

Primitively Rational Belief-Forming Processes

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One long-standing approach to understanding “reasons”—including both reasons for action and reasons for belief—postulates a fundamental connection between *reasons* and *reasoning*. The idea is this: there is a reason for you to ϕ —where ϕ -ing could be either an action (such as *writing a letter*) or an attitude (such as *believing that it is snowing*)—if and only if there is a possible process of sound or rational reasoning that can take you from your current state of mind to your rationally ϕ -ing.

This idea is familiar from the literature on reasons for action. As Bernard Williams (1995, 35) put it, for there to be a reason for you to ϕ , there must be a “sound deliberative route” that leads from your current state of mind to your being motivated to ϕ . Similarly, Kieran Setiya (2007, 12) states that a fact counts a reason for you to ϕ if and only if you have some collection of mental states C (which does not contain any false beliefs) such it would be an instance of “good practical thought” to be moved to ϕ by the combination of C and the belief that that fact obtains. Presumably, Williams’s speaking of “a sound deliberative route” comes to more or less the same thing as Setiya’s speaking of an instance of “good practical thought”, and my own terminology of a “possible process of rational reasoning”.¹

It is clear that the same approach can be taken to understanding reasons for belief. You have a reason to believe p if and only if there is some possible process of rational reasoning that could lead you from your current state of mind to your being rationally inclined to believe p . So one way to make progress in understanding reasons for belief is to investigate which processes of reasoning count as rational.

One might take this question, about which processes of reasoning count as rational, as concerned with *particular* mental processes—that is, with *token* processes rather than with *types* of process. But of course every particular process is an instance of infinitely many types. Suppose that I accept the inference: ‘If it is still snowing, the journey will take over an hour; it is still snowing; so, the journey will take over an hour.’ This inference is an instance of *modus ponens*. But it is also an instance of the pattern ‘ $p; q; \text{therefore, } r$ ’, and also of a special restricted pattern that coincides with *modus ponens* in cases that involve propositions about snow, but otherwise has no instances at all. Intuitively, however, if this inference is rational it is *because* it is an instance of *modus ponens*, not because it is an instance of one of those other patterns. So the particular *token* process is rational because it is an instance of a rational *type* of process. For this reason, I shall focus on *types* of processes of reasoning here.

Specifically, the types of reasoning process that I shall focus on here are what I shall call *belief-forming processes*—that is, types of mental process that result in the thinker’s forming a belief. A full theory would also have to investigate other processes as well—such as processes that result in the thinker’s *revising* her beliefs in various ways (say, by adjusting her degree of confidence in a belief that she already holds, or by completely abandoning a belief

¹ So, according to this approach, a “reason to ϕ ” is a fact that in some way serves as a *starting point for a possible process of practical reasoning* that would lead the relevant agent to (be motivated to) ϕ . This is only one approach to understanding the notion of a reason. The main rival to this approach is John Broome’s (2004) definition of a “reason to ϕ ” as a fact that plays the “for- ϕ role” in a “weighing explanation” of whether or not the relevant agent *ought* to ϕ . My own view is that these are simply two different kinds of concept expressed by the term ‘reason’, and each of these two approaches captures one of these two kinds. But I cannot defend this view here.

that she used to hold). But for the sake of simplicity, I shall focus exclusively on belief-forming processes here. In this essay, I shall try to solve a basic problem that arises when we try to understand how belief-forming processes can be rational.

1. How can there be fallible primitively rational processes?

Specifically, the problem that I shall try to solve concerns belief-forming processes that have the following three properties:

- a. They are *rational* processes, and the beliefs that we form as a result of these processes are themselves rational or justified beliefs.
- b. Even if in most cases these processes reliably lead to correct beliefs (i.e., beliefs in true propositions), they are *not infallible*: it is still logically possible for beliefs that are formed as a result of these processes to be incorrect (i.e., to be beliefs in *false* propositions).
- c. The rationality of these processes is *basic* or *primitive*. That is, the rationality of these processes is not due simply to the availability, by means of some process of reasoning that consists purely of *other* processes, of a rational or justified belief in the reliability or truth-conduciveness of these processes. As we might put it, the rationality of these processes is not due to the availability of a “process-independent justification” for these processes.

In this essay, I shall focus on a particular example of a belief-forming process that has these three properties—what I shall call the process of “taking experience at face value”.

Very roughly, the process of taking experience at face value is the process where one comes to believe a proposition p in response to the fact of one’s having a conscious experience that has p as part of its representational content. For example, if my present experience has the proposition ‘I am holding my hands in front of my face’ as part of its content, then this process would involve my responding to this experience by forming the belief that I am indeed holding my hands in front of my face.

Now, this specification of the process is in one sense very obviously too rough. I could have an experience of this kind even if it also appeared to me that a demon was talking to me out of the palm of my mind, mocking me with the claim that all of my experiences are complete illusions. In this case, it would clearly *not* be rational for me to form the belief that I really am holding my hands in front of my face. If this process of “taking sensory experience at face value” is to be genuinely rational, it is not sufficient for forming a belief by means of this process that one just forms a belief in p in response to *any* experience that has p as part of its content. It must also be the case that one’s experiences, background beliefs, and other mental states do not contain any *special defeating reasons* of this kind. So a more precise name for this process would be the “process of taking one’s experiences at face value, *when such special defeating reasons are absent*”.² But the most part, I shall omit this qualification

² In his comments on this essay, Stephen Schiffer has argued that my reference to “the absence of special defeaters ... stands in for something extremely complicated.” But on the contrary, it seems that we do have a general notion of a defeater: this is just the general notion of a set of mental states that one is in at the

here.

Even with this qualification, however, I have still only given a very rough description of the process of taking experience at face value. There are several reasons for this. First, my description says nothing about the fact that even when a proposition p is part of the representational content of one's current experience, the *degree of belief* that one would place in p through taking one's experience at face value may vary enormously, depending on how specific this proposition p is. The proposition that *there are exactly 26 lights arranged in a circle in front of one's eyes* may be part of the representational content of one's experience; but without careful counting, one should presumably place a much lower degree of belief in this proposition than in the weaker and less specific proposition that *there are some lights before one's eyes*.

Secondly, this description of the process of taking one's experience at face value may also require revision if it is true, as many philosophers have urged,³ that the primary representational content of sensory experience is *non-conceptual*. However, even in this case, we would still be able to make sense of what we might call the "conceptualized upshot" of experience, which would be the result of the one's conceptual capacities' operating on the primary non-conceptual content of experience. Then we could refine our description of the process of taking one's experience at face value by saying that it involves forming the belief in a proposition p in response to having an experience that has p as part of its "conceptualized upshot". In general, it will clearly be a difficult and controversial matter to give a fully precise account of the process of taking experience at face value. I believe, however, that the rough description that I have given will be sufficient for present purposes.

At this point, it is more important to see what the process of taking experience at face value does *not* involve. Specifically, as I understand it, engaging in this process does not involve relying on any antecedent belief in the reliability of one's sensory experiences (or indeed on any belief about one's sensory experiences at all). This process involves coming to believe p in *direct response* to one's having an experience that has p as part of its representational content (together with the absence of defeating reasons of the relevant sort); it is not required that one should in addition have any belief *about* one's experiences.

Now it seems plausible that the process that I have called "taking experience at face value" has the three properties that I listed above. First, it seems rational to form beliefs by means of this process—or as I shall sometimes say, it is rational to "engage in" this process. Since my current experience does not seem to represent a demon talking to me out of the palm of my hand, and in general my experiences, background beliefs, and other mental states contain no special defeating reasons of the relevant kind, it is rational for me now to form the belief that I am holding my hands in front of my face; and the belief that I form in this way is itself a rational or justified belief.

Secondly, this is obviously a fallible process. If I really were being undetectably deceived by an evil demon, then the overwhelming majority of the beliefs that I could form by means of this process would be false. So it is not in any way guaranteed to be a reliably

relevant time such that, although normally forming a belief in a certain way would count as rational, it does not count as rational at that time because of the presence of these mental states. It is this general notion that I am using here.

³ For versions of the claim that the content of sensory experience is non-conceptual, see especially Peacocke (2001) and Burge (2003); for the other side of the debate, see especially McDowell (1994).

truth-conducive process.

Thirdly, it also seems plausible that this process is “primitively” rational. It does not seem plausible that the rationality of this process is explained merely by the availability of any process-independent justification for the process.⁴ Admittedly, the assumption that this process has this third property is admittedly not quite as obviously true as the corresponding assumptions about the first two properties that I listed above. However, in this essay, I shall not attempt to justify this assumption. In this essay, I am simply invoking these assumptions in order to illustrate a more general and fundamental problem. If these three assumptions are not in fact true of the process that I have called “taking experience at face value”, I would only have to pick another process that does satisfy these three assumptions; and it seems indisputable that there are at least some processes of this kind.

If the general process of taking one’s experiences at face value is indeed primitively rational, then it is rational to form beliefs in this way whenever one’s experiences and background beliefs contain no special defeaters of the relevant sort. In other words, to adapt some terminology from Crispin Wright (1989, 251), if the process of taking one’s experiences at face value is necessarily rational, then the rationality of forming beliefs by taking experiences at face value is “positive-presumptive”: the rationality of forming beliefs in this way is the *default* position, which can be dislodged only by the presence of special defeaters.

Now it seems that the idea of such primitively rational belief-forming processes gives rise to a problem. How *can* a belief-forming process (i) be rational, given that (ii) it is not rational in virtue of the availability of any process-independent justification of the process, and (iii) the process is fallible and might fail to be leading us to the truth?

Why does it seem so hard to understand how a process that can have all these three properties? The difficulty seems to consist in the following point: it seems highly plausible that if a belief-forming process is rational, then forming beliefs by means of the process must be a *reasonable way for the thinker to pursue the truth*—that is, to pursue the goal of believing the proposition in question if and only if that proposition is true. But if a process is perfectly capable, in some possible circumstances, of leading one to believe falsehoods rather than truths, then how could the process be a reasonable way for one to pursue the truth, unless one has some process-independent reason for regarding the process as reliable in one’s actual circumstances?⁵

⁴ My claim that the process of taking one’s sensory experiences at face value is primitively rational is closely similar in spirit—though not identical—to the position that James Pryor (2000) has called “dogmatism”. As Pryor (2000, 519) puts it, “the dogmatist about perceptual justification says that when it perceptually seems to you as if *p* is the case, you have a kind of justification for believing *p* that does not presuppose or rest on your justification for anything else, which could be cited in an argument—even an ampliative argument—for *p*.” According to my claim, the rationality of the process of taking your sensory experience at face value is not *explained* by any justification that you have for believing in the reliability of your experiences. Nonetheless, even though the rationality of this process is not *explained* by the availability of any justification for believing the process to be reliable, I have not ruled out the possibility that the rationality of this process may still *entail* the availability of such justification. (I intend to explore the significance of this point elsewhere; I cannot go further into this question here.)

⁵ Indeed, as we shall see later on, there are even some *infallible* belief-forming processes that seem not to count as reasonable ways to pursue the truth. So the fallibility of the process of taking experiences at face value is in fact not essential to the fundamental problem that we are concerned with here. The fundamental problem is simply that it is not clear how this process can be a reasonable way to pursue the truth; focusing on the fallibility of this process really serves only make this problem more intuitively vivid.

This diagnosis of the problem points in the direction where we must look in order to find a solution. In effect, the solution would involve a clarification in more precise terms of the intuitive formulation that I have just used—“a reasonable way for one to pursue the truth”—and an explanation of how the process of taking sensory experiences at face value really does satisfy this condition when it is clarified in these more precise terms.

An ambitious version of such a solution would aim to be in a sense *reductive*: that is, it would aim to clarify this intuitive formulation by *analysing* what it is for something to be “a reasonable way for one to pursue the truth” in entirely *non-normative* terms, and then it would aim to show that the process of taking one’s experiences at face value satisfies the conditions that are given in the analysis.

I am not confident that any such reductive analysis of rationality is even possible. It seems a live option to me that the rationality of forming beliefs by taking one’s experiences at face value may simply be a bedrock normative truth, of which no such ulterior explanation can be given. So in clarifying the idea of a process that is “a reasonable way of pursuing the truth”, I shall not aim to give any such reductive definition of rationality. Instead, I shall simply aim to articulate some crucial features that rational belief-forming processes must have, without making any attempt to ensure that these crucial features are picked out in strictly non-normative terms. Then I shall try to dispel the sense of puzzlement that surrounds the thesis that forming beliefs by taking one’s experiences at face value is rational, by making it plausible that the process has these crucial features.

2. Assumptions about rationality

In the discussion that follows, I shall rely on a number of fundamental assumptions about rationality. First, I shall assume that the view that epistemologists call “internalism” is correct. That is, I shall assume that the processes by means of which it is rational for a thinker to form beliefs in at a given time t are always determined purely by the facts that are in some way “internal” to the thinker’s mind at t . Specifically, I shall assume that whether or not it is rational for a thinker to form beliefs by means of in a given process at t is entirely determined by the facts about what mental states the thinker has, what mental states the thinker lacks, and what mental abilities and capacities the thinker has, at t .⁶

If internalism about rationality is correct, then the rationality of a belief-forming process must supervene purely on the thinker’s mental states. The belief-forming process itself must be individuated purely in terms of the relations between the internal mental states involved; and the features of the process that make it a rational belief-forming process must consist purely of features that the process has in virtue of its role in the thinker’s mind. Nothing that is external to the thinker’s mind can be involved in making the process rational.

The most prominent rival to this internalist view of rationality is the “reliabilist” view. According to the reliabilist view, whether or not a belief-forming process is rational depends

⁶ This sort of epistemological “internalism” is attacked by Goldman (1999) and defended by Conee and Feldman (2001). I have offered my own defence of internalism in some of my earlier work (Wedgwood 2002a); as I explained there, it is important that in characterizing internalism, we use a notion of “mental states” that excludes the so-called “factive mental states” that play such a prominent role in the epistemological approach of Williamson (2000).

entirely on whether it is a reliable way of arriving at the truth.⁷ I am in fact inclined to believe that internalism is correct, and reliabilism is incorrect. But I shall not argue for this belief here. I shall simply assume for the sake of argument that the internalist view is correct. My reason for making this assumption is that the reliabilist has a very easy response to the problem that I am concerned with here. The reliabilist can simply say, “If, as a matter of fact, the process of taking one’s experiences at face value is reliable, then it is a source of justified or rational beliefs; otherwise, it is not a source of justified or rational beliefs.” On the other hand, if an internalist conception of rationality is correct, and reliabilism is incorrect, then this easy response is not available. In this way, internalist assumptions make the task of solving this problem harder, not easier.

The second assumption about rationality that I shall rely on here is an assumption that I have already articulated—intuitively and metaphorically—by saying that the rational belief-forming processes are all “reasonable ways of pursuing the truth”. In other words, there must be some fundamental connection between rational belief-forming processes and the *truth*. But exactly *is* this fundamental connection to the truth that is a necessary feature of all rational belief-forming processes?

There are several possible connections between belief-forming processes and the truth that we could consider here. First, some belief-forming processes may themselves lead to the conclusion that these processes are reliable guides to the truth; when we engage in these processes, we are thereby led to form a belief in the reliability of these processes. As we might put it, these processes recommend themselves, and represent themselves as reliable and truth-conducive processes. Still, although this may be a *necessary* condition that every rational process must meet, it is clearly not a *sufficient* condition for the rationality of a set of belief-forming processes—since many crazily irrational processes might also recommend themselves in this way.

Secondly, there are some belief-forming processes that are in a sense *infallible*: if one genuinely forms a belief by means of this process, the belief is bound to be true. One example of such an infallible process is the process of forming the introspective belief that one could express by saying ‘I am in pain’ directly in response to the fact that one is in pain. Another example would be the process of forming a belief in a mathematical or logical theorem (such as ‘313 is a prime number’) directly on the basis of a *proof* of that theorem. But as we have seen, the process of forming beliefs by taking one’s experiences at face value is an eminently *fallible* process, since one could form a belief by means of this process even if one was undetectably being deceived, so that the belief in question was not true at all.⁸

Thirdly, there are certain other processes that count as rational ways to form beliefs, but only because we have some *process-independent* way of forming a rational belief that the process is a reliable guide to the truth. If P_1 is a process of this sort, then it is only rational for us to engage in P_1 because there is some *other* rational process P_2 , which does not itself involve any reliance on P_1 , such that this other process P_2 can lead from one’s current overall

⁷ For this reliabilist conception of justified belief, see especially Goldman (1979).

⁸ It may be correct to interpret much of the work that has been carried out in epistemology since Descartes as inspired in part by the goal of reconstructing as much of our knowledge of the world as possible purely on the basis of these infallible belief-forming processes. For what seems to me to be a recent contribution to this tradition, see the essays of Laurence Bonjour and Richard Fumerton in DePaul (2001). I am assuming here that this tradition is fundamentally mistaken: that is, according to my assumptions, some eminently fallible belief-forming processes are genuinely rational.

state of mind to one's rationally forming (or reaffirming) the belief that process P_1 is reliable. For example, this seems to be the case with the processes in which we form beliefs on the basis of the use of measuring instruments. It is rational for me (in the absence of defeaters) to form a belief about the temperature of the air around me on the basis of reading a certain thermometer; but this is only because it is *already* rational—quite independently of the process of relying on this particular thermometer—for me to believe that the thermometer is reliable. However, I am assuming that this is not the case with the process of taking one's experiences at face value. If this is a rational process at all, it must be, as I put it, a *primitively rational* process.

Thus, it seems that it cannot be any of these three connections to the truth that explains the rationality of the process of taking one's experiences at face value. Still, it seems to me that *some* such connection to the truth must be part of what makes it primitively rational to form beliefs by taking experience at face value. We need to find a *fourth* connection to the truth.

3. A connection to the truth

Given my internalist assumptions, any primitively rational belief-forming process is rational purely in virtue of the nature of all the concepts and internal mental states involved. Thus, if my connection to the truth is part of what makes the process of taking experiences at face value a rational belief-forming process, this connection to the truth must also hold purely in virtue of the nature of the concepts and mental states involved. That is, whatever exactly this connection to the truth may be, it must be *necessary* that, given all the concepts and mental states involved in the process, the process has this connection with the truth. So, the process must have this connection to the truth in all possible worlds—even in “demon worlds” where (because of the machinations of deceiving demons and the like) the process is not a reliable way to pursue the truth.

What sort of connection to the truth could this be? It must obviously be a *weak* connection to the truth, if it is a connection that this process has with the truth even in “evil demon worlds”, where the process fails to be a reliable guide to the truth.

I propose that every rational process has the following connection with the truth. The essential nature of the mental states that are involved in this process requires that any thinker who is capable of these mental states must have certain *dispositions*, and when all of these mental states arise from the operation of these essential dispositions, the process really is a reliable guide to the truth. With the process that I have called “taking experiences at face value” the mental states involved are (a) an experience, and (b) the belief that one forms on the basis of the experience. If this process has this sort of connection with the truth, then the nature of these mental states must require that any thinker capable of these mental states must have a set of dispositions that can make this process a reliable way of getting to the truth.

Of course, the questions about the nature of experience are among the most controversial and disputed questions in the philosophy of mind. But most philosophers would agree that every experience has a *content*. This content is a representation of a possible state of affairs. When this state of affairs actually obtains, the experience will count as a *veridical* experience. For example, my current experience could represent the state of affairs of my holding my hands in front of my face; if I really am holding my hands in front of my face, then it counts as a veridical experience.

I tentatively suggest that it is an essential feature of sensory experiences that any subject who has experiences at all must have some *disposition* to have experiences that veridically represent certain aspects of her environment. This suggestion should not be read as implying that every such subject has a disposition for *completely* veridical experience—that is, a disposition to have experiences that do not represent *any* aspects of the environment non-veridically (let alone a disposition to have god-like experiences that represent *all* aspects of the environment veridically). Instead, this suggestion should be read as implying only that for every subject who has experiences at all, there are *some* aspects of the environment such that the subject has some disposition to have experiences that veridically represent *those* aspects of the environment. Presumably, one cannot have a disposition to have such veridical experiences by *chance*; so the relevant disposition must be a disposition to have an experience that represents a certain state of affairs precisely in *response* to the fact that that state of affairs really *does* obtain. To fix ideas, we may assume that dispositions are to be understood as generalizations about what happens in “normal conditions”—in other words, in all conditions in which *cetera* are *paria* (that is, other things are equal).⁹ More precisely, then, my suggestion is this: it may be a necessary truth that, for every subject of experience, there is a range of propositions such that for every proposition *p* within that range, in normal conditions, the subject will respond to being in a situation in which *p* is the case by having a sensory experience as of *p*'s being the case.¹⁰

Why might this suggestion be true? It may be that this disposition to have partly veridical experiences is essential to explaining how experience has the specific *content* that it has. That is, the fact that a mental state is of the kind that would be involved in manifesting this disposition in response to being in a situation in which *p* is the case may be an essential part of what makes this mental state count as a sensory experience as of *p*'s being the case in the first place.¹¹

This suggestion does not imply that *all* of our sensory experiences arise from the operation of this disposition. It only implies that we would not be capable of having experiences at all unless we had this disposition. Even if the manifestation of this disposition is blocked or inhibited by other factors (such as the machinations of an evil demon), the subject may still *have* some disposition to have veridical experiences of this sort. Admittedly, it may be impossible to have a disposition of this kind unless the disposition has at least

⁹ It will obviously be a challenging task to give a detailed account of “normal” conditions (i.e. conditions in which “other things are equal”). But it seems that it is a task for metaphysics and the philosophy of science in general; it is not a special problem for the branch of epistemology that I am focusing on here.

¹⁰ How can this disposition be ascribed to a subject of experience who is radically deceived, like the “brain in a vat”? Perhaps the reason is that all subjects of experiences must have something like a *brain* that was, at least at some point during its existence, connected to a body in such a way that the subject was capable of perceiving and acting in a normal environment, and that brain must continue to function internally the same way as it did when it was connected to such a body. This may be enough to make it the case that even the subject has this sort of disposition for veridical experiences (even though its current envatted condition now prevents this disposition from being manifested). But clearly the issue will require much further investigation.

¹¹ Compare Peacocke's (2004, 69) idea that experiences are “*instance-individuated* with respect to certain of their contents”. Compare also Burge's (2003, 511) “*perceptual anti-individualism*”—the idea that the “nature of a perceptual state, as marked by its representational content, is partly determined by relations between the perceptual system ... and features of the environment that cause instances of its states and that states of the system represent.”

sometimes been manifested. So it may be impossible to have experiences at all unless one has at some time in one's life actually manifested this disposition—that is, the disposition, for each proposition p within the appropriate range, to respond to being in a situation in which p is the case by having a sensory experience as of p 's being the case. However, even if this sort of “anti-individualism” is true of sensory experiences, this is still compatible with “mid-life envatting”—that is, one might become a “brain in a vat” only *after* one's sensory experiences have been appropriately connected to the environment long enough for them to be genuine conscious experiences with representational contents. So this modest sort of anti-individualism is still capable with the possibility that you are now being radically and undetectably deceived.

Nonetheless, this sort of anti-individualism about experience does guarantee a certain sort of connection between the process of taking one's experiences at face value and the truth. Whenever one's experience *does* consist in the manifestation of this essential disposition, then the content of the experience will be true. In short, there is a certain disposition, which is essential to having the capacity for sensory experiences at all, and when the process of taking one's experience at face value involves the manifestation of this disposition, the process is reliable.

This sort of connection to the truth has the two features that we noted at the beginning of this section. It is clearly a *weak* connection to the truth, since a thinker can *have* such a disposition to have veridical experiences, even if the manifestation of this disposition is blocked or inhibited—for example, by the machinations of a deceiving demon—for much of the thinker's lifetime. Nonetheless, this is still a connection that holds *necessarily*, in virtue of the essential nature of the “internal” mental states that are involved in the process of taking experiences at face value.¹²

It may be that some such essential connection to the truth is a necessary part of what makes any belief-forming process primitively rational. Let us return to the intuitive and metaphorical formulation that I used earlier, when I said that every rational belief-forming process must be a “reasonable way of pursuing the truth”. Let us extend and further explore this metaphor: imagine that you were *literally* “pursuing” the truth about a range of propositions; that is, you actually intend to realize the goal of believing any of those propositions if and only if the proposition in question is true. Which processes would it be reasonable for you to choose to engage in as your means for pursuing this goal? In order to model our “internalist” assumptions within the context of this metaphor, suppose that you had to choose which belief-forming processes to engage in purely on the basis of the “internal” features of this belief-forming process. Once there is a set of processes that you have already reasonably chosen to engage in, you may always extend this initial set of processes by also engaging in some further processes that the initial set of processes leads you to regard as reliable guides to the truth. But how are you to choose which processes to treat as *basic*—that is, as the processes that it will be reasonable for you to choose to engage in even in advance of any such process-independent justification of those processes? It seems that one would have to choose processes that had some connection to the truth that held necessarily, purely in virtue of the nature or essence of the mental states that are involved in that process.

One might wonder whether a thinker who was choosing which processes to treat as basic in this way would in fact always choose a set of processes that is *infallible*, in the sense

¹² Compare George Bealer's (2000, 7–10) “modal reliabilism”, according to which any “basic source” of evidence must have a weak but necessary connection with the truth.

that I discussed earlier. Why is it not the case that the only processes that it is reasonable for one to treat as basic in one's pursuit of the truth are infallible processes of this sort?

In fact, it seems that it would not be reasonable of the thinker to limit her belief-forming processes to these infallible processes. The goal of belief is not just to *avoid* believing the proposition in question p if p is *not* true; it is also to *believe* p if p is true. To pursue this goal effectively, one needs processes that are not just *reliably error-avoiding*, but also *reliably belief-yielding*.¹³ While a set of belief-forming processes that includes only infallible processes would score very highly with respect to being error-avoiding, it would not score highly with respect to being belief-yielding. In particular, these infallible processes seem only capable of giving us beliefs about our own introspectible mental states and their logical consequences. But it seems plausible that we absolutely need to have beliefs about the contingent features of the external world if we are to be intelligent agents at all. No set of cognitive processes could score well with respect to being reliably belief-yielding unless it is at least possible for these processes to give us beliefs about the external world. So it seems that it would not in fact be "a reasonable way for one to pursue the truth" to limit oneself to these infallible belief-forming processes. The only sort of connection to the truth that is *necessary* for all primitively rational belief-forming processes is the *weak* sort of connection that I have described.

Still, it seems doubtful whether any such link to the truth can be a *sufficient* condition for the rationality of a belief-forming process. There seem to be many possible belief-forming processes that have some such necessary connection to the truth but are not intuitively rational. As Bonjour (1980) in effect famously pointed out, the reliability of a process will not make the process rational if the configuration of mental states in the thinker's mind does not *justify* the thinker in believing the process to be reliable.

To illustrate this point, consider the belief-forming process that consists in coming to believe a certain necessarily true proposition directly and immediately on the basis of simply considering the proposition. For example, this necessarily true proposition could be a highly non-obvious mathematical theorem; or it could be a necessary truth that can only be known empirically, such as 'Water = H₂O'. Intuitively, this process is not rational even though it is necessarily reliable. It is only rational to form a belief in a non-obvious mathematical theorem on the basis of something like a *proof* (or of what one rationally believes to be reliable testimony); it is only rational to form a belief in the proposition that water is H₂O on the basis of appropriate empirical evidence. It would not help to make this process rational if a whimsically manipulative neuroscientist had somehow "wired you up" in such a way that this process was as psychologically basic for you as (say) the process of immediately coming to believe obvious logical truths like '1 = 1'. And if being wired up to form beliefs by means of this process by a whimsical neuroscientist cannot help to make it rational, I do not see how being wired up to do so by nature can either.¹⁴

¹³ For a discussion of this point in slightly more detail, see some of my earlier work (Wedgwood 2002b). However, a more complete treatment of this issue would require much more investigation. For example, we would have to take account of the fact that belief comes in *degrees* (since other things equal, it does seem rational for the primitive belief-forming processes that are also *infallible* to give rise to *more confident* beliefs than the more fallible primitive belief-forming processes). But unfortunately I cannot go any further into this issue here.

¹⁴ For this reason, I am also not convinced by the very interesting suggestion of Enoch and Schechter (2008). In effect, all that they require for a primitively rational belief-forming process is (i) that it should be *possible* that it can lead to success in a "rationally required cognitive project", and (ii) that it should be

Thus, even though this necessary link between the process of taking one's experiences at face value and the truth is a necessary condition of the rationality of the process, it is not a sufficient condition of its rationality. The fundamental problem is that it is not enough if one just *happens* to form beliefs by means of a process that has this sort of connection to the truth. It is also necessary that on the relevant occasions, one forms beliefs by means of this process *precisely because* the process has this sort of connection to the truth. In this sense, it is only processes that one can engage in *precisely because* of their connection to the truth that can count as "reasonable ways of pursuing the truth". But we still do not yet have any detailed understanding of how it is possible for one to form beliefs by means of a belief-forming process *precisely because* of process's connection to the truth. In the last two sections of this paper, I shall turn to another essential feature of primitively rational belief-forming processes, which seems to me to be capable of illuminating this idea in more detail.

4. *A priori* processes

Philosophers often talk about the distinction between *a priori knowledge* and *empirical knowledge*. However it seems clear that whether or not a piece of knowledge counts as *a priori* or empirical depends on the justification on the basis of which the piece of knowledge is held. So we can also distinguish between *a priori* justification and empirical justification.

It is widely assumed that it is only *beliefs* that can be either *a priori* or empirically justified. However, there is a natural generalization of this notion of *a priori* justification, so that it applies to *belief-forming processes* as well as to beliefs. In this section of this essay, I shall explain what it would mean for the rationality of a belief-forming process to be *a priori*, and I shall argue that the rationality of the basic primitively rational processes is *a priori* in this way.

We have already seen that we can distinguish between belief-forming processes that are rational and processes that are not rational. So we can also ask: What makes these processes rational? In some cases, the rationality of the thinker's forming beliefs by means of a certain process depends on the specific experiences that the thinker has had, or on the thinker's empirical background beliefs. In these cases, the rationality of the process is empirical. But in other cases, the rationality of the thinker's forming beliefs by means of the process is independent of all experiences and empirical beliefs that the thinker has whatsoever. In those cases, the rationality of the process is *a priori*.

If the rationality of a belief-forming process is *a priori*, and so independent of all of the thinker's specific experiences and empirical beliefs, what does make the process rational? In some special cases, it may be that the thinker has access to some *a priori* proof of the process's reliability. But this cannot be the case with the *primitively rational* processes—which we have defined to be processes the rationality of which is *not* due to the availability of any rational belief in the processes' reliability. It seems then if the rationality of a primitively rational process is *a priori*, then the process must simply be rational for *all* thinkers who have the capacities that are necessary for forming beliefs by means of the process. Such a process

psychologically basic for the thinker in question. It is unclear what they mean by a "rationally required cognitive project", but it seems overwhelmingly plausible that they will have to claim that getting to the truth about mathematics is a "rationally required project" of this sort. Then a necessarily reliable process will obviously be capable of leading to "success" in this project. But even if it is "psychologically basic", it need not be rational.

would be rational purely because in some way, the rationality of this process is simply “*built into*” the structure of those cognitive capacities themselves.

I am relying here on a broadly Kantian conception of the *a priori*. This is how Kant first introduces the central question of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

But even though all our cognition begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience. For it may well be that even our empirical cognition is composed both out of what we receive through impressions and out of what our own cognitive faculty (sensory impressions serving merely as the occasion) supplies out of itself.¹⁵

This suggests the following way of characterizing the *a priori*: the *a priori* is what our cognitive faculties or capacities “supply out of themselves”. Our cognitive capacities “supply” a belief-forming process “out of themselves”, we may suppose, just in case anyone who has those capacities must already possess the ability for rationally forming beliefs by means of the process—or at the very least must be in a position to acquire such an ability, simply through exercising those capacities, without relying on any further mental states that are not necessarily available to everyone who possesses those capacities.

This then is what it would be for the rationality of a belief-forming processes to be *a priori*: it would have to be a process that our cognitive capacities “supply out of themselves”, rather than a process that it is rational for us to engage in because of additional mental states that we have happened to have, over and above those that are necessarily available to everyone who possesses the cognitive capacities in question.¹⁶ But why should we think that the primitively rational processes are *a priori* in this way?

If we consider our favourite example of a primitively rational process—the process of taking experience at face value—it seems intrinsically plausible that the rationality of this process is *a priori*. It seems to be rational for *every* thinker to form beliefs by means of this process—or at least for every thinker who has the capacities that are necessary for forming beliefs in this way—regardless of the specific experiences that they have had. Even if the thinker has the experience as of a demon’s speaking to him out of the palm of his hand, mocking him with the claim that all his experiences are illusory, it would not cease to be rational for the thinker to form beliefs by means of this process; since the process only involves forming beliefs on the basis of experience when special defeating considerations are absent, and such special defeaters are present in this case, it is simply *impossible* to form beliefs by means of the process in this case. Thus, the rationality of forming beliefs by taking experience at face value seems to be independent of all experiences and empirical beliefs whatsoever, and so to be *a priori*. This process cannot be, as one might put it, read off from one’s experiences, because it is precisely by means of this process that one reads anything off from one’s experiences in the first place.

It seems that we can generalize this point to all of the basic primitively rational

¹⁵ See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd (B) edition (Riga, 1787), Introduction, p.1.

¹⁶ Not all *a priori* processes are primitively rational: *a priori* processes include a great many highly sophisticated processes (such as the use of special mathematical proof techniques, for example) that are not in any way *primitively* rational. The point that matters here, however, is just that all primitively rational processes must be *a priori* (not the converse).

processes. If the rationality of a belief-forming process were empirical rather than *a priori*, then the rationality of the process would *depend* on the specific experiences and empirical beliefs that the thinker has had: if the thinker had had sufficiently different experiences and empirical background beliefs, the belief-forming process would not have been rational. But what possible collection of experiences and empirical beliefs could undermine the rationality of these basic belief-forming processes?

There presumably are some possible collections of experiences and empirical beliefs that would prevent it from being possible to form rational *beliefs* by means of these processes. But these collections of experiences and empirical beliefs will in effect count as a *defeating* condition, and it seems plausible that these basic rational processes are structured in such a way that they already involve sensitivity to the presence or absence of such defeating conditions. So when these defeating conditions are present, it is simply impossible to form beliefs by means of these processes. So it is just not true that when these defeating conditions are present, it becomes irrational to form beliefs by means of this process. Forming beliefs in the presence of these defeating conditions would not be an instance of this rational process at all. So it seems that the rationality of these basic processes cannot be undermined by any possible collection of experiences and empirical beliefs at all. In short, the rationality of these basic processes seems independent of all experiences and empirical beliefs whatsoever—that is, it seems *a priori*.

Given my broadly Kantian conception of the *a priori*, we may infer that if the rationality of a belief-forming process is *a priori*, the process must be rational for *all* thinkers who possess the relevant cognitive capacities. Presumably, if it is rational for a thinker to engage in a belief-forming process, then the thinker must already possess the ability for rationally forming beliefs by means of the process (or at the very least she must already be in a position to acquire this ability). So, in the case of the basic primitively rational cognitive processes, *all* thinkers who possess the relevant cognitive capacities must already have the ability to engage rationally in the process (or be in a position to acquire an ability to engage in the process), regardless of the experiences and empirical beliefs that they have.

If the process in question is a *primitively* rational process, it does not seem that any complex process of reasoning could be necessary to give the thinker the ability to engage rationally in the process. So how exactly can the thinker's cognitive capacities "supply" a primitively rational cognitive process "out of themselves"? The simplest way in which they could do this is if the possession of these capacities essentially requires having some *disposition* to engage in the process. As I shall now propose, this is why these primitively rational processes count as *a priori*: a process is primitively rational if and only if there is some cognitive capacity of the relevant kind that essentially requires having some disposition to engage in the process. Let me now explain what exactly this proposal amounts to.

First, what is the "relevant kind" of "cognitive capacity"? One sort of capacity that is surely relevant is the *possession of a concept*. For example, the possession of the concept 'green' is the capacity to have thoughts and attitudes involving this concept (that is, to have the sorts of thoughts and attitudes that are normally ascribed in English by means of attitude-ascribing phrases in which the term 'green' appears in a hyperintensional context, such as 'thinking that grass is green', 'hoping for green pastures', and the like).¹⁷

¹⁷ In this way, my proposal has a lot in common with that of several other philosophers—such as Boghossian (2002 and 2003), Peacocke (2004), and Pollock and Cruz (1999)—who have all maintained that many of the most fundamental belief-forming processes are in some way implicit in our possession of concepts. There are several differences between my proposal and theirs; the most important difference is probably that (as

It would however be unwarranted to assume here that our possession of concepts is the *only* sort of capacity that is relevant here. It is equally important that we are capable of various sorts of *attitudes*, such as belief and intention. Moreover, in drawing up an inventory of the attitudes of which we are capable, it is important not to overlook the full range and complexity of these attitudes. Belief itself comes in various *degrees* of belief; and our thoughts can also be mere suppositions or wonderings rather than full-blown beliefs. Similarly, intentions seem *prima facie* different from other conative states, like aims and wishes and desires. So there are many more propositional attitudes than just belief and intention. Moreover, there may also be attitudes that are not *propositional* attitudes at all. Perhaps, if one is frightened of a snake that one sees lying in one's path, one's fear consists of one's standing in a mental relation, not to a proposition, but only to one's singular concept '*that snake*'. On the other side, many philosophers—such as Edgington (1995)—have held that conditional beliefs are not really beliefs in conditional propositions, but instead consist in an essentially conditional attitude towards a *pair* of propositions. This view could be generalized to a general view of *inference*, according to which an inference is an attitude towards a whole *argument* (which is a structure built up out of propositions), rather than an attitude to any single proposition.

In general, the capacities that are relevant here include: (i) one's possession of each of the various concepts that one possesses, and (ii) one's capacity for each of the various types of mental states and attitudes of which one is capable. My current proposal, then, is that what makes the *primitively* rational cognitive processes *a priori* is that they are precisely those processes that we must have some disposition to engage in if we are to possess these basic cognitive capacities.¹⁸

Can anything more be said to make it plausible that it is precisely these capacities that explain why the primitively rational processes are *a priori*? It may be relevant that these capacities seem to be necessary for even *considering* the questions that one actually asks oneself. Clearly, one's possession of the concepts that appear in these questions is a capacity that one must have in order to consider these questions. Moreover, there is an intuitive difference between *practical* questions, which one answers by means of practical reasoning, and *theoretical* questions, which one answers by means of theoretical reasoning. To be capable of considering such practical questions, one must be capable of *intentions*, whereas to be capable of considering theoretical questions, one must be capable of *beliefs*; and a similar point applies to the other attitudes. If these capacities are indeed necessary for even considering the questions that we are in fact considering, this may help to make it plausible that it is these capacities that explain why the primitively rational processes are *a priori*.

An example may help to illustrate how a capacity might essentially require a disposition to engage in a certain cognitive process. Consider the capacity of possessing the

I make clear in the rest of this section) the possession of concepts is by no means the *only* sort of cognitive capacity that I am appealing to here. Some philosophers—most notably Williamson (2007, chap. 4)—have objected to the idea that there is any concept that one cannot possess without having a disposition to engage in a certain cognitive process. For an attempt to answer Williamson's objections, see Wedgwood (2007a).

¹⁸ An additional advantage of this proposal is that it may help to solve problem of how to *individuate* the rational belief-forming processes. According to this proposal, the primitively rational processes are the processes that are built into the nature of these basic cognitive capacities; so an investigation of the nature of these cognitive capacities should also tell us how to individuate these primitively rational processes.

concept ‘if’—the capacity for thinking conditional propositions.¹⁹ Perhaps possessing this capacity essentially involves a disposition to engage in the process of making inferences that have the form of *modus ponens*: ‘If *A* then *B*, but *A*; hence *B*’. Perhaps, if you had absolutely no disposition of this sort, you could not even possess the concept ‘if’ at all.²⁰ In that case, according to the proposals that I have made here, the process of making *modus ponens* inferences would be a primitively rational process; and the way in which the process is built into our possession of the concept ‘if’ would explain why it counts as an *a priori* cognitive process.

What we need to investigate now is whether this account of why the primitively rational processes count as *a priori* can also be applied to the process of taking one’s experiences at face value. Suppose that it is the case that if one had no disposition to engage in this process, one would be incapable of forming beliefs in any contingent propositions about one’s environment at all. Without such beliefs, one would not even be capable of intelligent agency or practical reasoning at all, since all such practical reasoning has to start from some beliefs in contingent propositions about one’s environment. Then there would be a particularly basic cognitive capacity—the capacity for intelligent agency and practical reasoning—that essentially requires some disposition to engage in the process of taking one’s experiences at face value. If all this is right, then according to my proposals, the process of taking experiences at face value would also be an *a priori* primitively rational process.

Is it the case that unless one has some disposition to form beliefs by taking one’s experiences at face value, one would be incapable of forming beliefs in contingent propositions about one’s environment? It might seem that it is not the case. It may seem that there are other ways of forming such beliefs. For example, perhaps one could form beliefs *about* one’s experiences by means of introspection, and then form beliefs about one’s environment by means of inference to the best explanation of one’s experiences?²¹

We should concede, I think, that it is possible for a thinker to *cease* to form beliefs by taking experience at face value. Perhaps the thinker comes to believe that she is being deceived by a Cartesian demon, or that she is in the Matrix. Or perhaps the thinker ceases to form beliefs about her environment except by means of an inference to the best explanation of her experiences. But this does not entail that such a thinker could lack even the *disposition* to take her experiences at face value. One can have a disposition even if one does not actually manifest that disposition; so one can be disposed to engage in a process, even if one no longer actually engages in the process.

On reflection, it is not clear that it really would be possible to form beliefs in contingent propositions about one’s environment in these other ways if one had no disposition to take one’s experiences at face value. In particular, it is not clear that one could form introspective beliefs about one’s current experiences if one had no disposition to take

¹⁹ As I have already mentioned, some philosophers—such as Edgington (1995)—deny that natural-language conditional sentences express such conditional propositions. But this issue does not matter for my purposes so long as such conditional propositions exist and are thinkable.

²⁰ The claim that possession of the concept ‘if’ requires a disposition to accept *modus ponens* inferences is controversial. I have tried to defend this claim elsewhere (Wedgwood 2007a). But for present purposes, I do not need actually to endorse this claim, which is discussed here merely for the sake of illustrating the general idea of how a cognitive process could be built into our possession of a concept.

²¹ This objection was put to me by Ram Neta.

one's experiences at face value. One clearly cannot form such introspective beliefs unless one can identify the conceptual content (or the "conceptualized upshot", as I put it in Section 1) of those experiences. But it is not clear that one's experiences would *have* any conceptual content at all, unless one were at least *disposed* to form beliefs directly on the basis of one's experiences. (Indeed, on some views of the matter, the conceptual content of an experience precisely *consists* in the proposition that the thinker is disposed to come to believe in direct response to that experience.) Moreover, it is also not clear that one could form beliefs by an inference to the best explanation of any contingent phenomenon if one had no disposition to take one's experiences at face value. How could one judge that a proposition provided the "best explanation" of some contingent phenomenon without relying on a mass of empirical background beliefs? And where could those empirical background beliefs have come from if one has no disposition to form beliefs by taking experience at face value? So we may tentatively conclude that a disposition to engage in the process of taking one's experience at face value really is necessary if one is to have beliefs in contingent propositions about one's environment—and so to be an intelligent agent—at all. So a disposition to engage in this process would be a necessary part of having this basic cognitive capacity. If so, then according to my proposal, this process would count as an *a priori* primitively rational process.²²

In this section, I have proposed an explanation of why the primitively rational processes count as *a priori*—they are processes that our basic cognitive capacities "supply out of themselves" in a particularly immediate way—and I have provided some reasons for thinking that we can give the very same explanation of why the process of taking our sensory experience at face value is *a priori*. But what does this proposal have to do with the problem that we confronted at the end of the previous section? How does this proposal help us to see how it is possible for us to engage in this process precisely *because* of its connection with the truth? In the final section of this paper, I shall attempt to provide an answer to this question.

5. A solution to the problem

In the previous section, I proposed that the primitively rational cognitive processes are precisely those that we must have some disposition to engage in if we are to possess certain basic cognitive capacities (such as the capacity of possessing a particular concept, or the capacity for a certain type of attitude). However, there is an obvious objection that some philosophers might be tempted to raise against this proposal. Why could it not be the case that one of these cognitive capacities requires a disposition to engage in a thoroughly *irrational* belief-forming process?

In Section 3, I proposed that the primitively rational belief-forming processes must at least have *some* essential connection to the truth (even if it is only a weak connection). So taken together my proposals imply that possessing these basic cognitive capacities cannot require having the disposition to engage in any belief-forming process unless that process has at least some such connection to the truth. Why could it not be the case that one of these basic

²² A full defence of this proposal would of course have to make it plausible that *all* of the primitively rational processes—including reliance on memory, induction, and inference to the best explanation, among others—are processes that our basic cognitive capacities "supply out of themselves" in this way. Unfortunately I cannot attempt to carry out this task here (although I hope to do so on another occasion).

capacities requires a disposition to engage in a *misleading* process that altogether *lacks* any such connection to the truth?

In fact, however, it seems, at least to me, to be most doubtful whether these capacities could essentially involve a disposition for such irrational or misleading processes. How can these capacities—our possession of concepts and our capacities for all of the various types of attitude—essentially require a disposition to engage in a belief-forming process that has no such connection with the truth? These capacities are cognitive powers, not cognitive foibles or liabilities.²³ Possessing the concept ‘if’ may essentially involve a disposition to accept certain truth-preserving inferences, such as *modus ponens*; but it is surely perfectly possible to possess this concept without having any disposition to accept fallacious inferences, such as “affirming the consequent” or “denying the antecedent”. In general, it seems plausible that these capacities cannot essentially require a disposition to engage in a belief-forming process unless that process has some appropriate connection with the truth.

We can dramatize this point by considering the idea of a perfectly rational being. It seems plausible to me that every concept that we possess could also be possessed by this perfectly rational being. (For example, this perfectly rational being would have to make use of these concepts in order to ascribe mental states to us and to diagnose the errors and confusions that mar our thinking.) I am also inclined to accept the following thesis: for every concept, there is a particular cognitive process that one must have some disposition to engage in if one is to possess the concept. But of course the perfectly rational being has no disposition to engage in any irrational processes. So the processes that are essentially built into these concepts cannot be irrational processes; they must be rational processes instead. Unless a belief-forming process has some essential connection to the truth, it cannot be a rational process. So the processes that are in this way built into our possession of concepts must be rational processes that have an essential connection to the truth of this kind.

At the end of Section 3, I argued that the mere existence of an essential connection between a belief-forming process and the truth was not enough to make the process rational; it is also necessary that one should be able to engage in this process precisely *because* of its connection with the truth. In the case of the *non-primitively* or *derivatively* rational belief-forming processes, one can engage in them because one has *independent justification* for *believing* them to have an appropriate connection with the truth; that is, one can engage in them because there is some *other* rational process that can lead one to the belief that these derivatively rational belief-forming processes have an appropriate connection to the truth. But in the case of the *primitively* rational processes, one can engage in these processes simply because one must have a disposition to do so, purely in virtue of being capable of certain concepts and of certain types of attitude. Since it is necessary that any disposition that is built into one’s possession of a concept or one’s capacity for some type of attitude in this way should have such a connection to the truth, one can also engage in these processes *precisely because* of their connection to the truth—even if one does not engage in these processes because one has any process-independent justification for believing them to have such a

²³ Compare the central idea of my argument for the normativity of the intentional (Wedgwood 2007b, 169), which was originally suggested to me by reflecting on Gareth Evans’s (1982: 331) insistence that understanding a linguistic expression is a species of knowledge and so cannot be based on false belief: “Truth is seamless: there can be no truth which it requires acceptance of a falsehood to appreciate.” Some philosophers will object by claiming that there are “essentially defective concepts”—concepts possession of which essentially requires irrational dispositions of some kind. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Wedgwood 2007a), there are in fact compelling reasons to deny the existence of such “defective concepts”.

connection to the truth.

According to my proposals, then, these processes are built into the very nature of our capacities for the concepts that we possess, or for the types of attitude that we are capable of. This explains why they are *a priori*, as I explained in the previous section; and it also explains why it is possible for us to engage in these processes precisely because of their connection with the truth. In this way, my proposals explain why these processes have these crucial features that any primitively rational process would have to have.²⁴ Since it seems intuitively plausible that these processes are indeed primitively rational, it helps to make my proposals more plausible that it can explain why these processes have these features.

If I am also right that we must have a disposition to engage in the process of taking our experiences at face value if we are to have the capacities of intelligent agency and practical reasoning, then we have all the materials that we need to solve the sceptical problem about the rationality of this basic belief-forming process. Just like all other primitively rational cognitive processes, this process is built into the very nature of these fundamental cognitive capacities, and is therefore an *a priori* process, which it is possible for us to engage in precisely because of its essential connection with the truth. This should help to dispel any sense of puzzlement that we might have had about how it can be that it is a genuinely rational belief-forming process.²⁵

²⁴ This is a slightly different account from the one that I proposed in earlier work (Wedgwood 1999). There I claimed, in effect, that the belief-forming processes that are built into our concepts and capacities for attitude-types are primitively rational because they form the “only non-arbitrary starting point”. It is not that that claim is wrong, but I am no longer confident that I was entitled to make that claim on the basis of the arguments that I offered at that time.

²⁵ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at a conference at the University of Edinburgh, at a conference that was organized by New York University in Florence, and (in German) at the University of Göttingen. I am grateful to all those audiences, to my commentators at those conferences—Alan Millar in Edinburgh, and Ram Neta and Stephen Schiffer in Florence—and also to Cian Dorr, Lizzie Fricker, Joshua Schechter, Nicholas Shea, David Wallace, Timothy Williamson, and an anonymous referee, for helpful comments.

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