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, Working Paper No. 210, 1996), p. 3, writes that some ‘positive meanings of “need” ...distinct from [meanings of] “want” ...fit under the concept of “felt need”:- person A feels a strong desire to have S...and is expected to suffer or be notably uncomfortable...without it, which makes this mental states more than a want alone’. This does not necessarily constitute endorsement of the phenomenological thesis and there are at least two ways of denying that it does. When ‘need’ is used in reference to so-called ‘felt need’, we may say that the word really refers to need-generated desires. (See the main text.) Or, we may say, so-called ‘felt needs’ are just a subclass of desires: namely those associated with anticipated suffering or discomfort if not satisfied. The fact that a desire may be so associated does not make it something other than a mere desire. (These strategies for denying that Gasper’s remarks entail the phenomenological thesis may also be mixed, since we might view ‘felt needs’ as breaking down into two types of desires.) Jonathan Bradshaw, ‘The Concept of Social Need’, *New Society* 496 (1972), pp. 640-3, recognizes ‘felt needs’ but these are desires that are articulated by the people who have them. Bradshaw’s view does not constitute endorsement of the phenomenological thesis, since that thesis is that needs are not a kind of desire but that (at least some) needs are nevertheless felt. In discussions like Bradshaw’s, the language of ‘felt need’ would best be avoided.

<sup>31</sup> I thank Phillip Meadows for help with this point. On the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic perception see, for example, Quassim Cassam, *The Possibility of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Williams, ‘Skepticism’ in John Greco & Ernest Sosa (eds) *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 35-69, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> Whether or not desires can be felt is a question I can leave open. Bloomfield, *Moral Reality*, p. 28, remarks that ‘many properties that humans have in virtue of being living, biological creatures are not directly observable and yet are not candidates for nonrealism’. I include the needs and capacities of human beings, which I believe to be ontologically akin, in this class.

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<sup>34</sup> G.F. Schueler, *Desire: Its Role in Practical Reason and the Explanation of Action* (London: MIT Press, 1995), p. 15, writes that ‘some desires get “generated”...from my making decisions and forming intentions’. The claim I entertain is that some desires get generated from my having certain occurrent needs. I use the fudge word ‘generate’ because I do not, at present, want to discuss the specific claim that needs can be *causes*. This and other metaphysical and logical questions about needs are discussed in Stampe, ‘Need’.

<sup>35</sup> Contrary to the view of Paul W. Taylor, “‘Need’ Statements”, *Analysis* 19 (1959), pp. 106-11, p. 106, who classifies hunger and thirst as ‘conscious needs’, hunger and thirst are not (even if they are generated by needs) themselves needs. Schueler, *Desire*, p. 10, associates hunger and thirst with needs but he views them, I think correctly, as distinct from needs. What Taylor calls ‘unconscious needs’ are ‘neurotic compulsions, anxieties, wishes, etc.’. Without denying that people have psychological needs, I do not recognise ‘unconscious needs’ in Taylor’s sense –that is, deep or hidden *psychological drives*– as needs at all.

<sup>36</sup> Compare Schueler, *Desire*, pp. 93-4.

<sup>37</sup> Compare Anscombe, ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Hamilton, *The Political Philosophy of Needs*, p. 167, invokes ‘felt needs’ specifically in connection with the attempt to mitigate a political philosophy of need against the charge of paternalism. If the arguments of this article are sound, that is a misguided strategy.

<sup>39</sup> In his abstract, Tim Schroeder, ‘Desire’, *Philosophy Compass* 1 (2006), pp. 631-9, p. 631 claims that ‘Desires...give us urges’, though he does not elaborate on this claim in his article. I am not sure that the normal situation is that desires give rise to urges. It may be the other way round, or a mixture of both. Schueler, *Desire*, pp. 9-10, classifies hunger and thirst as belonging to an ‘important set of cases of desire’ the members of which are ‘connected to a corresponding biological need or drive’. If hunger and thirst *are* desires, rather than feelings or urges, then they provide, as Schueler (p. 10) realises, a counter-example to the claim that desires are not felt. I am inclined to reject that claim anyway, and the associated claim (albeit

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one that does not entail it) that desires are propositional attitudes. However, I will not probe these issues here.

<sup>40</sup> Compare Schueler, *Desire*, pp. 41, 93.

<sup>41</sup> Thanks to Richard Gaskin, Daniel Hill, E.J. Lowe and Soran Reader for discussion of this example.

<sup>42</sup> I once suggested that knowledge of need must always be inferential. I am grateful to Richard Gaskin for convincing me otherwise (though I remain stubborn in my view that needs cannot be felt). He and Daniel Hill helped me to improve this part of the article.

<sup>43</sup> Given that I consider introspection to be an active power of the mind, I do not count awareness of sensations, *per se*, as a kind of introspective awareness. This does not, I think, preclude knowledge of aspects of sensations –such as whether a pain is dull or sharp– from being arrived at by introspection.

<sup>44</sup> Compare Philip Robbins, ‘The Ins and Outs of Introspection’, *Philosophy Compass* 1 (2006), pp. 617-30. Robbins, p. 618, calls the first ‘primary’ introspection and the second ‘secondary’ introspection.

<sup>45</sup> Wiggins, ‘Claims of Need’, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> I reject the assumption of B. Wolniewicz, ‘Needs and Values’ in P.T. Geach (ed.) *Logic and Ethics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), pp. 289-302, p. 297 ‘that whatever is of value, and whatever satisfies a need or a desire, is never a thing, but always a possible state of affairs’. First, if there are states of affairs then they are themselves things (albeit complex ones). Second, although we may desire that *p*, we never need that *p*. NEED is a transitive verb which does not take the name of a (putative) state of affairs as its second term. I take needing to be a primarily verbal phenomenon. I do not take the verb to be eliminable in favour of an operator upon sentences. (At least, the advocate of any such logical analysis of the verb owes us the actual logic. For a move in that direction, see Stampe, ‘Need’, p. 130. Stampe, p. 133, also takes states of affairs to be needs-satisfiers.) Wolniewicz (op. cit., 297-8) also confuses needs with their satisfiers when he asserts, in supposed evidence of his earlier view, that ‘If we say, e.g., that oxygen is a constant need for animals, this is just short for saying that being constantly supplied with free oxygen is such a need’. Being supplied with oxygen is a positive and occurrent state of affairs: it is neither a modal matter nor an occurrent lack. It is

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therefore, in the context under discussion, a satisfier, not a need. I think that taking (the noun) *NEED<sub>n</sub>* as one's point of analytical departure, rather than (the verb) *NEED<sub>v</sub>*, is in any case a mistake.

<sup>47</sup> The analogy between knowledge of needs and knowledge of medical conditions that is pursued here is similar to one drawn by Bloomfield, *Moral Reality*, Chapter 2, between knowledge of moral goodness and knowledge of health.

<sup>48</sup> Compare Stampe, 'Need', p. 148: 'A state  $\square$  *indicates*....a need if there are certain normally obtaining conditions C such that under conditions C, if something is in state  $\square$  then it is in need. (Under a certain normal condition, being in a state of thirst indicates a need for water.)'

<sup>49</sup> I agree with Stampe, 'Need', p. 140, that in cases like this there need not be awareness of what is needed (i.e., knowledge-that concerning the satisfier of the need). I disagree with his claim that there is phenomenal awareness of the need itself.

<sup>50</sup> See Colin Ogilvie and Christopher C. Evans, *Chamberlain's Symptoms and Signs in Clinical Medicine* (12<sup>th</sup> ed., Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1997), pp. 8-10. Compare Bloomfield, *Moral Reality*, p. 69; Stempsey, *Disease and Diagnosis*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>51</sup> See Ogilvie and Evans, *Chamberlain's Symptoms and Signs in Clinical Medicine*, e.g., pp. 5-19.

<sup>52</sup> That the symptoms that may be associated with an occurrent need are not constitutive of the need is again analogous to the case of medical symptoms, since medical symptoms are not constitutive of the disease. Medical symptoms are caused by or associated with the disease. In this, a disease differs from a syndrome, since the latter is either a collection of signs and symptoms or, following Stempsey, *Disease and Diagnosis*, p. 181, a collection of such collections in which family-resemblances obtain between the element collections. On these points in the philosophy of medicine, compare Griffith Edwards, *Alcohol: The World's Favorite Drug* (New York: Thomas Dunn, 2002), Chapters 5 & 7 and Howard I. Kushner, 'Taking Biology Seriously: The Next Task for Historians of Addiction?', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 80 (2006), pp. 115-143, p. 139. Kushner remarks that 'Measles, polio, and Huntington's chorea are diseases, because a tentative diagnosis based on signs and symptoms is confirmed or rejected through a laboratory

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test indicating infection by a pathogen or the presence of a genetic mutation; in contrast, the cause of a syndrome –such as schizophrenia, Tourette syndrome, or affective disorders (depressions)– remains unknown.’ Two misleading impressions need to be forestalled here. First, the distinction between a disease and a syndrome is not merely an epistemic one, since the signs and symptoms of a disease are not the disease itself. Rather, the disease is the pathology that causes the signs and symptoms. Second, knowing the causes of a syndrome does not make it cease to be a syndrome (although it may result in the discovery of a disease, and this, in turn, may make reference to the syndrome slip out of usage).

<sup>53</sup> *Needs and Moral Necessity*, pp. 54-63.

<sup>54</sup> E.g., ‘Introduction’ to Reader (ed.), *The Philosophy of Need*, pp. 1-24. In the same volume, compare David Wiggins, ‘An Idea we Cannot do Without’, pp. 25-50, p. 29. Compare also Stampe, ‘Need’, p. 129.

<sup>55</sup> Compare Stampe, ‘Need’, p. 135. My more general position on the relationship between natural and metaphysical necessity is that some but not all natural necessities are metaphysical necessities. Needs are among the natural necessities that are not metaphysical necessities.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Introduction’ to Reader (ed.), *The Philosophy of Need*, p. 23; *Needs and Moral Necessity*, Chapter 4.

<sup>57</sup> E.g., ‘Introduction’ to Reader (ed.), *The Philosophy of Need*, p. 23.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Compare Stampe, ‘Need’, p. 134: ‘Needs are a matter of what is necessary in the course of time’.

<sup>60</sup> For references to authors who make this mistake, see White, *Modal Thinking*, Chapter 8.

<sup>61</sup> For discussion of this point, I thank Sorin Baiasu.

<sup>62</sup> I depart from Kripke in that he would position the word ‘necessarily’ in such a way as to make it a sentential operator (e.g., as in ‘Necessarily, water is H<sub>2</sub>O’), rather than having it embedded in the predicate. For references to and a survey of work in post-Kripkean modal epistemology, see my ‘Recent Work on Modal Epistemology’, *Philosophical Books* 46 (2005), pp. 235-45.

<sup>63</sup> The major premise in the example is, I would say, not in fact an a priori premise at all. Nevertheless, the general view in post-Kripkean modal epistemology would be that it is itself derived from an argument in

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which there is an a priori modal major premise. I cannot go into the subtleties here, but I recommend George Bealer, 'The Limits of Scientific Essentialism', *Philosophical Perspectives* 1 (1987), pp. 289-365.

<sup>64</sup> Audi, *Epistemology*, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Though I deal with a universal non-modal generalisation and its strengthening to a universal need-involving generalisation here, this is as a result of discussing Audi's example, rather than of taking either a Humean or an 'essentialist' view of the laws of nature. I am inclined to agree with Mumford, *Dispositions*, that natural 'laws, *qua* true generalities, if they exist at all, are ontologically parasitic upon the capabilities of particulars, rather than the other way round' (p. 230).

<sup>66</sup> Compare Garrett Thomson, 'Deseos y Necesidades', *Ideas y Valores* 107 (1998), pp. 43-55, p. 53: 'Las necesidades no son actos de elección, sino disposiciones para sufrir daño a causa de una falta'. ('Needs are not acts of choice, but dispositions to suffer harm due to a lack.')

<sup>67</sup> See Rom Harré and E.H. Madden, *Causal Powers: A Theory of Natural Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975).

<sup>68</sup> Compare Mumford, *Dispositions*, p. 131. Jonathan Dancy, *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 208-11, also espouses this claim, after the British idealists Blanshard and Ewing, in connection with a coherentist account of epistemic justification. I do not believe that coherentism is required or made plausible by the view of induction, explanation and modality I am endorsing. Immanent realism about modality can underwrite the rationality of induction and it is consistent with a foundationalist view of epistemic justification. So, I disagree with Dancy's claim, that 'coherentism is the only position from which induction can be shown to be a rational practice' (p. 211).

<sup>69</sup> Compare the discussion (after G.E.M. Anscombe) of diagnostics and problem-solving in Bloomfield, *Moral Reality*, pp. 72-3.

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