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DIALECTIC DELICACIES IN ARGUING FOR AGENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract: An agent who acts intentionally knows what she's doing. There are reasons for thinking *that* the agent's warrant for such kind of agential knowledge isn't based on observation. *How* can an agent attain warrant for her agential knowledge non-observationally though? Recently, some philosophers have borrowed the entitlement-based approach to self-knowledge about our mind in attempt to answer this question. By highlighting the proof vs. explanation distinction, I'll argue that this approach faces a dilemma: its key argument works neither as a proper *proof* for the relevant kind of entitlement nor as a proper *explanation* of how the relevant kind of entitlement is generated.

Keywords: Anscombe; epistemic entitlement; intentional action; self-knowledge.

1. Introduction: Non-Observational Agential Knowledge

Ellie is climbing a tree to save a cat. Many onlookers are at the scene. They know that Ellie is saving the cat. As the one performing the action, of course, Ellie herself knows that she is saving the cat. It's constitutive of

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intentional actions that the person who performs an intentional action knows *that she's performing that intentional action*. Call this agential knowledge.

Intuitively, there is a difference between the agential knowledge that Ellie has and the knowledge those onlookers have about the same fact that Ellie is saving the cat. First-person and third-person knowledge about actions appear to be different in kind. This category difference manifests in multiple ways (see Lucy O'Brien 2003); I won't be able to address all of them. I'll focus on the seemingly *non-observational* character of agential knowledge that G. E. M. Anscombe (2000/1957) noted. Whereas both the onlookers and Ellie are warranted in believing that the latter is saving the cat, their *warrants* are different in kind such that Ellie's warrant is, in a unique way, not based on observation.[2] Ellie learns that she's saving a cat not because she observes anything. I'll refer to the claim that agential knowledge isn't based on observational warrant as the **Non-Observational Thesis**.

Let me clarify what I mean by "observation". It isn't uncommon for people to use the word "observation" only for the outer senses, thereby excluding other forms of sensory access, like proprioception and kinesthesis. But the intuition underlying the Non-Observational Thesis runs deeper. It also drives a wedge between our agential knowledge and these other senses. As John Schwenkler (2011, 146) puts it, part of the intuitive appeal to the Non-Observational Thesis is that, when we're aware of our intentional action, such awareness typically isn't acquired as information *given* to us. Agential knowledge isn't a *passive* form of knowing like observation.

One way to bring this intuition into sharper focus is to consider how the word "notice" is used. When you *see* a pen, it's appropriate to say that you *notice* a pen. When I *hear* piano music, it makes sense for me to say

[2] In this essay, like others in this debate, I follow Plantinga and use "warrant" as an umbrella term that covers whatever it takes to make a true belief knowledge. Whereas justification by evidence is one way to warrant a belief, we can also be warranted to form a belief simply because we are epistemically entitled to form the belief even if we have no justification (I follow Burge in reserving the word "justification" for warrant based on evidence).

that I *notice* that my neighbor is practicing the piano again. We can describe acquisition of knowledge via the outer senses as our *noticing* something.

But "notice" applies to ways of acquiring knowledge different from the outer senses. It's sensible to say that I notice the following things: (i) that I'm tapping my foot to the beat, (ii) that I'm crossing my legs, (iii) that I feel disoriented when I look at a certain picture, etc. So, it's also sensible to speak of (i) kinesthesis, (ii) proprioception, and (iii) introspection as us *noticing* something. *On the contrary*, we don't say that we *notice* what we are doing intentionally.

I contend that our linguistic intuition about how to use the word "notice" mirrors the idea of a passive form of knowing. The Anscombian claim is that our agential knowledge doesn't belong to this category. To remain faithful to this intuitive appeal of the Non-Observational Thesis, I'll use the word "observation" to cover all passive forms of knowing, i.e., all forms of noticing: outer senses, kinesthesis, proprioception, introspection, etc.

Suppose we accept ***that*** agential knowledge isn't based on observational justification. Agential knowledge, as knowledge, is still a warranted belief.[3] We still need to ask: ***how*** is agential knowledge warranted without observational justification? An important approach to this question — defended by O'Brien (2003; 2005; 2007) and Yannig

[3] By framing the issue this way (i.e., in terms of warrant for beliefs), I set aside theories about agential knowledge that aren't belief-based. For example, Lucy Campbell (2018) believes that there are two kinds of knowledge. Whereas standardly knowledge is taken to consist in *beliefs* (with extra qualifications), Campbell argues that *intentions* can sometimes play the same knowledge-function that beliefs play and, therefore, we should think that there is another kind of knowledge consisting not in beliefs but in intentions. Since intentions aren't warranted by observation, this kind of knowledge is non-observational. Our agential knowledge happens to be an instance of that. My concern is that, even if I grant that there are good reasons to speak of knowledge not consisting in beliefs, it's hard to deny that agents *do* have beliefs about their intentional actions and those beliefs *do* appear to be warranted independent of observation. Unless there is compelling reason to deny that agents have belief-based agential knowledge, adding an extra kind of knowledge in the mix doesn't seem relevant to shedding light on the nature of the belief-based one.

Luthra (2017) — is to borrow a move from agentialism about mental self-knowledge. Agentialism is a view that invokes a special form of epistemic entitlement to tell us why we have privileged knowledge *about our own mind*. Call the attempt to apply the same strategy to our first-person knowledge *about our intentional actions* the **Agency Approach**.

This essay aims to examine the key agentialist argument that defines the Agency Approach. After explaining the agentialist argument and how it's redeployed to address agential knowledge in section 2, I'll argue in sections 3 and 4 that the argument faces a dilemma once we fully appreciate the distinction between an argument that serves as a ***proof*** that a phenomenon exists and an argument that serves as an ***explanation*** of said phenomenon. In section 5, I'll explore what one needs to keep the Agency Approach alive.[4]

2. The Agency Approach

2.1 Entitlement about Our Minds

The phrase "epistemic entitlement" is used in many ways. Defenders of the Agency Approach typically rely on the notion developed by Tyler Burge. The basic idea is that some beliefs can be warranted even without justification because a person, for some reason, is in an entitled position to hold that belief unless they have reason to doubt it. To be epistemically

[4] The objections I'm going to offer apply to both the Agency Approach to self-knowledge about actions and agentialism concerning self-knowledge about the mind. This paper focuses on the Agency Approach, however, because the fundamental motivation for the Agency Approach and the fundamental motivation for agentialism aren't the same. Whereas the Agency Approach aims to help us understand the non-observational character of agential knowledge, I'm not 100% positive that this is also the driving force behind agentialism for mental self-knowledge. With different motivations in play, the dialectics involving the same objection may play out differently. I have no objection to extend the same points I'm going to make about the Agency Approach to agentialism more generally. But I want to limit the scope of this essay.

entitled, the person doesn't even need to have the cognitive ability to grasp the basis of their entitlement.[5]

There are different kinds of epistemic entitlement. Some say we're entitled to form perceptual beliefs, for example. Why do we have perceptual entitlement? According to Burge's (2003) view, assuming content externalism, the reason that we are so entitled is that the content of perceptual representations is in part determined by the *actual* historical correlation between the perceptual representation and what is perceived in normal circumstances.

We are also entitled to form beliefs about *some* of our other mental states; in particular, those mental states that we have control over via rational deliberation, e.g., judgments. According to Burge, the entitlement we have in forming beliefs about these mental states is different from our entitlement for forming perceptual beliefs. Content externalism doesn't tell us why we are entitled to form beliefs about our rationally managed mental states. For my purpose, I'm not interested in Burge's negative reason *against* conceptualizing our self-knowledge about our minds as a kind of perceptual knowledge.[6] I'm only interested in his *positive* argument that purports to tell us why we are entitled to form beliefs about

[5] Christopher Peacocke (1996) has also developed a concept of epistemic entitlement but he appears to use "entitlement" and "justification" interchangeably. And Crispin Wright's (2004) notion of epistemic entitlement applies only to an attitude he calls acceptance and not to belief. For the purpose of this paper, Wright's notion is not as directly relevant. Furthermore, since we distinguish warrant and justification (see footnote 2 for terminological clarification), "epistemic entitlement" and "externalist justification" could just be verbally different but could also be distinct and orthogonal to each other, depending on one's views on other epistemological issues. For example, suppose one defends the view that says that to *possess* a piece of evidence and justify one's belief based on it, one doesn't need to have access to the basis of the piece of evidence's justificatory force. If so, one would have externalist justification (partly depending on how one defines externalism), but not epistemic entitlement (as Burge uses the term). To focus on the Agency Approach, I'll set the internalism-externalism debate about justification aside.

[6] For a defense for an observational/empirical model of mental self-knowledge against Burge's objection, see Gertler (2018). *Contra* Burge, for an attempt to apply the perceptual entitlement model to self-knowledge (or at least an agent's knowledge of her own *tryings*), see Peacocke (2003).

our rational mental states if they aren't understood as perceptual beliefs (see also footnote 16).

Burge states that our rational mental states are products of critical reasoning. Critical reasoning is a reflective activity. To reason critically, it isn't enough that a person reasons and entertains rational mental states in a way that matches certain principles. The person needs to have a *meta-level awareness* of her mental states and consciously shape them according to certain principles. Being critical reasoners, it must be the case that we have access to our rational mental states. Therefore, he argues, we are rationally entitled to form beliefs about our own rational mental states.[7]

2.2 From Entitlement about Our Minds to Entitlement about Our Actions

O'Brien defends a view about the epistemology of our rational mental states similar to Burge's. But she argues that these rational mental states are mental *actions*. And our entitlement to form beliefs about these rational mental states is but a special case of our entitlement to form beliefs about our actions.[8] Consequently, she applies Burge's argument to actions to tell us why we are entitled to hold beliefs about our own intentional actions. Our intentional actions are products of our *practical reasoning* capacity. The performance of our intentional actions is guided by our deliberation of the pros and cons. For performing an action to be guided by one's reasoning, one must be able to have a meta-level belief about one's action as a choice among alternatives. That means we must have beliefs in order for our actions to count as rational and for us to count as practical agents of those actions. So, she argues, just as we are entitled to form beliefs about our rational mental states, as rational agents, we are

[7] Other agentialist account of mental self-knowledge can be found in Richard Moran (2001) and Matthew Boyle (2009).

[8] O'Brien is interested in self-knowledge about action generally. My focus is more restricted. I'm only interested in the epistemology of *intentional* action. This is partly because, unlike O'Brien, I'm not convinced that an agent has the same kind of privileged self-knowledge regarding her non-intentional actions.

entitled to form beliefs about our intentional actions. What's necessary for our rational agency is automatically justified; our beliefs about our own intentional actions don't need to rely on evidence for justification.

Luthra (2017) offers a similar argument to tell us why we are entitled to our agential knowledge. Luthra's presentation is particularly useful in that he brings a ***normative*** premise of the argument to the fore. The reason why we are entitled to our agential knowledge isn't that we do things based on practical deliberation but that we ***should*** do things based on practical deliberation.

Luthra states, not implausibly, that, if a norm applies to a person, that person must at least be in a position so that they can be epistemically warranted to trust, i.e., to believe, that they're acting according to said norm. If I could never be justified in believing that I'm φ-ing, then I couldn't possibly have obligations that I can only discharge by φ-ing. For example, a norm that requires one to have a heartbeat of 80 times per minute cannot apply to me right now because even if my heart were indeed beating at 80 times per minute, that wouldn't be something that I could be warranted in believing about myself right now.

Acting according to our practical reasoning — i.e., performing intentional actions — is necessary for satisfying the norms of a well-functioning practical agent that apply to us. Therefore, the fact that such norms are applicable to us entails that we have epistemic warrant to believe/trust that we are performing whatever intentional actions we perform.

To appreciate the insight of Luthra's normative construal of the argument, consider this. Perhaps O'Brien is right that having knowledge about one's intentional action as a choice among options is essential for being a genuinely practical agent who does things based on practical deliberation. But one might object that this argument simply repackages, instead of answering, the question of why we are entitled to form beliefs about our intentional actions. The question now becomes why we should think that we truly are practical agents that act based on practical deliberation. At best, O'Brien's argument proves a conditional: ***if*** we are practical agents that act on practical deliberation, we have epistemic

warrant to form beliefs about our intentional actions. The argument cannot rule out the possibility that our practical agency is an illusion.

Luthra's normative construal of the argument allows one to say something in response (I'm not saying this is the final word). By construing the argument normatively, the issue isn't about whether we are genuinely practical agents. The point is that we *should* be practical agents (and hence comply with the norms of practical agency) even if we aren't. Suppose Ellie is a person who doesn't think things through before she acts. Still, the norms of practical reason apply to her: she *should have* acted based on thorough deliberation. According to Luthra's version of the argument, it's the practical norms that govern how we should be practical agents, not the fact that we are practical agents, that provide the reason for why we have such epistemic warrant. Given the advantage of the normative construal, I'll focus on Luthra's version of the agentialist argument; but the following discussion equally applies to other versions.

By borrowing Burge's agentialist reasoning about our rational *mental states* to intentional *actions*, O'Brien and Luthra offer a kind of argument that purports to tell us why we are also entitled to hold beliefs about our own intentional actions. Such agentialist arguments rely on nothing that an agent observes; it appeals only to an essential link between our intentional actions and our rational agency. (They flesh out the nature of this essential link differently.) So, it would appear that we now not only know *that* we have non-observational agential knowledge, but we also know *how* we have it. Appearances, however, can be deceiving.

3. Proof or Explanation?

There is more than one sense in which an argument can tell us why something is the case. Consider the following two arguments:

Argument 1:

[1] If Joel is alive, he must have contacted Ellie.
[2] Joel has not contacted Ellie.

Therefore:

[3] Joel is dead.

Argument 2:

[4] Joel was hit heavily in the head.

[5] No one can survive a heavy hit in the head.

Therefore:

[6] Joel is dead.

There is an important difference between them. Suppose Ellie, being Joel's friend, refuses to believe that he's dead. Both arguments can be employed as an attempt to convince her to accept her friend's death — a **proof**.[9] But there is one thing that Argument 2 can do but Argument 1 cannot. Suppose Ellie accepts that Joel is dead but demands an **explanation**; she wants to know how he died or why his death occurred. Whereas Argument 2 is an explanation (whether it's a good explanation is a different issue), Argument 1 isn't.

In the previous section, we've seen the agentialist argument which, by appealing to our rational agency, purports to tell us why we are entitled to hold beliefs about our own intentional actions. With the proof-explanation distinction in mind, a question arises: is the agentialist argument meant to prove that we have non-observational epistemic entitlement for agential knowledge or explain why we have non-observational entitlement? The discussions about the Agency Approach haven't always been sufficiently clear about this.

On the one hand, there is dialectical reason for thinking that the agentialist argument is at least meant to **explain** where our epistemic entitlement for agential knowledge comes from. For instance, recall Burge's work on perceptual entitlement. Content externalism isn't developed to prove that we are entitled to our perceptual beliefs. The fact

[9] By 'proof', I don't mean something that establishes a conclusion with 100% certainty, which is how the word is used occasionally. I use the word in a weaker sense. A proof doesn't need to be conclusive. I'm certainly not the only one who uses the word in this weaker sense. That's what scientists typically mean when they speak of certain scientific claims being proven. For an example of epistemologists using the word this way, see Engel (1992, 136).

that even infants have warrant for believing what they perceive is meant to do that. The crucial contribution of content externalism is to help establish an account that explains the source of said entitlement after we acknowledge that such entitlement exists. In Burge's discussion about epistemic entitlement, content externalism about perception is often juxtaposed with our agential knowledge to shed light on the two kinds of epistemic entitlement. Given this, it would make little dialectical sense if the agentialist argument were merely meant to prove that we have epistemic entitlement for self-knowledge and not also to explain the distinctive source of such entitlement.

On the other hand, some can be read as if they interpret the agentialist argument only as an attempt to prove that we have non-observational epistemic entitlement for agential knowledge. When Setiya complains that Shoemaker (and Burge) fail to offer detail about our (groundless) agential knowledge, he writes:[10]

> Shoemaker declines to specify the nature of this mechanism [i.e. the mechanism through which the relation between an agent's meta-level awareness about her beliefs and her rational capacity contributes to the warrant for her self-knowledge], except to say that it is "constitutive" of belief. Insisting that self-knowledge draws on capacities involved in being rational, he does not tell us how these capacities work or what they are. (2011, 181-182; this complaint is meant to apply also to Burge, see *ibid*, 181, footnote 37)

Here's how one *might* read Setiya's complaint. The agentialists offered a proof — based on the fact that we have the capacity to reason — so as to *show that* our agential knowledge must be supported by a non-observational epistemic entitlement without offering any detail to *explain how* our capacity to reason generates an epistemic entitlement for our meta-level awareness about ourselves. *If* that's the right way to interpret

[10] Shoemaker's view doesn't belong to the Agency Approach. The point here is simply that Setiya thinks that the same point against Shoemaker applies to Burge. It's how Setiya understands Burge that matters here.

Setiya's complaint, he understands the agentialist argument as a proof, not an explanation.

How these philosophers read each other is hard to pin down beyond dispute. I don't intend to offer an exegesis of this literature. The bottom-line is, the literature leaves it ambiguous whether the agentialist argument is meant to be a proof or an explanation. The dialectical significance of the distinction hasn't been appreciated as much as it should be.[11]

4. Cannot be Proof

In this section, I'll offer a reason *not* to treat the agentialist argument as a proof. But before that, let me highlight three dialectical nuances that we must keep in mind if we were to navigate around this discussion properly.

Firstly, saying that our agential knowledge is based on epistemic entitlement alone isn't yet saying that our agential knowledge is based on non-observational warrant. Some forms of epistemic entitlement are observational. The Agency Approach is about a specific form of epistemic entitlement.

Secondly, simply saying that our agential knowledge is based on non-observational warrant also falls short of saying that our agential knowledge is based on some form of epistemic entitlement. There may be different forms of non-observational warrant. For example, some believe that mathematical intuition serves as evidence for mathematical beliefs. Justification via evidence, observational or not, is by definition not epistemic entitlement. The Agency Approach is about a particular form of non-observational warrant.

Thirdly, the Agency Approach I'm interested in examining is based on the agentialist argument that appeals to an essential connection

[11] For readers who think that the agentialist argument is *obviously* a proof or *obviously* an explanation and that I'm gesturing at an ambiguity that doesn't exist, the truth is, different philosophers have expressed this same claim about what's 'obvious' to me from both sides.

between our self-knowledge and our rational agency. My target is rather specific. I'm not addressing just any view/argument that uses the idea of epistemic entitlement to study agential knowledge. Philosophers occasionally gesture at the fact that even infants (Burge 2003, 528) have perceptual knowledge and that even lower-level organisms (Luthra 2017, 479) can know what they are doing in order to demonstrate that perceptual knowledge and agential knowledge must be based on epistemic entitlement, not evidence. These additional arguments make no appeal to the essential connection between self-knowledge and agency; whether they succeed or not is beyond the scope of this essay.

What does a proof do? To show that p is the case, an argument needs to rule out some nearby possible scenarios in which p is *not* the case. As Littlejohn (2018) puts it, '[i]t seems that if you have any reason to believe p it has to rule out something to support p.' (534) The agentialist argument, however, doesn't rule out any significant alternatives while speaking in favor of the existence of a non-observational epistemic entitlement to form beliefs about our own actions. Let's take a closer look at Luthra's version of the argument, which I summarize as follows:

> [7] The norms of practical agency apply to us.
> [8] Relying on our practical capacity, i.e., performing intentional actions, is necessary for complying with the norms of practical agency.
> [9] If being F is necessary for one to comply with the norms of practical agency, and if those norms apply to one, one must be able to know the fact that one is F when one is F.
> [10] One must have epistemic warrant to believe that p to be able to know that p.

Therefore:

> [11] We must have epistemic warrant to form beliefs about the intentional actions we perform.[12]

[12] This is a simplified version of Luthra's reasoning. He actually proceeds in two steps: first, he establishes the warrant for a general self-trust in one's practical ability; then, as a second step, he establishes warrant to form beliefs about our specific intentional actions

Note that [11] actually says nothing about *non-observational epistemic entitlement*. (The argument wouldn't be valid had we rephrased [11] to be about non-observational epistemic entitlement and not just about epistemic warrant in general.) As I have emphasized, saying that we have a non-observational epistemic entitlement for a belief is a much more specific claim than simply saying that we have an epistemic warrant for the belief. The claim that we have non-observational epistemic entitlement to form beliefs about our own actions is a specific claim about ***how*** we are warranted to form those beliefs. It's more than just a statement about the fact ***that*** we are epistemically warranted somehow. Notice that even those who think that agential knowledge is justified by *observation* would obviously agree ***that*** those beliefs are epistemically warranted (knowledge requires epistemic warrant). In this debate, no one denies that our beliefs about our intentional actions are epistemically warranted. The Agency Approach aims at making a substantive claim about the *nature* of the epistemic warrant for our agential knowledge. And the agentialist argument is presented as the centerpiece of this endeavor. But [11] is a trivial statement that doesn't contradict anyone's view in this discussion.

Surely, the premises of the agentialist argument, i.e., [7] - [10], don't appeal to our observation; the argument is a piece of *a priori* reasoning. But that alone tells us absolutely nothing about the *source* of the warrant that the conclusion (i.e., [11]) refers to. [11] doesn't even force us to accept that our agential knowledge is based on *non-observational* epistemic warrant, let alone non-observational *epistemic entitlement*.[13] It's perfectly consistent to say both (a) that there is an *a priori* argument for *the fact that*

based on the warrant for this general self-trust. This is how Luthra separates his view from dogmatism. The details don't matter for the point I'm going to make.

[13] Notice that I'm not saying that the advocates of the Agency Approach must rule out that observational evidence about our actions is available to us. Of course we have observational evidence for what we are doing. The point is that we don't typically form beliefs about what we are doing *based on* that observational evidence. If we interpret the agentialist argument as a proof, it's meant to convince us that our agential knowledge is typically *based on* some form of non-observational epistemic entitlement — despite observational evidence being available. But, as I try to show, the argument doesn't do that.

our beliefs about our actions are warranted *and* (b) that the warrant happens to be based on observation alone. So, the *a priori* character of the agentialist argument doesn't prove that we have any non-observational epistemic entitlement.

Since [11] says nothing specific about the source of an agent's warrant for her agential knowledge, the argument [7] - [11] doesn't rule out any relevant options in this discussion, the whole point of which is to determine the source of the warrant for agential knowledge. The issue isn't that I'm not convinced by what the argument proves if it's interpreted as a proof. By not ruling out *any* sources of epistemic warrant for our agential knowledge, the argument doesn't even *present itself* as a proof for the existence of a non-observational epistemic entitlement for agential knowledge.[14]

Certainly, relevant support often goes beyond agentialist arguments like [7] - [11]. Just to be absolutely clear, I'm ***not*** saying that agentialists did nothing to rule out alternative accounts about the nature of the epistemic warrant for our agential knowledge. They surely did. What I'm saying is that this argument, [7] - [11], i.e., the appeal to an essential connection between self-knowledge and agency, contributes nothing meaningful to that effect. What I'm trying to focus on is the appeal to the self-reflective nature of rational agency that agentialists make a big deal of. What is it supposed to accomplish? Whatever it does, it doesn't serve to prove that we have non-observational epistemic entitlement for agential knowledge.

Various ***negative*** **arguments** are offered by agentialists to show that observation is *not* a suitable source of epistemic warrant for our typical agential knowledge. Those arguments are certainly interesting in their own right (see Gertler 2018 for a critical examination of such arguments). It's not the goal of this paper to address them. Instead, the goal of this

[14] In response to my complaint that, interpreted as a proof, the agentialist argument shows nothing interesting in this debate, it's sometimes said that I have overlooked the fact that the agentialist argument is a *transcendental argument*. I must admit I fail to see the relevance of the label. If an argument is meant to be a proof that p is the case, the argument should aim to rule out some significant scenarios of not-p. If it doesn't, it isn't a proof that p is the case. Calling it a transcendental argument wouldn't help.

essay is to better understand the unique and prominent attempt to offer a ***positive* argument** that appeals to the fact that first-personal knowledge is essential to our rational agency in order to conclude that our agential knowledge is based specifically on non-observational epistemic entitlement. Notice that those negative arguments alone don't support the positive thesis that our agential knowledge is based on non-observational *epistemic entitlement*. As I've emphasized: saying that there is non-observational warrant is one thing, saying that there is non-observational *epistemic entitlement* is another thing — a more specific claim. It's important that we separate different arguments and judge each of them in light of their own dialectical purposes even if they are associated with the same philosophers and the same general philosophical view.

For what it's worth, even if we ***combine*** these negative arguments against an observation-based account of agential knowledge with the positive argument [7] - [11], interpreted as an attempt to prove that we have epistemic warrant for agential knowledge, the best that can prove is that we must ***somehow*** be warranted to form beliefs about our intentional actions independent of observation. This still doesn't tell us anything about this 'somehow' — the one thing that we have been trying to figure out in this discussion. We still don't have anything that serves as a proof that this non-observational warrant exists *in the form of a non-observational epistemic entitlement* specifically. For a proof like this to go through, one needs an additional premise that basically amounts to saying that if the epistemic warrant for our agential knowledge is non-observational, that epistemic warrant must be based on epistemic entitlement. Assuming an additional premise like this comes pretty close to just assuming the conclusion. The dialectic power of such a proof is therefore incredibly weak.

Setting aside the dialectical weakness of such a combined argument, the bottom line is, my previous point still stands: the contribution of the agential argument, i.e., [7] – [11], is redundant. In this debate, no one denies that we have agential knowledge (hence, no one denies *that* we have epistemic warrant for such knowledge); the issue is about the *nature* of this epistemic warrant.

What I've said so far doesn't prevent the argument from being interpreted as an *explanation* of our epistemic entitlement to form beliefs about our actions instead. This is because, unlike a proof, it's at least not obvious that explaining something must consist in ruling out alternatives.[15] A mosquito bite can be offered to explain a person's death even if that doesn't rule out significant alternative scenarios, e.g., any close by possible scenarios in which he was bitten by a mosquito and remained alive. So, if Ellie wants us to *convince* her of Joel's death, citing a mosquito bite won't do. *Yet*, saying that could serve as an *explanation* of Joel's death. Perhaps, in a similar way, the agentialist argument can still be interpreted as an attempt to show how, *assuming* that we have non-observational epistemic entitlement for agential knowledge (so we aren't trying to prove that), such epistemic entitlement *stems from* the practical norms that govern us, not from observation.

Remember our leading question: how are we warranted to form beliefs about our intentional actions non-observationally? If we have an argument to *prove that* we are non-observationally entitled to form those beliefs, that would be an answer. Would the argument be less satisfying if it could only be read as an *explanation* and not as a proof of our non-observational entitlement? Not necessarily.

If the agentialist argument is to be understood as an explanation, the dialectic should be reconstructed in the following way. We start with the fact *that* we have a non-observational warrant for agential knowledge. We just need to know *how* we come to have such a warrant. Here's a **hypothesis**: we have a non-observational warrant because we are *epistemically entitled* to form beliefs about our own actions *and* the basis of this entitlement is independent of our observation. Why should we accept this hypothesis? *Not* because of the agentialist argument (I've shown that this argument cannot help prove this hypothesis). Instead, it's because of inference to the best explanation: the truth of the hypothesis best explains

[15] Of course, a lot of the detail depends on one's theory of explanation, which I'm not going to offer here. All I'm endorsing is the very weak claim that it's *not obvious* that it *needs* to rule out alternatives. For example, one might think that offering theoretical unification is a form of explanation, in which case an explanation doesn't need to be able excluding any alternatives.

why we have a non-observational warrant for agential knowledge — the fact we started from. What work does the agential argument do then? Whereas the hypothesis states that the basis of the relevant epistemic entitlement is independent of observation, it doesn't say where this epistemic entitlement comes from. Without any detail, one might find the explanation offered by the hypothesis *ad hoc* and it becomes unclear whether the hypothesis really offers a *good* explanation, let alone the best one. The agentialist argument helps by giving us a sensible story about the basis of this special epistemic entitlement the hypothesis refers to.[16]

5. Order of Explanation

We're finally clear what the Agency Approach is getting at: it's not to convince us that we have non-observational epistemic entitlement for our agential knowledge; instead, it's an explanation of what constitutes said epistemic entitlement. I want to present a problem for this explanation.

Let's consider Argument 1 again. Why can't it explain Joel's death? That Joel hasn't contacted Ellie is meant to be something that happens after Joel's death. There is no backward causation. So, for p to *causally explain* q, the fact p has to be either before or simultaneous to the fact q. Instead of being a peculiar feature of causal explanation, this reflects something about explanation in general: it must respect a proper ***order of explanation***.

The order of explanation doesn't have to be about the timing of the explanans and of the explanandum. Here's an example about grounding

[16] Once the role of the agentialist argument and the dialectical context around it are understood this way, the agentialist argument by itself is not meant to be a challenge to empiricism about agential knowledge. This agentialist argument is an explanation of what constitutes the non-observational entitlement *after assuming that* we have such a non-observational entitlement. It's not to be read as an attempt to prove to those who are not sure whether our agential knowledge is empirical (or: observational) that our agential knowledge is based on non-observational entitlement. Given all this, it isn't an objection to the agential argument to point out, as Gertler (2018) does, its compatibility with empiricism.

as a kind of metaphysical explanation. The existence of an abstract object can be explained by the existence of a concrete object (e.g., Socrates's existence explains the existence of {Socrates}). Intuitively, the explanation cannot go in the opposite direction. Abstract objects don't ground the existence of concrete objects.[17]

Here's another example. Non-normative facts may explain normative facts.[18] But the explanation cannot go in the opposite direction. For example, certain moral facts, e.g., that the US government should implement universal basic income, *may* exist partly in virtue of some socio-psychological facts. But it doesn't seem right to use moral facts to explain facts about human psychology or sociological facts.[19]

Here's a third example. Since it's plausible that *ought* implies *can*, we certainly can *infer* facts about what we can do based on what obligations we have. But not all inferences are explanations. Intuitively, having the ability to X is a ***pre-condition*** of having a duty to X. A thing entails its pre-condition but doesn't explain its own pre-condition. Hence, although *ought* implies *can*, *ought* doesn't explain *can*. One may *prove that* a person has an ability by appealing to an *ought*; but one may not *explain* her abilities by appealing to her obligations. Having greater power partly explains Spiderman's greater responsibility, not the reverse. To try to explain our abilities with our obligations is to get the order of explanation wrong.

Interpreted as an explanation, unfortunately, [7] - [11] seems to have messed up the order of explanation in exactly this way. Having epistemic access to our actions partly constitutes our ability to comply with the

[17] I'm not saying that this cannot be contested. One might, like L. A. Paul (2002), think that individuals are nothing but bundles of abstract properties. I'm only trying to illustrate *the idea* of explanatory order. There are, of course, disagreements about specific instances of explanatory order.

[18] This isn't to say that normative facts are *reducible* to non-normative facts.

[19] This can be contested. Attempts to revert the order of explanation aren't unprecedented. It has been done, notably, by Plato. According to his theory of Form, the way each individual thing exists is explained by the Forms it partakes. For example, a particular city is a city because it partakes in the Form of a city. Platonic Forms are ideals, i.e., the ways things *should* be.

norms of practical reasoning and hence is a pre-condition for the applicability of these norms to us. If it aims to explain this epistemic access by appealing to the practical norms that govern us, the agentialist argument is an attempt to use an *ought* to explain what constitutes the corresponding *can*.

Those who embrace the Agency Approach, therefore, face a dilemma: *either* the agentialist argument is offered as a proof that, curiously, doesn't rule out any competing alternatives to their view *or* the argument is an explanation that gets the order of explanation wrong. The moral of the story *I* draw from this is that the Agency Approach, which crucially relies on an essential connection between self-knowledge and agency, as it is expressed by arguments like [7] – [11], should be abandoned. This doesn't rule out other ways to develop an account of non-observational epistemic entitlement to shed light on our agential knowledge. For example, Lam (2021) develops one that explains the non-observational warrant of agential knowledge as an instance of Kripkean contingent *a priori* stipulative knowledge. Here, however, I want to wrap up the discussion in a slightly different direction.

One might wonder whether the order of explanation problem actually means I was wrong in the previous section to suggest that the agentialist argument should be interpreted as an explanation. Maybe it should be interpreted as a proof after all, only as a bad proof. Part of the reason I think it's more illuminating to construe the agentialist argument as an explanation — regardless of whether there was a clear original intention — is that I suspect there is still room to maneuver regarding the order of explanation problem.

I said that, intuitively, [9] can't be true if it's read as saying not only that *ought* implies *can*, but that *ought* explains *can*. But I have no *arguments* for saying that *ought* can *never* explain *can*. If one insists upon developing the Agency Approach, one might say that, sometimes, *ought* explains *can* and this is one of those times. One might then replace [9], which is simply about what norms *entail*, with [9'], which is an explanatory claim about what is the case *in virtue of* norms:

> [9′] If being F is necessary for one to comply with the norms of practical agency (setting aside other norms that also govern us, e.g., moral norms), and if those norms apply to one, one must, *in virtue of those norms*, be able to know the fact that one is F when one is F.

Surely, explaining *can* with *ought* doesn't sit well with our intuitions. But here's a possible response to explain away the counter-intuitiveness. One might argue that the source of those intuitions is that, *typically*, the basis of our ability is non-normative. For example, the fact that I have the ability to save a drowning kid consists of various non-normative facts, e.g., certain physiological facts about me. And my ability explains what norms apply to me — non-normative facts explaining normative facts. To explain my ability with normative facts in such *typical* cases would get the order of explanation wrong by explaining the non-normative with the normative. In contrast, in the particular case we are addressing, the relevant ability to be explained — our ability as rational agents — happens to be partly *normative* as well: this ability partly consists in us *having the epistemic warrant* to form *de se* beliefs. "Epistemic warrant", as Jaegwon Kim (1988) reminded us, is a normative notion. So, ***if*** the source of our intuition against using *ought* to explain *can* just is an intuition against explaining the non-normative with the normative in disguise, the intuition loses its force in this particular context where both the explanandum and the explanans happen to be normative, unlike the drowning kid case.

I don't *know* that any of this is true about my intuition against *ought* explaining *can*. *Even if* this were true, this at best undercuts an objection against using [7] – [11] as an explanation. This doesn't change the fact that using the norms of practical agency to explain our entitlement to form *de se* beliefs about our intentional actions is *ad hoc* given that *ought*-to-*can* explanations don't exist anywhere else whether or not the "can" involved is normative. Simply asserting [9′] doesn't get rid of the *ad-hoc*-ness. Since the dialectical purpose of the agentialist argument construed as an explanation is to show that the hypothesis about our non-observational

epistemic entitlement for agential knowledge isn't *ad hoc* (see section 4), the argument itself better not rely on premises introduced *ad hoc*.

Therefore, what the advocates of the Agency Approach need for it to remain a viable option is an independently sensible view that explains how the norms of practical agency can *explain* — not just *entail* — the existence of epistemic warrant, which is a constituent of our ability to comply with those norms. If not, and if I'm right that our agential knowledge is essentially tied to our rational agency simply in the sense that such self-knowledge is a pre-condition of rational agency, then the agential argument fails to explain our non-observational agential knowledge. I'll leave this task to the defenders of the Agency Approach. I don't have an argument against its possibility. But until that explanation is offered, the approach remains an empty promise.[20]

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THE HARD PROBLEM OF CONTENT AND WHY WE SHOULD SOLVE IT

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Abstract: The world is its own best model (Brooks, 1989)! Or at least it is for Brooks' behavior-based robots. Robots such as Herbert, whose task consisted in stealing empty soda cans from offices and Baxter, whose task was to interact with human beings in a factory environment, prove that complex behavior can be achieved without any inner representation of the world. If we believe Hutto and Myin (2013), we human beings are not too different from Herbert or Baxter. Our behavior can be explained without assuming that we mentally represent our world. In this paper, I want to show evidence against this claim based on empirical data. Although certain aspects of our behavior can be understood without assuming internal representation of the world, most of our actions and how we store interactions with the world strongly suggest internal representation. This claim will be based on the following empirical evidence: non-linguistically based spreading activation (Barr et al., 2014), object recognition (Banich & Compton, 2018), agnosia (Banich & Compton, 2018) and visual reconstruction (UC Berkeley, 2011). I will, furthermore, extend this theory and argue for human beings being different in knowledge acquisition to behavior-based robots due to the nature of our memory. While behavior-based robots do not need to represent the world, we human beings have to represent the world in a specific manner to be able to interact with the world. The knowledge we acquire is mainly based on our inner representation of the world.

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1. Introduction

When I remember Aunt Abby's birthday, I remember quite a lot of what I have experienced as something. For instance, I remember her birthday as her (57th) birthday or the cake we got as red velvet cake. My ability to represent my experiences as something is indicative of our memory traces not only being a form of reactivation (and nothing else on top of that) but as saving content from the experiences we had and transmitting this content up until the point, we recall our experience. While this is a plausible explanation of how we can remember experiences as something, the claim that memory traces have content has its opponents. David Hutto (2023) claims that memory traces do not need content, that reactivation is simple reactivation and nothing more and together with Erik Myin (2013) that cognition in general can be explained without assuming that content exists in the world or our cognition. In what follows, I will counter their claim, asserting that there is a compelling reason to assume cognition relies on content—specifically, our incapacity to engage with the world in a sophisticated and continuous manner without content.

After introducing Hutto and Myin's theory, namely, radical enactivism, I will provide arguments for the assumption that our cognition relies on content. However, I will also show that while our cognition needs content, there is cognition which is possible without content. I will introduce Rodney Brooks' behavior-based robots to give an example of cognition without content. While I will admit that their interaction with the world is quite sophisticated2 and that cognition without content is possible, I will also explain that this form of cognition

[2] I will not define the word 'sophisticated' in this paper. While there may be important distinctions between sophisticated and non-sophisticated behavior, I will assume that our common understanding of sophisticated behavior is captured by the behavior I will introduce in the form of Brook's behavior-based robots.

is limited. I will suggest that these limits can only be surpassed by contentful cognition, and that radical enactivism is wrong for this reason.

2. Radical enactivism

Imagine you use your phone to tell your heating system at home to heat your home up to 20 degrees before you even arrive at home, to open the curtains and to start the coffee machine. With current smart home technology, this is already a possibility. You can control your home remotely. But what if you would not need your phone to do so? What if you were able to control your home with your brain directly? How much of that connection would still count as your cognition or your mind, and how much is still part of the external world? An enactivist would gladly admit that there is not any clear distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' here. They would claim that cognition can only be understood if we take our interactions with the environment into consideration. If we were not to interact with our environment, our body would have nothing to interact with and with this, our mind would not have anything to engage with. However, as we constantly interact with the environment, the environment significantly influences our mind and the non-neural body as well. Our mind and body, however, also constantly influence our environment. Due to the fact that our interactions with the environment are continuous and highly recurrent, we cannot distinguish between a linear input to the mind and an output to the world. Our interaction with the environment is loopy, not linear, and therefore, there is no clear distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' when it comes to cognition (Hutto & Myin, 2013, 6ff.).

Usually, we would assume that something is still transported in this loop, and this something is usually thought to be information. For instance, when we see an apple, we assume that the information of there being an apple in front of us is carried to our brain, processed, stored there and maybe retrieved again once we want to eat an apple and grasp it. An enactivist would agree with this claim. Our cognition carries content.

According to Hutto and Myin (2013, 79), this also implies the following: Cognition consists in representing our interactions with our world as something. For instance, when we see an apple, we represent this apple as an apple in front of our mind. This is achieved by our representational states of representing an apple as an apple having semantic content. For instance, when we see an apple and it is already brown, we represent the apple as rotten. This representation has the semantic content of "The apple is rotten". Through the semantic content, the content we have has truth-values. Either it is true that the apple is rotten, or it is false that the apple is rotten.

While Hutto and Myin identify themselves as enactivists, they explain that enactivism needs to be radicalized when it comes to content. We need to dispose of the current idea that there is informational content in the world which is acquired by us. Informational content is not the raw material of mental consumption and content also does not enter the game at a later point (Hutto & Myin, 2013, 73) as there is no reason to assume that there is content, truth-values and semantic content present in most of our interactions with the world. We can explain the behavior of beings without assuming that there is content (Hutto & Myin, 2013, 2). Beings are able to deal with aspects of the environment in quite remarkable and sophisticated ways even if they do not have the capacity for content-involving deliberation (Hutto and Myin, 2013, 14). Consider how crickets deal with their environment without any representational content. Female crickets can find their male counterpart by attending the acoustic signals of male songs since the sound they follow has a species-specific characteristic tone and rhythm—one that uniquely matches the particular makeup of the female's auditory system. By locating their male partner, female crickets '[…] engage in a continuous interactive process of engagement with the environment. […] a beautiful cooperation arises because of the way the cricket's body and features of the wider environment enable successful navigational activity—activity that involves nothing more than a series of dynamic and regular embodied interactions (Hutto & Myin, 2013, 42). Female crickets do not have representational internal knowledge about their environment. All they do

is to be guided by continuous, temporary, extended interactions with their environment (Hutto & Myin, 2013, 42).

Hutto and Myin (20143, 42) explain that crickets can act intelligently without creating and relying on internal representations and models and that their cognition might even be the only real possibility of basic cognition per se. Our cognition does not need to represent or be semantically contentful for us to be able to interact with the world (Hutto & Myin 2013, 82). There is only one possible scenario in which Hutto and Myin grant interaction with the world content. Language is without any doubt semantically contentful (Hutto & Myin 2013, 82). Yet, language is to be seen as the tip of the cognitive iceberg (Hutto & Myin, 2013, 46). Everything 'below' can make do without content. World-directed, action-guiding cognition exhibits intentional directedness that is not contentful (Hutto & Myin, 2003, 82).

Apart from being able to explain cognition without content, Hutto and Myin also introduce another reason to not argue for contentful cognition in most cases. It is the so-called hard problem of content. The problem of telling where content comes from if it cannot be picked up from the world. This problem is subject to what Hutto and Myin (2013, 66) call the Muggle constraint. 'One's explanation of some phenomenon meets the Muggle constraint when it appeals only to entities, states and processes that are wholly nonmagical in character (Hutto & Myin, 2013, 66)'. Or, in other words, there needs to be a clear explanation for the question of where content comes from apart from the world just magically conveying it. To solve the hard problem, we would need to discover how basic physical properties such as a brown apple relate to contentful properties such as 'This apple is rotten' (Hutto & Myin, 2013, 69).

3. Why we should face the hard problem of content

In what follows, I will argue against radical enactivism. I agree with Hutto and Myin when it comes to the claim that there is no content to be picked up from our environment. Our environment does not represent itself to

us as something. For instance, if I am about to be hit by a car, the car itself does not present itself as a (dangerous) car to us. There is no content to be picked up here. However, I disagree with Hutto and Myin's claim that we can interact with the world in quite sophisticated ways without content. Even though we might be able to interact with the world in quite sophisticated ways, I will argue for the view that we do not do so without content. This means, that I have to solve the hard problem of content. But with my suggestion, it is an easy solve. The source content comes from is by the processing powers of our brain itself. I will support this claim and the claim that we might be able to interact with the world in quite sophisticated ways but do not do so based on empirical evidence. The argument will be the same for all four cases. Our brain sorts the input it gets into specific categories. If it sorts the input it gets into specific categories, it needs to represent the input it gets as something. Yet, if it represents the input as something, we have internal mental (probably unconscious) representation and with this content. We do not have cognition without content. Moreover, I will also shortly explain why content needs to be more than linguistic content if Hutto and Myin's argument should be able to bite in the first place.

I'll begin by presenting the argument against content solely relying on linguistic aspects initially. If content was only based linguistically, only beings with the ability to structure their representations semantically would be able to have cognition to start with. This restricts cognition to a very limited field. Therefore, I claim that we necessarily have to extend content to more than semantic content. If we do not do so, Hutto and Myin have it very easy to argue that there is nearly no (except for language) cognitively important content as there is no possibility for content to have a broader base than language. Thus, in what follows, I will assume that content extends beyond the limits of linguistic content. I will show four different cases of empirical evidence which are suggestive of our brain working with content and to assume that cognition cannot make do without it.

The first case is the so-called spreading activation theory by Loftus and Collins (1975). Based on a theory by Quillian, they propose that we store verbal input related to semantic distance/relatedness. For instance, we would store the word 'fox' physically/neuronally closer to the word 'cat' than the word 'book' as both belong to the category 'animal'. To be able to store words depending on their semantic relatedness, our brain needs to interpret those words as what these words mean. It needs to store the acoustic content it gets according to what this content means. Otherwise, there would not be any storing according to semantic relatedness. While this shows that there is the need for content for our brain when it comes to storing, this example only relates to the very tip of the cognitive iceberg so far according to Hutto as it refers to semantic content. Yet, spreading activation goes beyond semantic content. While research around spreading activation is usually done with verbal material (Barr et al., 2014, 550), spreading activation can also be found in other areas than verbal content, for instance, in visuospatial memory networks. Foster et al. (2017), for example, have done studies which suggest that verbal and visuospatial memory networks are dissociated but still show spreading activation in both cases. However, an even more convincing case for spreading activation being present apart from semantic input can be found in preverbal infants. If spreading activation can also be found in preverbal infants, it is not only connected to language and content goes beyond language for the simple reason that preverbal infants do not have language yet. In what follows, I will cite empirical evidence which is indicative of preverbal infants showing spreading activation.

One way to show spreading activation with nonverbal features is to pair a task which would usually been inaccessible after a short period of time with another task which is remembered for a longer period[3]. After a timely delay which is usually longer than the short-lived task would be accessible, infants are tested on whether the longer-lived task helps to

[3] This can be seen as a nonverbal analogue of the verbal priming task.

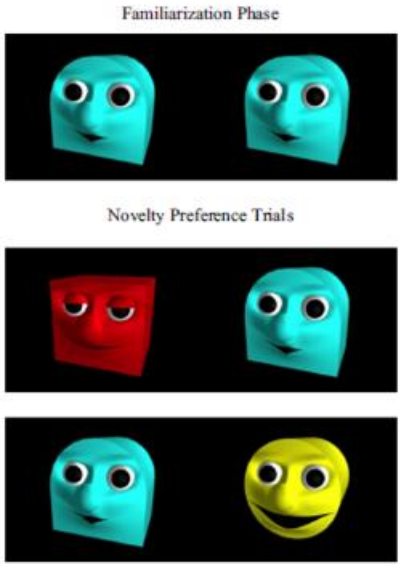

Figure 1

retrieve the shorter-lived task which would usually have been forgotten at that point in time (Barr et al., 2014, 550). Studies like these have been done multiple times (e.g., Barr et al., 2001, 2002; Barr et al., 2011; Greco et al., 1990; Hayne et al., 1993; Timmons, 1994). To understand the individual steps, I will introduce a study by Barr et al. (2014) more closely. Barr et al. (2014) have given infants of different ages (6, 12 and 18 months) a non-verbal analogue of a spreading activation task and have found that spreading activation can also be found with preverbal infants. They have based their study on two different tasks. The first one is the shorter-lived task and makes use of the visual recognition memory paradigm. The VRM paradigm exploits the fact that young children pay more attention to newer stimuli than to older ones (Barr et al., 2014, 551). During an initial familiarization phase, infants were presented with the same stimuli on two different screens and with two different stimuli during the test phase (stimuli are depicted in figure 1). The already known stimulus from the familiarization phase also changed screens within the test phase and during the second trial of the test phase, a new stimulus was used to exclude the possibility of the infant having become familiar with the novel stimulus from the first trial. Infants tended to show a so-called novelty preference. They preferred to look at the novel stimulus. 10 seconds of familiarization was sufficient for all age groups to show a novelty preference if they were presented with the novel stimulus immediately. 18 months old infants also showed a novelty preference when 24 hours had passed but did not show a novelty preference after

one week anymore. 12- and 6-months old infants did not show a novelty preference if they were not shown the novel stimulus immediately.

The second task consisted of a pairing of the VRM task and a deferred imitation task and was designed to see whether the deferred imitation task would help to prolong retention of the first task. In the deferred imitation task, infants were shown a hand puppet which wore a removable felt mitten on its right hand. During the demonstration session, the experimenter removed the mitten, shook the puppet three times, and placed the mitten on the puppet's hand again. Infants were not allowed to touch the puppet. During the test session, infants were allowed to touch the puppet and monitored to see whether they would imitate the interaction with the puppet of the experimenter. To see whether the deferred interaction task would protract the retention of the VRM task, the demonstration phase of the deferred imitation task was directly followed by the VRM task. After 24 hours, so longer than just an immediate confrontation with the novel stimulus (6- and 12-months old infants), or one week (18 months old infants), as 18 months infants had still shown a novelty preference after 24 hours, infants were tested on whether they would still show a novelty stimulus. All three age groups have shown retention in the DI task. After some changes in the experiment design, the novelty preference could also be found in all age groups. This is indicative of the pairing of the deferred stimulus task with the VRM task prolonging preverbal infant's retention interval.

The given study suggests that similar to spreading-activation in semantically related content, there is spreading-activation in the case of preverbal infants when it comes to contextual or situation dependent information as the ability of preverbal infants to retrieve short lived input increased when it was paired with long lived input. This is indicative of preverbal infants storing this input according to its contextual or situational relatedness. If infants indeed store input situationally or contextually related, they, similar to semantic relatedness, need to store the given input as something. Yet, if they store the given input as something, we have content. Thus, we have the first good reason to assume that there is content in memory traces.

The second case, which is indicative of memory traces having content and our brain not being able to make do without content, is the case of object recognition. If we would not mentally represent an object as that object, there would be no way for us to recognize that object as that object at a later point in time since we would not have any means to compare the former object with the latter object without an inner mental representation. However, we recognize objects. People can recognize objects as the same even if an object has changed locations, configuration or orientation (Banich & Compton, 2018, 539 ff.). For example, if we observe a rabbit at time t_1 eating dandelions on our lawn under a tree and lying on its back, and then at a later time t_2, we see the same rabbit inside our house on our table, standing on its hind legs, we can recognize that the rabbit in our house is the same one we observed on our lawn at t_1. Moreover, if we could not recognize objects as the same at a later point in time, we would not be able to change our behavior towards it. But this is what we constantly do. For instance, when we see a rabbit on our lawn at t_1 and see it again at a later point in time at t_2, our reaction to it should be the same at t_1 and at t_2 as our interaction with the world should trigger the same response if there is no internal representation of that rabbit available. Yet, we react differently to that rabbit at t_2. For instance, we might feed the rabbit a dandelion at t_2 because we saw it eating dandelion at t_1. If we were to just blindly react to our world, this would not be possible. We are only able to change our behavior once we represent the rabbit at t_2 as the same rabbit we have met at t_1.

Because we can change our behavior towards the same object and since we are able to recognize an object as the same object even when it changes configuration, location or orientation, I claim that we are able to represent an object as the same object. Yet, if we are able to represent an object as the same object, we represent objects as something. If we represent an object as something, we have content. Thus, the second reason to assume that our cognition needs content is object recognition.

The third case, which is indicative of memory traces having content and our brain not being able to make do without content, is the case of agnosia. Technically, it is an extension of the second argument. While I

have explained that we are able to recognize an object as the same object and thus have to assume that there is content present, this argument does not only apply to sameness as content but to us usually linking meaning to the input we get and with this giving our input content.

People with agnosia have some physical impairment in their brain. This impairment makes it hard or even impossible for them to give meaning to specific input they get (Banich & Compton, 2018, 500 ff.). For instance, while someone with agnosia might see an apple, they might not be able to tell that they are seeing an apple. For them, the visual information of seeing an apple is meaningless. It does not come with any content. People with a non-impaired brain, in contrast, do not have this problem. They see an apple as an apple. Therefore, I suggest that giving the input we get content is our brain's default reply to input. On top of that, there is further evidence which is indicative of us representing input as something and cognition having content. It is the fact that agnosia comes in different forms. To name only a few, there is prosopagnosia, the inability to recognize faces as such, the inability to recognize human voices as such and to distinguish between them, the inability to recognize printed words as such, the inability to identify a sound as such (for instance, recognizing the honking of a car as honking of a car) and category specific agnosia. Category specific agnosia only applies to specific categories. Someone with category specific agnosia might, for example, not have any problems with recognizing animals as such but might have severe problems with recognizing fruit as such (Banich & Compton, 2018, 500 ff.). If people with agnosia have a deficit in recognizing input to such a specific extent, the input they got must have been stored in the lesioned area. To store input in a specific area in the brain, however, there must have been some sorting of the input into a specific category such as 'noise' or 'fruit'. If we sort the input we get into specific categories, we need to represent the input we have as something. Otherwise, we would not be able to sort. If we see the input we get as something, we need content again. This is why the third reason why memory traces should be seen as having content is the case of agnosia.

The fourth case, which is indicative of memory traces having content and our brain not being able to make do without content, is the case of vision reconstruction. Technically, it is an extension of the third case. In the third case, I have considered what lesioned brain areas can tell us about the question of whether cognition needs content. In the fourth case, I will consider what a non-lesioned brain tells us about content.

Vision reconstruction was first done by UC Berkely (2011) researchers. They have successfully generated videos of what people have seen on a screen by carefully monitoring brain activation while being shown a video and reconstructing this activation into a video based on the very brain activation being present while watching the video. For further reference, feel free to refer to UC Berkeley (2011).

Specific different areas of the brain were, for example, active when it came to specific local features such as edges, color, motion, and texture. This means that we store the input we get to such a reliable extent that others can reconstruct what we have seen by reading our individual brain patterns. If this is possible, our brain sorts the input we get into specific categories to store it at specific brain areas. Yet, if it does so, it needs to represent the input we get as something (for instance as that color or as that edgy form) and with this, we have content again.

I have provided four examples which support the claim that our brain usually represents the input it gets as something and that it thus works with content. Spreading activation, agnosia, object recognition, and visual reconstruction demonstrate the brain's typical reliance on content, although it may demonstrate some functionality without it; its operation is predominantly content-oriented. However, as it works with content, I claim that radical enactivism is wrong in the claim that cognition does not need content. It may not need content in a strictly logical necessary way, but we usually work with content generated by our brain sorting the input we get. This also helps us to solve the hard problem of content. Content does not come from our environment but from our brain.

How human beings are different

In the last section, I have given a possible solution to the hard problem of content. Moreover, I have claimed that even though cognition might make do without content, this is not how we work. While we might not need content in a logical necessary way, we still work with content. Yet, beings such as crickets seem to be able to interact with the world in a sophisticated way without having content. In what follows, I will introduce cases of mechanisms being able to interact with the world in quite sophisticated ways even though they do not work with content. Subsequently, I will show how they differ from us and give a possible explanation for why they are able to interact with the world without content while our cognition continues to need content. While we can adapt our behavior, to learn from the interaction with our environment and to avoid making mistakes in the future, contentless organisms cannot do this. This is why they can make do without content. As long as we want organisms which are able to adapt to their goals though, we need content. Therefore, I claim that radical enactivism does not apply to human beings.

Apart from the already introduced example of crickets, there are further examples of organisms interacting with the world in quite sophisticated ways without content involving cognition. These organisms are Brooks' (1990) behavior-based robots. They are based on a bottom-up approach. Behavior-based robots rely on simple stimulus-response mechanisms without one central executive. They interact with their environment on the basis of these simple mechanisms and in quite sophisticated ways that is (Rodney Brooks and Bottom-Up Robots, 2011). These robots seem to show goal-directed behavior even though their interaction with the world stems from non-goal directed behaviors.

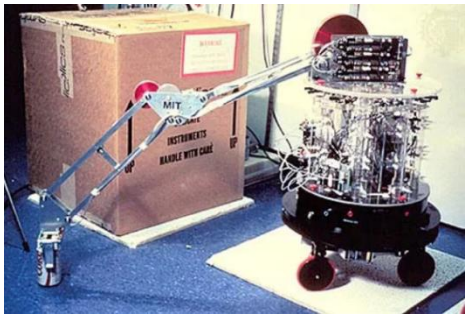

Figure 2

Figura 3

For instance, robot Herbert (depicted in Figure 2[4]) runs around in offices and collects empty soda cans. For this, it scans its environment for hinderances. Once it senses a soda can, it extends its arm, equipped with simple sensors and grasps the soda can (Brooks, 1990). For an impressive showcase of its abilities, feel free to refer to Mechanimal (2010).

Herbert is able to avoid obstacles, follow a wall, recognize a soda can, move its arm into the right orientation to grasp a soda can, search for the soda can, locate it and pick it up (Brooks, 1999).

Brooks' Packbot (depicted in figure 3[5]) is even able to interact with its environment in a more impressive way. It is used as a surveillance device in war areas in which it would be too unsafe to send a soldier into. Packbot can explore its environment autonomously, flip itself over. If necessary, climb stairs and go into communication range in an uncontrolled environment. That is, the Packbot does not need someone to clean up before it enters an area. It can interact with its environment and climb possible hinderances itself even if the terrain should be highly

[4] Figure 2: Robot Herbert, from: Copeland, 2014.
[5] Figure 3: Robot Packbot, Defense update, 2007.

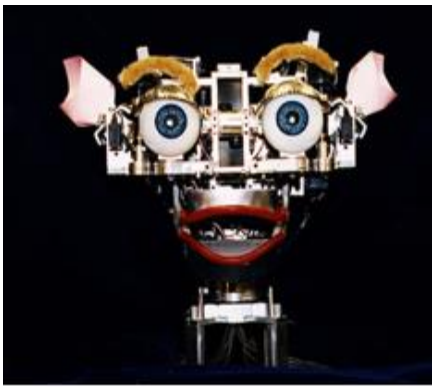

Figure 4

Figura 5

inaccessible (TED, 2009). A video demonstration of its behavior can be found at TED (2009). The robot Kismet (depicted in figure 4[6]) can interact with a human being via emotional, facial expressions and words. Its facial features include eyebrows, eyelids, and a mouth. It can mimic expressions analogous to anger, fatigue, fear, disgust, excitement, happiness, interest, sadness, and surprise (Brooks et al., 1999). Kismet's interaction with a human being is surprisingly life-like. When Kismet is told that he has done something wrong, he reacts convincingly upset. Kismet has also been found to have a 25-minute-long conversation with a researcher in the lab. For a video demonstration of this conversation and its emotional responses, feel free to refer to TED (2009).

The two-armed collaborative robot with an animated face Baxter (depicted in figure 5[7]) shows even more surprising behavior. Baxter is able to sense human beings and to interact with them via its animated face. As it senses human beings, it is safe to work around Baxter without getting into accidents with it as Baxter will stop what it is doing once it senses that it might collide with a human being. Baxter's animated face makes it

[6] Figure 4: Robot Kismet. From: Geo, 2023.
[7] Figure 5: Robot Baxter and Rodney Brooks Create, 2018.

easy to predict its behavior as it gazes into the direction it will move to. Baxter's two arms enable it to sense its environment and to move objects from one place to another. It can also be trained to make specific movements with its hands by people manipulating its arms (CNBC International TV, 2015). For a peak into how Baxter interacts with its environment, feel free to access CNBC International TV (2014).

Herbert, Packbot, Kismet, Baxter and many more examples show that even though their cognition seems to be contentless as their behavior is only controlled by sensors and certain behaviors as reactions to the world pre-programmed within them, their behavior can be interpreted as quite sophisticated. Yet, I have claimed that we human beings might be able to interact with the world in quite sophisticated ways but simply do not do so. This leaves us with the question of where the difference between us and them might be found.

Herbert might be able to interact with its environment in quite sophisticated ways, but only once following one specific goal, the collection of soda cans in its case remains a feasible goal. A possible world in which it is asked to collect glass bottles will stop it from interacting with the world in a quite sophisticated manner. This even applies to Baxter who is able to acquire new hand movements. If its task was to now find soda cans, it could not do it. The only way for them to be able to achieve these new goals would be re-programming. Fortunately, human beings can do that for them. However, human beings cannot be that easily reprogrammed. If their goal changes, they need to adapt to their changed environment and change behaviors without external help. Human beings are able to do so. Human beings are able to learn from the interaction with their world, change their goals and to also change their behavior towards their environment in a more sophisticated manner than behavior-based robots. The difference between them and behavior-based robots is that they use content to interact with the world. Thus, I suggest that radical enactivism only applies to organisms which cannot adapt their goals. If organisms are able to adapt their goals, their input needs content. Radical enactivism does not apply to human beings.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have presented arguments against radical enactivism, asserting the necessity for extending content beyond linguistic boundaries to avoid an overly restricted definition of cognition. Additionally, I have demonstrated that while humans, akin to other beings, may have the capacity to interact with their world without content, in practice, they seldom do so. Supporting this assertion, I have referenced spreading activation, object recognition, agnosia, and visual reconstruction. Furthermore, I have provided examples of beings capable of sophisticated interaction without content, highlighting their dependency on unchanging goals. In contrast, human beings can maintain sophisticated interactions even when their goals change, suggesting a connection to the use of content in cognition. This implies that radical enactivism is applicable only to beings with unchanging goals, a scenario seldom observed in our dynamically evolving world.

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EATING A KINDER BUENO TO SHIFT FOCUS AWAY FROM DISCONTENTS

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Abstract: Drawing on both Anglo-Saxon and continental phenomenology, this text analyzes the impact of affordances and sensorial content on sub-doxastic processes by investigating the experience of eating a kinder bueno in order to distract oneself from one's discontent(s). More specifically, I provide an analysis of how the perceived kinder bueno's impoverished content—nonconceptual and sensory—are used in order to generate conscious perceptual content that redirects one's attention away from one's discontent(s) and toward the pleasure of tasting and consuming the kinder bueno.

Keywords: self-awarness, self-image, affordances, emotional eating.

1. Proposal for a dialogue

My analysis is solely concerned with cases when one eats a treat, e.g., a kinder bueno, in order to temporarily redirect one's attention away from one's discontent(s); I limit my analysis to emotional eating so as to reach a wider audience concerned with the perception-self relationship. Also,

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my focus is only on one's experience of eating rather than on the hedonic consequences that occur after the treat's consumption.

No matter if one explicitly or implicitly intents to redirect one's attention away from discontent(s) by consuming something delicious, if one intends to do so, then one executes the following: when eating something with the aforementioned intent, one places one's attention on that something because it is pleasant and, thereby, it makes it easier to keep one's attention averted away from discontent(s) and it also, simply by being pleasant, decreases the intensity of recently occurred unpleasant experiences. If diverting one's attention is successful, this modification of one's lived experience need not itself be consciously generated. However, one can consciously intend its occurrence and facilitate it by buying the kinder bueno and redirecting one's attention.

In diverting attention away from one's discontents, with the intention to no longer experience them, one tacitly edits one's lived experience such that one deceives oneself that one's discontent(s) no longer occur, or perhaps had never even occurred. This is much like self-deceiving that you are a confident person, i.e., you feel and believes that you are confident without being able to be so and, thereby, you miserably fail when trying to showcase your confidence. In this article, I analyze the proccess of editing one's lived experience by using Susanna Siegel's concepts of impoverished contents and rich contents.

In point of content, my analysis is not interested in the precise duration and intensity of the lived experience of eating a kinder bueno in order to redirect one's attention away from one's discontent(s). Instead, I am interested in the process that enables one to temporarily alleviate discontent(s) by or in disregarding them. The pleasant object available to redirect one's attention towards does not have to be something to eat; it can be a classical song or the activity of swimming; the core features of the general process do not change depending on what pleasant object is chosen. Therefore, my analysis would not be substantially affected by choosing another example than that of a kinder bueno. The reason for focusing on one example and for choosing that of the kinder bueno is that

emotional eating provides a fairly simply example of a lived experience that is directly accessible to me because I experienced it. In some cases, redirecting attention fails; such cases are irrelevant here, since this article aims to analyze the process when it does unfold, editing one's lived experience.

In point of method, I compare and synthesize Siegel's (2010, 87-96) method of phenomenal contrast by which one abductively chooses between multiple hypotheses that explain phenomenal differences (e.g. between a kinder bueno experienced as blissful and one that is not), and Husserl's (2012, 51-61, 190-138) method of phenomenological reduction and analysis of essences, of meticulously analyzing the phenomenal contents of a blissfully experienced kinder bueno without falling into unwarranted assertions regarding its phenomenal and ontological contents.

2. The kinder bueno's rich and impoverished contents

In reference to perception, the term rich contents denotes those contents that are not "spatial properties, color, shape, motion, and illumination" (Siegel 2010, 3), which usually feature among impoverished contents. I will use the term impoverished contents to denote those contents that belong to an object's perception but originate exclusively from the percieved object itself. If perception has rich contents, then abstract contents such as "personal identity, causation, and kinds of objects" are not external to perception (Siegel 2010, 3), but part and parcel of perception as such. In contrast, as Siegel writes: "If the Rich Content View is false, then the contents of associative agnosics' visual experiences may be no more impoverished than those of the rest of us" (Siegel 2010, 13).

The term affordance, as I understand it in its most general sense, denotes all the properties of an object that allows any agent to interact with that object in certain manners (e.g., motor, sensory, affective, intellectual, etc.). In the kinder bueno case, I will apply the term

affordances only to those properties of the kinder bueno that allow humans to consume it (e.g., grabing, eating, feeling pleasure, feeling beatitude).

The Kinder Bueno, a hazelnut filled wafer biscuit, affords a perceptual experience with both impoverished contents, such as color, shape, taste, texture, etc., and rich contents. Such rich contents include: the tacit ascription of this set of impoverished contents as constituting a unitary object named "kinder bueno", the kinder bueno's ability to be situated in cause-effect relationships, the tacit ascription of categories to it (such as being tasty, sugary, or being a snack). For the relevant rich contents to be generated, raw sensory experience needs to be incorporated into a rich, conceptualized perception.

Rich contents of the experience of eating a kinder bueno often include, in turn, several of the following: 1. one's sensory-physiological appraisal of the kinder bueno as relaxing, 2. one's hedonic appraisal of the kinder bueno as tasty, pleasant, and as an object to be sought for, and 3. one's affective appraisal of the kinder bueno as soothing and bliss inducing. I will focus only on aspects of how eating a kinder bueno helps one forget one's discontent(s).

3. What is the conscious experience of eating a kinder bueno?

In order to have a unitary flux of conscious experience, a subject of experience must be able to unify previous mental states (objects of retention) with its present contents (primary impressions) and with one's anticipation of what shall soon arrive (protention). This enables a subject's experience to persist in time as one's total lived experience (Husserl 2012; Zahavi 2010).

How to separate eating a kinder bueno from experiences that co-occur? Consider sneezing while eating the kinder bueno. The eating experience is briefly interupted by the sneeze. However, if one is not interested in the experience of eating it per se, but in the entire series of

events that shape how one feels while eating it, then one can include the sneezing experience as belonging to the kinder bueno eating experience. Hence, one can distinguish in the flux of conscious experience between experiences that co-occur with other experiences, cause the occurence of other experiences, or are constitutive contents of other experiences. Depending on one's specific object of analysis, one will have to consider different portions of one's flux of consciousness as co-occuring, causing, or constitutive. This is not to say that anything goes in the metaphysics of phenomenal parthood. That methodology drives metametaphysics' borders on platitude: different analyses will carve the same total phenomenal experience differently.

In my analysis of the kinder bueno experience, I will consider, as constitutive to it those sensory and affective contents that are about the kinder bueno (e.g., its taste and texture, the hedonic enjoyment). I will furthermoreconsider causally relevant conscious states such as, e.g., the intention to buy a kinder bueno and the first motor movements that materialise one's intent of buying it). And I will leave aside co-occuring mental states that are neither constitutive nor causally relevant, e.g., sneezing while eating the kinder bueno or solving a mathematical equation while eating it. The motivation for which one eats a kinder bueno (e.g., you are worried about an exam or you do not afford anything else to eat) determines whether that kinder bueno eating experience falls within the scope of my analysis or not. For instance, the experience of eating a kinder bueno because you do not afford anything else to eat is irrelevant here because I am concerned only with cases in which one eats a kinder bueno in order to temporarily redirect one's attention away from one's discontent(s).

4. The method of phenomenological reduction

I will use Husserl's (2012) method of phenomenological reduction and analysis of essences. This involves 1. the suspension (epoche) of any

ontological assertions regarding the mind-independent existence of oneself and objects (transcendental reduction), 2 .the selection of that quale to be analyzed, and 3. the identification of those properties that make that quale be itself and no other, i.e., the detection and analysis of a quale's traits. The first step is key; if one introspects or analyses without suspending such ascriptions, then one could infer at least one false conclusion in analyzing or introspecting a conscious experience (Husserl 2012, 51-61, 110-138). Without the epoche, one's access to phenomena is tainted by implicit ontological ascriptions.

Husserl's method is similar to Siegel's (2010, 87-96) phenomenal contrast method. Both arrive at descriptions of conscious experience through conceptual analyses grounded on an experience's phenomenal traits, and they do so without being grounded in introspection (Siegel 2010; Husserl 2012). The phenomenological analysis of essences does not ground its results in introspection, but on meticulous analyses and the identification of those phenomenal contents and dynamics that are both necessary and sufficient for these phenomena to be the very phenomena that they are. Phenomenology, so conceived, does not require an intense focus on what content is introspectively available, but the identification of those consciously experienced contents that are indubitably true for any mind that has sufficiently analyzed it.

The divergence between Siegel's and Husserl's method is that Husserl's method, unlike Siegel's phenomenal contrast method, does not involve a competition between hypotheses and does not require the selection of a contrast experience (Siegel 2010, 87-96). The dilemma between the introspectionist and the phenomenal contrast view posed by Siegel might be a false dilemma. For the risk of giving conceptual primacy to introspection in content identification is to focus, in a naïve manner, on phenomenal qualities that do not warrant intersubjectively relevant conclusions. However, introspection plays a positive role in phenomenal analysis when used as a supplement to conceptual analysis; it is crucial for this conceptual analysis to be grounded in phenomenal contents without being diverted away by assumptions regarding the ontological

status of phenomena. Methodologically, the phenomenological tradition provides a way out of Siegel's dilemma by fine tuning the proportion between increasing one's conscious access to phenomena and inferring descriptions by analyzing the accessed phenomena.

5. Correlations between the kinder bueno's impoverished and rich contents

Phenomenological reduction brackets what is inaccessible in conscious experience. Phenomenally accessible contents thus become more salient. Attention to them more easily lumps them into a whole, a unitary experience that is part of one's total flux of consciousness. This also applies to the experience of eating a kinder bueno.

Impoverished contents of the experience of eating a kinder bueno always include the following:

a. its color: a brown or white external coating and brown or white cream,
b. its shape: two sticks segmented into distinct sections,
c. its motor contents: easy to carry, grab, and chew,
d. its gustatory contents: sweet and permeated by aromas that correspond to those of hazelnut and milk or of white chocolate and milk,
e. its texture: slightly crunchy at the exterior, but creamy on the interior. The kinder bueno's creamy texture leads to a more intense gustatory experience since the cream fills one's mouth. The intensity of the creaminess impacts its hedonic appraisal if (and, I suggest, only if) one enjoys that creaminess degree more than another person. Because it depends on one's preferences, there is no objective correlation-rule between creaminess and enjoyment. The impact of the absence, intermittence or continuous presence of its creaminess can impact the kinder

bueno eating experience differently depending on one's tastes. Often, the creaminess of one kinder bueno bite can fill your mouth and this filling's impact depends on one's subjective appraisal. The perceptually given kinder bueno has rich contents too: tasty, sugary, relatively cheap, and so on. These rich contents depend on one's subjective appraisal of the kinder bueno's impoverished contents. Therefore, the specification of rich contents below is not applicable to all people, but only to those that experience the kinder bueno as an object that elicits pleasure. However, I limit the scope of my analysis to the following:

i. its gustatory sensory contents that induce relaxation,
ii. its hedonic contents that are experienced as pleasant and sought for,
iii. its affective contents that are experienced as joyful or blissful.

The kinder bueno's impoverished and rich contents interact in many ways. One's appraisal of the kinder bueno as relaxing is motivated by impoverished contents such as its taste and texture and by rich contents such as those originating in the hedonic appraisal of the kinder bueno as tasty, pleasant, and as an object to be sought for, sought partly by anticipating it to lead to a lived experience of bliss. Anticipation is prompted by previous experience; the current experience reinforces it.

In the experience of eating a kinder bueno to temporarily redirect one's attention away from one's discontent(s), sensory and affective mental states feed on each other: the felt pleasure increases one's joyous mood and one's joyous mood intensifies the felt pleasure. A feeling can trigger a mood and then subside leaving the mood take over. The impoverished contents comprising the perceived kinder bueno influence the intensity and quality of one's affective and mental state. For instance, if the kinder bueno lacks (enough) cream, then the desired sensory and affective mental states might no form. Whether affective intensity is proportional to creaminess depends on one's subjective tastes. For some people, maybe it is not the cream, but crunchiness that affective intensity

is commensurate to. The precise properties of the kinder bueno that elicit a specific person to bestow on it a positive appraisal are irrelevant because, for each person, different properties of the kinder bueno elicit pleasure.

External factors such as hunger, sadness, and being in a hurry can impact the enjoyment derived from eating a kinder bueno. Such factors can either hinder one's enjoyment or potentiate it. Being hungry or sad might make one feel a more intense release from negative mental states when eating it and, hence, a higher increase in hedonic appraisal than if one ate it while calm and not hungry. However, if sadness temporarily diminishes one's ability to derive pleasure from food, then that lived experience is no longer within the scope of my analysis.

The kinder bueno has affordances that incentivize you to add rich contents to its impoverished contents such that you satisfy your cravings; whether these cravings are satisfied either by mere physiological relaxation or their satisfaction includes a feeling of being special, it is irrelevant, all that matters is that this lived experience redirects one's attention away from discontent(s) by using the kinder bueno's impoverished contents. Examples of such affordances are: being edible, easily grabbable and chewable. Indeed, many edibles have these properties; this only shows that my analysis may generalize. The kinder bueno's affordances, due to its shape, size, and texture incentivize you, in order to gain instant gratification to add more positive hedonic and affective rich contents to the perceived kinder bueno than if the kinder bueno was slippery and dirty. One might get instant gratification and redirect one's attention away from one's discontents in other ways, e.g., drinking coffee, listening to Mozart, or swimming. Unlike these, eating a kinder bueno involves affordances and contents present only in sweet treats. No matter the specific object or activity chosen, if it facilitates redirecting one's attention away from one's discontent(s), then the just analyzed interplay between rich contents and impoverished contents may hold for those lived experiences as well, even if the precise rich contents and impoverished contents differ.

6. Being distracted isn't forgetting oneself

The correlations outlined show that the kinder bueno's impoverished contents (its color, shape, handling, taste, texture) impact its rich contents (its hedonic and affective value); sensory input, via rich contents, changes one's emotional state so as to increase one's felt wellbeing and security.

Eating a kinder bueno involves gratification, which leads to redirecting one's attention away from one's discontents. Eating a kinder bueno brings relaxation to the senses and bliss to one's feelings. Relaxation and bliss are blended in order to produce a gratifying conscious experience. Gratified, you temporarily feel as if your discontents impact you less or not at all. The positive hedonic value of its taste adjoined with having one's attention redirected away from discontents leads to a temporary feeling of wellbing and security. (This might backfire once the experience is over, but that aftereffect is external to the experience itself.)

The pleasure had in tasting, the feeling of being absorbed by or immersed in the experience of eating a kinder bueno and the feeling of getting what you sought for must be rich contents. This is because, if these were impoverished contents accessible to all people no matter their preferences, then everybody on the planet would love kinder bueno and would eat it to forget their discontents.

While eating a kinder bueno to temporarily feel as if one's discontents impact one's life less, one also feels a temporary decrease in those negative affective or physiological state(s) caused by one's discontent(s), including a decrease in one's implicit negative self-image. For the very experience of having a decreased negative self-image to occur, one has to have a minimal acquaintance with one's self, otherwise, one would not be able to do anything at all; if one literally forgets one's self, then one is no longer, literally, oneself. Therefore, what I describe here is an experience of being distracted, not of literally forgetting oneself. When distracting oneself from a minor inconvenience, for this distraction to be effective, it has to include, a distraction from a specific state that

one's self is in and that concerns one's self-image. This image is part of oneself onlyif the term "oneself" is used to denote not a first-personal manner in which experiences occur, but rather one's personality, habits, and ambitions.

The mind's subtle contribution to the kinder bueno's perceptual contents occurs by using the kinder bueno's impoverished contents as prompt for the coherent addition of rich contents that ascribe to the perceived kinder bueno a positive gustatory, hedonic, and affective value. The kinder bueno is an object to be bought and eaten so as to secure pleasure – so, rich affective phenomenal contents are grounded in object affordances.

Temporarily decreasing one's negative self-image is possible because pleasure hijacks one's attention away from other concerns. It does so twofold, both because we shift attention to what we find pleasant (which attracts us) and because of the sheer sensory intensity of the pleasure. Both involve self-image because it is the subject of experience who feels intense pleasure, and that same subject who attends to it in enjoyment.

7. A shift in focus

The experience I analyze is one in which one eats a kinder bueno in order to postpone one's concerns by shifting one's focus on something else that is pleasant and which, by its very pleasantness, leads to a brief decrease in or temporary release from unpleasant mental states; this decrease or temporary release can be intermittent while the experience unfolds; this intermittence may be insignificant across the kinder bueno eating experience as long as the shift in focus and distraction persist.

By shifting one's focus, I mean a shift in the content placed in the foreground of one's conscious experience. This shift can occur voluntarily or involuntarily, e.g., the voluntary case of focusing on a math problem

versus the involuntary case of turning one's head due to hearing a loud noise. The latter is the case during the emotional eating of a kinder bueno or whatever object captivates one. The choice to eat the kinder bueno is voluntary, however, the distraction that occurs while eating it is not. When one hears beautiful music, one is drawn towards it because the notes impact one's mind such that it puts the notes in the foreground of one's conscious experience.

Similarly, in emotional eating, the deliciousness of the food makes one's mind to place in the foreground those mental states correlated with the experience of eating the delicious food. As long as the food's taste and texture put the emotional eating experience in the foreground, contents unrelated with the food's deliciousness will be left unattended or cast toward the periphery of one's conscious attention. Thus, by eating something delicious, one experiences a distraction from negative mental states (e.g., worries, anxieties, and unhappiness) that can range from minor concerns to life-changing events, i.e., ranging from trivial annoyance to medium-level difficulties, the weight of past events or life-changing events. The strength of the hedonic value of the gustatory experience will determine whether the distraction will be effective only against minor issues or against life threatening situations (most likely, a kinder bueno is not powerful enough to annihilate the fright felt when one is pursued by the mafia).

8. Conclusion

The case I analyzed is drawn from my own experience and it sufficiently captures traits that are applicable to emotional eating in general; this does not mean that it applies to all cases and that I always have the same experiential states while I am emotionally eating a kinder bueno. The kinder bueno experience that I had multiple times is intersubjectively relevant because it discloses that one's global conscious experience in

emotional eating includes both impoverished and rich contents. Impoverished contents enable the addition of rich contents that serve to temporarily divert one's attention away from discontent(s). Describing this often tacit attentional dynamic is intersubjectively relevant because it provides a starting point for spotting those moments in which one finds the means to edits one's lived experience; not only that, it also allows one to spot the types of rich contents added and the likely motivations behind their addition. Part of this article's therapeutic function is to show that the nonconscious, or at least what is left unattended and we are distracted away from, is less elusive, in concrete situations, than usually conceived.

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