

# The State of Knowing

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The goal of this paper will be to defend two rather controversial theses proposed by Timothy Williamson. The tactic will be to provide an independent argument and structural model for them, which can be found in a previously existing philosophical theory, namely, William James' theory of cognition. Williamson's theses are the following: 1) knowing is a prime, factive mental state and 2) knowledge explains justified true belief and not the other way round.

Opposing Williamson's view is what I will term the "traditional position" on the nature of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> It states that *knowing* is a composite of an internal mental state and an external truth about the world. Some traditional theorists hold that a causal connection between the external fact or state of affairs and the corresponding internal mental state is necessary - the idea being that the former causes the latter. This means that knowing is a metaphysical hybrid, as Williamson calls it, and the traditional theorists hold that it is precisely this fact about knowing that allows for its factivity. Knowing is always of something that is true, and this is solely due to the fact that there is a component of knowing which is some fact or truth about the world, to which one's belief (or some type of thought at least) corresponds. The typical way of formulating the traditional position is to claim that knowledge is a special case of belief; more specifically, it is a justified true belief. This traditional view in epistemology has seen many challenges throughout the history of the debate - most famously by the ever popular Gettier scenario. As I am going to assume that any reader of this essay is already versed in the Gettier scenario I will not cover it in detail but will make a brief mention of it later in an attempt to draw out a valuable aspect of Williamson's position.

Implicit in the traditional position is what I will term the *compositional thesis* which holds that knowing can be analyzed into both a mental component and a non-mental component. In the traditional analysis of knowledge a case of knowing is *composed* of a belief and a corresponding truth. My contention is that Williamson's main argument for establishing the first thesis fails, but that the thesis is still correct. That is to say, knowing is a prime, factive mental state. Thus, the traditional analysis of knowledge is inaccurate. I will not be taking the same line of attack as Williamson in my attempt to defend his thesis but instead will attempt to show that, the thesis that knowing is a mental state, can be found as a positive account and not a critical argument in William James' theory of cognition. While Williamson's efforts are concentrated on demonstrating the falsehood of the compositional thesis, my strategy will be to show that knowing is a mental state by giving a positive account of what knowing is in terms of a person's cognitive relation to the world.

## Williamson's Strategy

Both the traditional theorist and Williamson agree that knowing is factive - a quality which is supposed to differentiate knowing from other types of mental states such as believing, judging, guessing, wishing and so on. The difference between Williamson's position and the traditional position is that the traditional theorist concludes that since knowing is factive it is thus not merely a mental state. Whereas Williamson, I think rightly, holds that this conclusion does not follow. For Williamson, knowing is the most general factive mental state one can be in. The fact

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<sup>1</sup> Williamson refers to this position more specifically as internalism about mental states. He claims that this position holds the view that mental states supervene upon the total internal physical state of the agent.

that one is in some factive state such as, seeing or remembering entails that one is in a state of knowing. In other words, other factive mental states entail a more general factive state and the most general factive mental state is knowing.<sup>2</sup>

This general factive state which is entailed by other factive states such as seeing, remembering and regretting cannot be analyzed into simpler terms – it is unanalyzable. The state of *knowing that such and such is the case* which one is in, solely in virtue of being in a factive state like remembering, has no components. It cannot be broken down into a simpler, more basic state with the addition of some truth, as the traditional theorist would hold (i.e. *believing that such and such is the case*, in conjunction with, the *fact that such and such is the case*). Knowing simply does not factor into components at all. The idea that Williamson is teasing out here is what he calls primeness.<sup>3</sup> Knowing, like seeing and remembering, is a prime state and it is this quality of primeness that gives knowing its fundamental role within epistemology. It is the most basic mental state – a state which other mental states, such as believing, guessing and hoping can be defined in terms of. Now, the traditional position is the view that knowing factors into more basic components, namely, belief and truth; and if Williamson is correct and knowing does not factor, then what exactly is the relation between knowing and these so-called components? How far off is the traditional position?

Williamson claims that believing truly that something is the case is entailed by knowing that it is so. However, as he also points out this does not imply that truth and belief are *constituents* or *components* of knowledge. For Williamson, knowing that *P*, entails a true belief that *P*, but this is merely a fact about the logical relation between these two concepts; and to draw the conclusion that knowing is some kind of metaphysical hybrid is fallacious. It simply does not follow that if *x* and *y* are necessary conditions for *z* that *x* and *y* are actual components of *z*. Being a necessary condition for something is not the same as being a metaphysical constituent of it. That something is colored and has spatial extension are necessary conditions for its being red, however it does not follow that its being colored and that it has spatial extension are components of its redness. The two in conjunction with each other do not necessarily constitute something red. They could just as easily be necessary conditions for something's blueness. A necessary condition is a logical notion, whereas being a constituent of something is a metaphysical notion - a point that has been established rather well in current epistemological debates.

I said earlier that I would briefly mention something about the Gettier scenario in the hope of clarifying a point of value in Williamson's view. It turns out that adopting Williamson's view allows one to ignore the Gettier problem altogether. If the relation between knowing and justified true belief is stated as a bi-conditional, as it is by the traditional theorist, then the Gettier case is a counterexample to this relation. However, the question still remains as to what entailment there actually is, if any, between each case. The Gettier case is a case of justified true belief that is not

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<sup>2</sup> Williamson is very specific about this point. He states, "...the claim that knowing is a state of mind is to be understood as the claim that there is a mental state being in which is necessary *and sufficient* for knowing *P* [where *P* is any proposition]." (2000).

<sup>3</sup> Primeness is actually defined in terms of a composite condition. Williamson states, "A condition *C* is composite if and only if it is the conjunction of some narrow condition *D* with some environmental condition *E*. *C* is prime if and only if it is not composite" (2000).

a case of knowing, but that is irrelevant to our purposes since we are not interested in analyzing justified true belief. We want to know about the necessary conditions for knowing not for believing truly. Whether or not there happen to be some cases of justified true belief that turn out not to be cases of knowing is completely irrelevant to the purpose at hand. The important claim is that all cases of *knowing* are justified true belief cases, not that all justified true belief cases are cases of knowing. Held as a standard objection to the traditional theorist's position the Gettier argument is only problematical if the traditional position is stated as a bi-conditional. Moreover, even if the traditional position is not stated as a strict bi-conditional, the only conditional that is relevant to an analysis of *knowing* is the statement for which the Gettier scenario can be ignored. The important point here is that for Williamson, if *S* is a case of knowing, then *S* is de facto a case of believing truly. There is an entailment here and it is precisely that knowledge entails justified true belief and never the other way round. This constitutes a reversal of explanation which is a valuable feature of Williamson's view. Once we abandon the traditional position we are free to replace the bi-conditional relation between justified true belief and knowledge with a unidirectional relation, where knowledge about something serves as the explanans and belief the explicandum.

One of Williamson's central arguments for primeness is designed to show that if knowing is a composite (mental component + non-mental component), then we should in principle be able to recombine the components of one case of knowing with the components of a similar but distinct case of knowing and get a third distinct case of knowing. Williamson is essentially claiming that there should be some kind of recombination procedure for these cases if they are factorizable. In other words, if a case of knowing can be analyzed in terms of its constituents, then it seems logical to suppose that we can interchange the components of distinct cases, like-for-like with each other and still have a case of knowing. The principle at work here is what Williamson terms *free recombination* and he claims that the traditional position assumes this principle or something like it. The idea is that something that has components to it can be broken down into those components and analyzed in terms of them. If knowing is constructed in such a way, then any case of knowing can be broken down into its components.

Now, if two items, whose internal components are identical with one another, can be broken down into their basic components, then it is feasible that the internal components can be swapped with one another and the items can be reconstructed without any significant change to either. Any two cases of knowing that are internally alike, that is to say, whose internal components (mental states) are identical, in theory, should be interchangeable. In other words, if in two cases  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ , *S*'s belief that 'water is wet' supervenes upon his total internal physical state and *S*'s total internal physical state for both  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  is identical, then both cases are said to be internally alike. If the external state of the environment is such that water is wet in both cases, then it can be said (on the traditional account) that *S* knows that water is wet in both cases, since *S* has a true belief in both  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . The question Williamson wants to ask is what would happen if we change like parts for like in multiple cases? Do we still get a case of knowing? Williamson's argument for primeness centers on this idea of interchangeability.

Williamson demonstrates with several examples that any recombination will never yield a new case of knowing, thereby showing the traditional position to be false. One specific example taken from *Knowledge and its Limits* will suffice for conveying the general idea. The scenario runs as

follows. In three different cases a subject S is told by both Smith and Brown that the election was rigged. The first two cases differ only by the fact that the roles of Smith and Brown have been reversed. The third case, constructed from the first two cases is internally like the first and externally like the second. The cases are as follows.

### Case 1

S believes truly that Smith is trustworthy and that Brown is untrustworthy.

*Result:* S knows that the election was rigged.

*Mental Component*

S believes that Smith is trustworthy and that Brown is untrustworthy

*Non-Mental Component*

Smith is trustworthy and Brown is untrustworthy

### Case 2

S believes truly that Smith is untrustworthy and that Brown is trustworthy.

*Result:* S knows that the election was rigged.

*Mental Component*

S believes that Smith is untrustworthy and that Brown is trustworthy

*Non-Mental Component*

Smith is untrustworthy and Brown is trustworthy

### Case 3

S believes falsely that Smith is trustworthy and that Brown is untrustworthy.

*Result:* S does not know that the election was rigged.

*Mental Component (Case 1)*

S believes that Smith is trustworthy and that Brown is untrustworthy

*Non-Mental Component (Case 2)*

Smith is untrustworthy and Brown is trustworthy

In all cases the mental component is the subject's belief that either Smith is trustworthy and Brown is untrustworthy or vice versa, and the external non-mental component is either the fact that Smith is trustworthy and Brown untrustworthy or vice versa. Now, if knowing is believing truly, then the first two cases are cases of knowing, since S believes truly in both cases (i.e. he trusts the trustworthy source and distrusts the untrustworthy source). How about the third case? Here S fails to have knowledge, since he trusts the untrustworthy source and distrusts the trustworthy one, that is, he does not believe truly. Given the principle of free recombination the third case should also turn out to be a case of knowing since knowledge is factorizable. However, this does not happen. Williamson concludes from this that knowing is prime or non-factorizable, since in the recombination the third case failed to give us a new distinct case of knowing.

Prima facie this argument looks valid and it looks like Williamson is building a strong case for the primeness of knowing. However, as Anthony Brueckner has shown in his essay "Williamson on the Primeness of Knowing" there is a very good reason for not accepting this argument.

Brueckner is keen to point out that what he terms a “Gricean Factorizer” (i.e. the traditional theorist who accepts a causal theory of perception) would have predicted that the third case will not turn out to be a case of knowing, since in the recombination Williamson is omitting the causal relation between the external truth and the internal belief about that truth. Simply recombining the components of a hypothetical case of knowing with another will not suffice to show that knowing is not a metaphysical hybrid. In each example that Williamson constructs, a causal theorist would agree that the third case is not a case of knowing, since he would hold that it is a case of knowing only if there is some causal connection between the external and the internal component as there is in both of the first two cases. It is not simply the fact that these two components are present that determines whether it is a case of knowing, but that a certain causal relation obtains between the two, namely, that the external non-mental component is causally prior to the mental component.<sup>4</sup> As this relation is completely neglected by Williamson he is essentially building a straw man to argue against, and as Brueckner points out the traditional theorist would be perfectly comfortable in agreeing with Williamson that the third case is not a case of knowing.

In both the first two cases the traditional theorist would assume that there is some specific reason for the fact that S believes one to be trustworthy and the other to be untrustworthy. It is not fair to just assume that these beliefs simply popped into the subject’s head and coincidentally fit with the external facts of the matter. We must assume that S believes that Smith is trustworthy because there must at least be something in Smith’s past actions that played some kind of causal role in determining S’s belief about him. Why else would S have such a belief? The same goes with S’s belief that Brown is untrustworthy. However, in the third case the reason why S believes what he believes can be nothing like the reasons he had for his beliefs in the first two cases. What causal connection is there between Smith’s past actions establishing him as a trustworthy person and S’s belief that he is not? This incongruity in the third case strains plausibility greatly.

I find Brueckner’s objection to be absolutely correct and a serious problem for what is probably one of Williamson’s most important arguments for primeness. Despite this fact it is still my contention that knowing is not factorizable and that Williamson’s main thesis is correct. Just because the argument fails does not mean that the conclusion is false. However, we might profit from changing tactics here and instead of showing that the compositional thesis is false, give a separate, positive account of the thesis that knowing is a mental state. Without the argument for primeness Williamson’s thesis remains unsupported. In order to show that knowing is merely a mental state, it must be demonstrated that it is not composite. We will find such support in William James’ theory of cognition.

### **James’ Theory of Cognition**

For James, *knowing* is the most basic, cognitive mental state.<sup>5</sup> Cognition, and consequently knowledge, gets its foothold on reality through sensation, something that James would call ‘knowledge-by-acquaintance’, or simply ‘acquaintance’. From this basic acquaintance relation a cognitive agent can build what we can call propositional knowledge about the world, though it is

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<sup>4</sup> See Grice’s causal theory of perception.

<sup>5</sup> The similarity between this claim and Williamson’s thesis helps motivate the comparison of the two philosophers.

not immediately obvious how this can be done. The following excerpt from James will articulate this idea in a more detailed manner.

Now it is to be observed that the common consent of mankind has agreed that some feelings are cognitive and some are simple facts having a subjective or, what one might almost call a physical, existence, but no such self-transcendent function as would be implied in their being pieces of knowledge. ... We are only to ask, How comes it that common sense has assigned a number of cases in which it is assumed not only to be possible but actual? And what are the marks used by common sense to distinguish those cases from the rest? ... Let us... suppose... [a feeling]... attached to no matter, nor localised at any point in space, but left swinging in vacuo, as it were, by the direct creative fiat of a god. And let us also, to escape entanglement with difficulties about the physical or psychical nature of its "object," not call it a feeling of... any... determinate sort, but limit ourselves to assuming that it is a feeling of *q*. ... Now, if this feeling of *q* be the only creation of the god, it will of course form the entire universe. ... Well now, can our little feeling, thus left alone in the universe... be said to have any sort of a cognitive function? For it to know, there must be something to be known. What is there, on the present supposition? ... For the feeling to be cognitive in the specific sense, then, it must be self-transcendent; and we must prevail upon the god to create a reality outside of it to correspond to its intrinsic quality *q*. ... If now the new-created reality resemble the feeling's quality *q*, I say that the feeling may be held by us to be cognisant of that reality. ... Now obviously if our supposed feeling of *q* is (if knowledge at all) only knowledge of the mere acquaintance-type, it is milking a he-goat, as the ancients would have said, to try to extract from it any deliverance about anything under the sun, even about itself. ... Now, our supposed little feeling gives a *what*; and if other feelings should succeed which remember the first, its *what* may stand as subject or predicate of some piece of knowledge-about, of some judgment, perceiving relations between it and other *whats*, which the other feelings may know. The hitherto dumb *q* will then receive a name and be no longer "speechless". But every name, as students of logic know, has its "denotation"; and the denotation always means some fact, or content, relationless *ab extra*, or with its internal relations unanalysed, like the *q* which our primitive sensation is supposed to know. No relation-expressing proposition is possible except on the basis of a preliminary acquaintance with such "facts," with such contents, as this. Let the *q* be fragrance, let it be toothache, or let it be a more complex kind of feeling, like that of the full-moon swimming in her blue abyss, it must first come in that simple shape, and be held fast in that "first intention," before any knowledge about it can be attained. The knowledge about it is *it* with a context added. Undo *it*, and what is added cannot be context. (James, 1885)

So, acquaintance with an object through sensation is the seed from which future knowledge about that object grows. What James has expressed is thus far a very standard, empirical realist view about the role of experience in acquiring knowledge about the external world. Where James' view deviates from the norm is in his identification of knowledge-about as simply another state further along in the mental stream which has incorporated a previous thought or feeling from a previous state. In the example there is no representational content to this raw feeling of *q* but it does give us the *what* of the cognition; that is, it can be at least loosely associated with

some external reality. The feeling is cognizant of something outside itself only if it has a quality to it that resembles the object or property that it *knows*, or *cognizes*. In other words, if a feeling is actually of some reality external or opposed to that feeling itself (whether mental or physical), then it is cognizant of that reality. We can say that it *knows* that reality. For James, knowing is thus an ultimate relation which cannot be analyzed or broken down into simpler terms. So, to be acquainted with some object in the world is to be cognizant of that object and thus, to know that object; and this is purely at the level of sensation that we are talking about thus far.

Now, strictly speaking we do not want to say that we have knowledge in this case, since we want to reserve the term ‘knowledge’ for something with the propositional form (e.g. ‘Sally knows that *P*’, where *P* is any proposition). We do not just want to explain knowledge-by-acquaintance in our theory of knowing, but more importantly we want to explain knowledge-about. The propositional knowledge that something is the case is what we are after here. James’ thought experiment is meant to illustrate the point that this simple knowledge by acquaintance of some thing in the world becomes the knowledge about that thing once a context is added. But what exactly does this mean? It means that when one feeling succeeds an earlier feeling and remembers it, the *what* of the first feeling can then serve as the subject or predicate of the second which we can then give a name to and use to form some knowledge about it.<sup>6</sup> Another example will help further elucidate the general idea.

Suppose person A sees and is thereby cognizant of a bowl of grapes on a table in front of him. Now if he had never seen a grape nor even heard the word ‘grape’ this would be an experience of something quite new. However, there would still be for him the experience of being acquainted with the bowl of grapes through the visual sensation. As it stands he is not able to do anything with this cognition since it is merely a raw acquaintance. As soon as something is added however, to his experience of the bowl of grapes, he is in a position to cognize something more than simply what he is acquainted with in sensation. For example, let us say that at some later time person B refers to the bowl of grapes by saying, “those are seedless grapes” and provides person A with a very detailed description of their appearance, such that person A is aware of what person B is describing. Person A now has some knowledge-about, namely, that those objects are called grapes and that they are seedless. The original raw feeling of the initial acquaintance experience has been given a context in his stream of thought; specifically it is now serving as the subject upon which something is being predicated. This knowledge-about of the grapes is not wholly independent of the first acquaintance experience. It is a development of the first cognition given through the visual sensation of seeing the actual grapes. The thought [these things are called grapes and they are seedless] is new knowledge-about, but of the same object of the first cognition. The new thought remembering the first cognition develops a context for it which creates the possibility of even having the propositional knowledge that something about the grapes is true. This is a greatly simplified example designed to show this point: Any cognition that is a case of knowing something about some object necessarily refers to a previous cognition of an acquaintance with that object. For James, this is a psychological law that essentially describes the function of cognition.

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<sup>6</sup> The term ‘what’ here is slightly unclear, but what James means by this is simply that nameless quality of the first intention of an acquaintance experience. It is equally acceptable to use any demonstrative expression such as *that* or *it* or even *lo!* to capture James’ meaning here.

So how does this account allow us to make the claim that knowing is a prime, factive mental state? What is the connection between this phenomenological description of a thought process and Williamson's goal of undermining the traditional analysis of knowledge? Well, here again we can borrow from James, since for James all mental states are prime; that is, they are single unified acts of cognition. Consequently for James, knowing (along with every other mental state) technically has no components to speak of. In the first instance of acquaintance-with we had one single, unified mental state characterized by the specific sensations of the object. The pertinent question is: What changed when we acquired knowledge about the object that would make us claim that our 'knowing that particular fact about the object' is not a mental state as it was in the first instance? We stated that the *knowledge-about* is the very same *acquaintance-with* feeling, only with a context added to it. Thus, it follows that this new case of knowing, if it was a mental state to begin with must still be a mental state after the context is added. Another feeling simply succeeded the first which took the first as the subject of it, thereby creating the context for the propositional knowledge that something is the case. The crucial point here is that there is no difference in kind between acquaintance with some external reality, as a cognizance of that reality, and knowing something about that very same reality. They are both prime, factive mental states. They are both single unified acts of cognition that constitute a state of knowing.<sup>7</sup> One possible objection the traditional theorist may make here is the following. How is James' view making the argument against the compositional thesis when he explicitly states that there is an external object that corresponds to a particular thought or feeling which is in turn, cognizant of that object? Isn't James in fact, making the argument for the traditional position? On his account, knowing does not seem to be prime, but has at least one internal and one external component which are necessary for it to be a case of knowing.

While it is true that James does hold that there must be something external to the feeling or thought itself for that feeling or thought to be cognizant of it, there is a further point that must be emphasized to make this clear. For James, as for Williamson, that *P* is true and that one's thought is about *P* (at least at some time) are necessary conditions for knowing that *P*. However, as was stated earlier, there is an important distinction that needs to be made between what counts as necessary conditions for something and what counts as metaphysical constituents of it. Knowing that *P*, entails that *P* is true and that one's thoughts (at some point) are about *P*. Thus, they are necessary for knowing that *P*. But we cannot draw the conclusion that they are metaphysically constitutive of *knowing* that *P*.

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<sup>7</sup> Some may object to my use of the term 'cognition' as a straight-across equivalence with 'knowing'. This objection will no doubt come from the field of cognitive science and perhaps from some new schools of thought in philosophy as well. For the contemporary cognitive scientist, cognition amounts to information processing and cognitivists have their own very peculiar view of how the mind functions at the information-processing level. I only have to go back to the historical use of the term by someone like William James to demonstrate that in its ordinary language usage it meant nothing remotely close to what the cognitivists hold it to mean. In fact, it did indeed mean 'to know' or 'to be aware of' or 'to be acquainted with'. I believe there is ample justification for the use of this term in the manner I have selected. Furthermore, the cognitive scientist has some serious elaborations to make if he wants to hold that cognition is merely information processing. My cell phone processes information, as does my eye or the thermostat in my house, the laptop I am writing this essay on and the sensors in my automobile. However, I do not think we would want to claim that any of these cases is a case of cognition. Perhaps the cognitive scientist would be perfectly happy doing so, but then he has definitely failed to make the distinction between acts of human cognition and these other cases.

James' point about a feeling which corresponds to something external to itself is meant merely to establish the cognitive relation as being one between the world and the mind. For that relation to develop into a *knowing* relation a successive mental state must occur which incorporates the first feeling. The *knowing* that takes place in the successive mental state is a furtherance of the first feeling alone and nothing more. It is not a composition of the external object (or fact about that object) with a thought; rather it is the mental state which occurs as the result of the development of that feeling. If the first cognition, be it purely an acquaintance with some physical object, is a mental state, and it is non-compositional, that is, it is a single unified act of cognition; and all mental states are essentially formed the same way, that is, they are the result of a single unified act of cognition, then any succeeding mental state which is a development of the first must also be a non-compositional mental state. Now, any thought which is the furtherance of some previous factive mental state, if it is also factive, constitutes a state of knowing.

James' view allows us to claim that knowing is a mental state by showing that awareness of objects is cognition of those objects and subsequently serves as the basis for any future knowledge about that object.<sup>8</sup> With this view in mind we are now in a position to restate the second thesis and show how it follows from the first. The second thesis was the claim that knowledge explains justified true belief not the other way round. Since knowing is the most basic, cognitive function, believing something to be the case cannot provide us any explanation for why we should also know it to be the case. Instead of defining a case of knowing in terms of another mental state (e.g. believing) and its correspondence to something factual, we hold that something is a case of knowing only if it is a case of actual cognizance of something factual. Therefore, knowing that something is the case explains why we are justified in believing it to be the case. Now, the fact that something is truly the case must be determined independently from any examination of which type of mental state we are in, since it depends solely on the facts of the world. If person A at time *t*, knows that the grapes are seedless, it may not be the case that he knows that he knows that the grapes are seedless. However, this fact is irrelevant to the issue of whether or not he is in a prime mental state at time *t*, since knowing is not transparent to the agent.<sup>9</sup> In fact, he is in such a state and it is factive, if the grapes are seedless.

The reversal of explanation comes from the second thesis which forces knowing into playing the fundamental role that believing plays for the traditional theorist. The traditional theorist, in this case, would hold that person A is in a belief state and, if what he believes is in fact true, then he has knowledge. The Williamson-James thesis holds that person A is in a prime mental state, which, if the grapes are in fact seedless, is a factive one. Such a state is the state of knowing. Determining whether or not one is in such a state is a separate matter and must be carried out through independent means.

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<sup>8</sup> Obviously there is room here for the skeptic to enter into the argument and claim that our awareness of any object might simply be an awareness of the appearance of some object and thus may not be a reliable source of any knowledge about that object. However, it is important to remember that both Williamson and James, at least implicitly, hold a disjunctivist position on the nature of perception.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note here that both Williamson and James emphatically deny the claim that in order to be in a state of knowing one must be in a position to know that they are in such a state. Knowing is not a transparent state to the agent and one is often not in a position to know that they know. See Williamson's "Anti-luminosity" argument.

The most important objection that the traditional theorist would raise here is something like the following. Even if we agree that a simple case of sensory awareness or an acquaintance relation with some physical object is a case of knowing, and concede that since it is a cognition of that object it is a mental state, it still does not address the point that what characterizes knowing is its factivity. Since, in both Williamson and James' theory, the direction of explanation has been reversed, aren't we simply begging the question as to whether or not a case of knowing something about some object of awareness is actually a case of knowing as opposed to a case of believing, or guessing? If we regard a case of knowing as a mental state that is cognizant of some truth, then we have merely circumvented the problem of how knowing is factive at all. The traditional theorist at least explains the fact that knowing is factive by claiming that it is a hybrid of some mental state in correspondence with some truth. It seems that Williamson and James are merely saying that knowing is factive, because that is what knowing is. Where is the explanation for *why* it is factive?

It is true, that James and Williamson are saying that knowing is factive simply because that is how we should regard knowing, namely, that mental state which is factive. However, assuming a disjunctive and causal theory of perception one is warranted in making such a claim. If cognition is, at its simplest level, an awareness of something external to oneself and this awareness is factive it can only be so because what we are aware of is actually the case. Otherwise, we would not be aware of what we think we are aware of and consequently would not know it to be the case. And claiming that we simply regard knowing as that mental state which is cognizant of some fact is not obviating the problem of how knowing is factive; it is simply expanding on what we already assume from a realist position on sensation and the function of cognition.

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