

KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE

The ‘modest’ theory of knowledge defended in Timothy Williamson’s book Knowledge and its Limits is compared here with the theory defended in the author’s articles ‘How knowledge works’ and ‘Knowledge and self-knowledge’. It is argued that there are affinities between these theories, but that the latter has considerably more explanatory power.

§1 I want to discuss two claims Timothy Williamson defends in his book, Knowledge and its Limits: first, that knowing is a mental state (6); and second, that ‘one’s total evidence is simply one’s total knowledge.’ (9)¹ In due course, I shall examine both of these claims in detail. For the moment, I shall add a few sentences, to convey an impression of what they are supposed to mean.

The first claim, that knowing is a mental state, contrasts knowledge with true belief. For in Williamson’s view, believing truly is not a mental state: it is ‘the combination of a mental state and a non-mental condition.’ (28) For example, Tom’s believing truly that lemons are sour is a combination of Tom’s believing that lemons are sour, which is a mental state, and lemons being sour, which is a non-mental condition. Admittedly, Tom cannot know that lemons are sour unless this non-mental condition obtains. There is no difference in this respect between knowledge and true belief. But unlike believing truly, knowing cannot be analyzed or ‘factored’ into a combination of mental states and non-mental conditions. This is what the claim that knowing is a mental state is mainly intended to convey.

The second claim, that one’s total evidence is simply one’s total knowledge, involves the idea that an individual has a stock or fund of evidence, which can guide her assessment of hypotheses. This includes every piece of evidence a person can avail herself of, without regard to any particular hypothesis she may be considering at any particular time, rather as her kitchen contains every ingredient she can make use of, without regard to any particular dish she may be preparing at any particular time. Williamson uses the phrase ‘total evidence’ to refer to this stock of evidence, and his claim is that it is equivalent to the sum total of what the individual knows. Equally, a community has a

stock of evidence which can guide its assessment of hypotheses, and this is equivalent to the sum total of what it knows.

Thus [Williamson writes] a hypothesis is inconsistent with with the evidence if and only if it is inconsistent with known truths; it is a good explanation of the evidence if and only if it is a good explanation of known truths. One's evidence justifies belief in the hypothesis if and only if one's knowledge justifies that belief. (9)

Taken together, these claims are intended to turn traditional epistemology on its head. The first is meant to rule out the traditional view that Tom's knowing that lemons are sour is a combination of Tom's believing that lemons are sour, lemons being sour, and some other condition or conditions, such as Tom's being justified in believing that lemons are sour. The second is meant to show that the justification of belief can be partly explained in terms of knowledge itself. Williamson puts it like this:

The proposed account uses the concept of knowledge in partial elucidation of the concepts of evidence and justification. To some people it will therefore seem to get things back to front. For although knowledge is more than justified true belief, many philosophers still expect to use concepts such as evidence and justification in a more complex explanation of the concept knows ... That order of explanation has been reversed ... (185)

§2 There can be no doubt, therefore, about the importance of these claims, if they are true. And I shall not contest them. Properly understood—and qualified, perhaps—I believe they are both true.² But it is natural to wonder why. In particular, it is natural to wonder what kind of mental state knowing can be, if the second claim is true. If knowing really is a mental state, it should be possible to show that the equation of a person's total evidence and her total knowledge is explained by the kind of state it is.

Compare colours. Rightly or wrongly, many philosophers have equated an object's colour with the colour it appears to have to standard observers in standard conditions. For example, it is said that an object is red if and only if it looks red to standard observers in standard conditions. But it is natural to wonder what kind of

property being red can be, if this equation is correct. One familiar answer, of course, is that being red is having the disposition to look red to standard observers in standard conditions.

I do not want to endorse these claims about colours—either the equation or the claim about what kind of property a colour is. But I want to point out two things. The first is that if the equation is correct, the claim that colours are dispositions to look a certain way to standard observers has at least this to be said in favour of it, that it shows how the equation could be explained by the kind of property a colour is. For example, if being red is having the disposition to look red to standard observers, the equation between being red and looking red to standard observers follows immediately. Secondly, if we accept the equation without being able to explain it in this way, then unless we have good reason to believe that an explanation of this kind is unattainable, we ought to feel that there is something missing from our understanding of colour.

The same applies in the case of knowledge. If we accept that a person's total evidence and her total knowledge can be equated, then we ought to ask ourselves what it is about knowledge, what it is about the kind of condition knowing something is, that explains this. And if we find ourselves unable to answer this question, then we ought to feel that there is something missing from our understanding of knowledge. Perhaps it could turn out that the question is unanswerable; that the feeling that something is missing is misplaced; and that we can only approach the equation from the other end, and say what it is about evidence that makes it true. But there is no reason to anticipate this theoretical dead end.

Williamson does not say what it is about knowledge that explains the equation, and I should like to propose an explanation of my own. The explanation, I suggest, is that knowledge is an ability: the ability to be guided by the facts. Since the facts we are guided by are the facts that are our reasons, this means that knowledge is the ability to do things, or refrain from doing things, for reasons that are facts. The phrase 'do things' is to be understood very broadly, so that it includes acting, intending, believing, doubting, hoping, wanting, and so on. So, if this theory is right, a person knows that p if and only if the fact that p is one of the facts she is able to take into consideration. Or better, since that way of putting it intellectualizes knowledge too much, if and only if the fact that p

can be among her reasons for performing a certain kind of action or for refraining from performing a certain kind of action; for believing or doubting or hoping or wanting something; or for not believing or doubting or hoping or wanting something; and so on.

If this is right, it is not difficult to see how the equation Williamson defends, between a person's total evidence and her total knowledge, should be explained. For if, as we ordinarily suppose, evidence consists of facts, a person's total evidence is the sum total of the facts that can guide her assessment of hypotheses. And if knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts, the sum total of the facts which can guide a person's thought and behaviour in general, and which can guide her assessment of hypotheses in particular, is the sum total of the facts she knows. Hence, the equation between a person's total evidence and her total knowledge is simply the result we obtain by considering how the general theory of knowledge I have proposed applies to the particular case of assessing hypotheses, as opposed to acting, intending, hoping, wanting, and so on.

§3 I shall now examine Williamson's claim that knowing is a mental state in detail. As I have said, I believe this claim is true. But the first chapter of Knowledge and its Limits is dense and difficult, there are several problematic details in Williamson's exposition, and it takes some careful work to determine exactly how the claim is best understood.

Williamson's conception of a mental state is not one that philosophers uniformly share. He says that paradigmatic mental states include love and hate; pleasure and pain; believing, hoping or fearing that something is so; and intending or desiring something to be so. According to some conceptions of a mental state, this is a surprising list.³ But the use of the term 'mental state' is partly stipulative, and so we find different conceptions of a mental state in philosophical writings. We need to consider what Williamson's conception of a mental state is—in other words, how he uses the term 'mental state'—before attempting to decide whether his claim, that knowing is a mental state, is true.

I shall begin with Williamson's conception of a state. To understand this, it is helpful to consider what Williamson contrasts states with. For it is obvious, for example, that a philosopher who contrasts states with abilities or dispositions will not have the same conception of a state as one who includes an object's abilities and dispositions among its states. And this difference may lead to apparently conflicting claims. For

example, one philosopher may claim that solubility is a state while another claims that it is not. I say apparently conflicting claims, because these different claims may only reflect a terminological disagreement, a disagreement in the use of the term 'state'.

Williamson's use of the term 'state' is a broad one. He contrasts states with processes; and he explains this contrast by distinguishing between two classes of verbs: those which have, and those which do not have, progressive tenses (35). For example, the verbs 'kill', 'knit', 'learn', and 'prove' have progressive tenses: 'is killing', 'was knitting', etc. Whereas the verbs 'know', 'believe', 'be able' and 'be blue' do not have progressive tenses. We can say that a child is learning how to multiply or that a cat was killing a bird; but not that a child is knowing how to multiply or that a cat was being able to kill a bird. Verbs of the first class are said by Williamson to stand for processes; verbs of the second class are said to stand for states. Thus, killing and knitting are processes; whereas knowing and believing are states.

As I have said, this is a broad use of the term 'state'; but it is a well-established use and I shall follow it.⁴ Some philosophers prefer to say that being gaseous is a state, but being volatile is not; or that being depressed is a state, but being prone to depression is not. Others prefer to call all of these conditions states and to distinguish between states of different kinds. In the present context, this is unimportant. What matters is that knowing is certainly a state, in the sense Williamson prefers.

§4 So much for states in general. We now need to consider which states are mental. Williamson's approach to this problem is unconventional. He does not claim that rationality or consciousness or intentionality is the distinguishing mark of a mental state. Instead, he defines the concept of a mental state as follows:

The concept mental state can at least roughly be defined in terms of the concept mental concept of a state: a state is mental if and only if there could be a mental concept of that state. (28)

However, this definition raises more questions than it answers. First, Williamson does not attempt to define the concept mental concept. He explains that if the concept C is the conjunction of the concepts C_1, \dots, C_n , then C is mental, in the sense of 'mental' that he has in mind, if and only if each C_i is mental (29); and also that non-mental

concepts in the content clause of an attitude ascription do not make the concept expressed non-mental, in this sense (29). But the significance of the term 'mental' here is taken as understood. This is puzzling, since one might think that if the meaning of the term 'mental' in the phrase 'mental concept' is being taken as understood, the same goes for the term 'mental' in the phrase 'mental state'. But in that case the definition of the concept mental state in terms of the concept mental concept seems to be otiose.

Second, Williamson suggests that a concept is mental only if it 'makes ... reference to a subject' (30). Presumably, a subject is a sentient or conscious being. But the phrase 'makes reference to' is not glossed or explained. It seems improbable that a concept which makes reference to a subject is one that only applies to sentient or conscious beings, because this would imply, paradoxically, that the concepts thought, feeling and mental state itself are not mental concepts, since they apply to thoughts, feelings and mental states, but not to the beings that have them or are in them. Perhaps a concept which makes reference to a subject is merely one that involves the idea of a sentient or conscious being in some way; although the concept of an ear, an eye, a word, a sentence, a law, a nation, a parliament and a church all satisfy this condition. But we cannot be sure. In short, it is unclear what 'makes reference to a subject' is supposed to mean.

Third, Williamson appears to hold that the concept believed is a mental concept (30). Certainly, it involves the idea of a sentient or conscious being. But although the verb 'believe' does not have progressive tenses, being believed is not a mental state. As Williamson says, 'a sense of "mental" is reasonable if it is sufficiently close to an ordinary sense of the word in important respects.' (28) The same is true in the case of 'mental state'. But the idea that a proposition can be in a mental state is too outlandish to accept; and it is unclear how this result is to be excluded. We could stipulate that verbs in the passive form cannot be used to attribute mental states; but this would exclude inter alia 'is pleased', 'is frightened' and 'is dismayed'.

Finally, if we set the difficulty presented by the passive form aside, it remains unclear why there should not be a non-mental state of which we can form a mental concept. Indeed there appear to be examples of such states. For instance, suppose we call the non-mental state that causes the sensation of heat in the actual world 'S'. S may, for

example, be a state of molecular agitation within a certain range. It follows that the concept state that causes the sensation of heat in the actual world is a concept of the state S. But state that causes the sensation of heat in the actual world appears to be a mental concept. For it is not a conjunction of concepts some of which are mental and some of which are non-mental. And it certainly involves the idea of a sentient or conscious being in some way. But, by hypothesis, S is a non-mental state. Hence, state that causes the sensation of heat in the actual world appears to be a mental concept of a non-mental state.

In sum, Williamson's definition of a mental state is unsatisfactory. The idea of a mental concept is not clearly explained. And without a clear explanation, it is difficult to see why there could not be mental concepts of non-mental states. I have only mentioned two kinds of example, but there may be more.

§5 Williamson's definition of a mental state is unsatisfactory. But—odd as this may sound—the definition does not play the central role in the argument he presents for the claim that knowing is a mental state. The central role is played by a contrast between knowledge and true belief. He writes as follows:

To call knowing a mental state is to assimilate it, in a certain respect, to paradigmatic mental states such as believing, desiring and being in pain. It is also to contrast it with various non-examples of mental states. (27)

The non-example Williamson has in mind here is believing truly, and he explains why it is a non-example as follows:

Believing p truly is not a mental state, at least, not when p is an ordinary contingent proposition about the external environment. Intuitively, for example, there is no mental state being in which is necessary and sufficient for believing truly that it is raining ... (27)

Even if believing truly is a mental state in some liberal sense of the latter term, there is also a more restrictive but still reasonable sense in which believing truly is not a mental state but the combination of a mental state with a non-mental condition. (28)

These remarks are the key to understanding Williamson's conception of a mental state. But they are not problem-free. First, as Williamson points out, there is no mental state being in which is necessary and sufficient for believing truly that it is raining. But as he implicitly concedes, there is a mental state being in which is necessary and sufficient for believing truly that p when p is a necessary truth. For example, believing that $2+2=4$ is necessary and sufficient for believing truly that $2+2=4$. It is necessary, because there are no circumstances in which someone believes truly that $2+2=4$, but does not believe that $2+2=4$; and it is sufficient, because there are no circumstances in which someone believes that $2+2=4$, but does not believe truly that $2+2=4$. Second—and again, Williamson implicitly concedes this—the same can be said of believing truly that one exists, or is alive. Third, as Williamson suggests, there is a reasonable sense in which Tom's believing truly that it is raining is a combination of a mental state with a non-mental condition. The mental state is Tom's believing that it is raining; and the non-mental condition is that it is raining. But this is not true of Tom's believing truly that he is depressed, because Tom's being depressed is not a non-mental condition.

If there is a useful sense in which believing truly is not a mental state, believing truly that $2+2=4$, or that one is alive, or that one is depressed will not turn out to be exceptions. So the remarks quoted above do not appear to define a restrictive concept of a mental state in a satisfactory way. But having said that, the distinction Williamson wants to insist on, between true belief and knowledge, is not difficult to explain. In effect, it is simply this: the proposition that a subject believes truly that p can be understood as a conjunction of propositions—viz. the proposition that the subject believes that p and the proposition that p—whereas the proposition that a subject knows that p cannot be understood in the same way.

This, I believe, is the substance of Williamson's position, although it should be noted that if we state it in these terms we can no longer claim to be pursuing his stated aim of 'understanding epistemology in terms of the metaphysics of states' (22), since the contrast we have drawn is about propositions rather than states.

§6 Williamson's exposition of his claim that knowing is a mental state is therefore problematic in several ways, and it is doubtful whether there is a coherent interpretation

of the claim which makes it a step towards understanding epistemology in terms of the metaphysics of states.

In effect, however, the claim amounts to this. First, the verb 'knows' does not have progressive tenses: in this sense, knowing is a state. Secondly, whereas the proposition that a subject believes truly that p can be understood as a conjunction of propositions, the proposition that a subject knows that p cannot be understood in this way: in this sense, believing truly is, and knowing is not, the combination of a mental state with a further condition, which is commonly but not invariably non-mental. This leaves the concept of the mental undefined. But perhaps that is okay. The best way to define the mind is probably the traditional way, which is to name and define the faculties of which it is composed, e.g. the intellect and the will. But there is no need for us to embark upon that here.

Williamson does not attempt to prove that knowing is, in this sense, a mental state. However, he does propose what he calls a modest positive account of the concept of knowledge (33), which is that 'knowing is the most general factive stative [propositional] attitude, that which one has to a proposition if one has any factive stative attitude to it at all.' (34) I shall not try to decide whether this account is true. I am mainly interested in comparing it with the theory that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts by considering each of them in relation to the claim that a person's total evidence and her total knowledge can be equated. But a few explanatory comments are in order.

First, the claim that knowing is factive means that the form of inference from 'A knows that p ' to ' p ' is deductively valid. This is almost universally accepted, with good reason. For it follows from the observation that a necessary condition for knowing something is being right.⁵ For example, one cannot know whether the sun sets in the west unless one is right about whether it sets in the west; and one cannot know how tall the Eiffel Tower is if one is wrong about its height. That is why it makes sense to say that someone mistakenly or erroneously believes that something is so, but not to say that she mistakenly or erroneously knows that it is so.

Second, the claim that knowing is stative means that knowing is a state. As we have seen, the claim is therefore true, as long as the term ‘state’ is understood in the broad sense Williamson has in mind.

Finally, the claim that knowing is a propositional attitude can be understood in two substantially different ways, depending on how the term ‘propositional attitude’ is read. The term was originally introduced by Russell to express the idea that believing, hoping, fearing, etc. that something is so are relations to propositions. But more recently it has also been used as a colourless term, under which believing, hoping, fearing, etc. that something is so can be subsumed without prejudice to what they are. In this colourless or non-committal sense, a propositional attitude is simply what a psychological verb followed by a ‘that’ clause signifies, whatever that turns out to be.

Unfortunately, Williamson does not make it clear whether he is using the term ‘attitude’ to mean a relation to propositions. If he is, the contentious question is not so much whether knowing is the most general factive stative attitude as whether it is an attitude at all. Taking the semantic escalator up a floor, it is whether sentences of the form ‘A knows (believes, fears, etc.) that p ’ should be understood as consisting of two singular terms, ‘A’ and ‘that p ’, and a two-place predicate, ‘knows (believes, fears, etc.)’; or whether there is a better way to explain how these sentences are put together.⁶ Since this is a difficult and contentious question, it is safer—or at any rate more charitable—to assume that the relational analysis is not meant to be implicit in the claim that knowing is the most general factive stative attitude.⁷

§7 I shall now turn to the claim that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts. I have defended this claim in detail elsewhere, but I shall introduce it again here.⁸ I shall then comment on Williamson’s views about this theory, and consider whether it is consistent with his own conception of knowing as a mental state. After that, I shall turn to the claim that a person’s total evidence and her total knowledge can be equated.

The general idea that knowledge is an ability can be traced to remarks made by Wittgenstein and Ryle.⁹ Wittgenstein remarks that ‘The grammar of the word “knows” is evidently closely related to that of “can”, “is able to”’; and Ryle says that “know” is of the same family as skill words.’¹⁰ Perhaps the idea was less influential than it would

have been, had it not been associated with Ryle's misguided attempt to show that knowing how to do something—e.g. ride a bicycle or play chess—is equivalent to being able to do it.¹¹ Be that as it may, the idea that knowledge is a kind of ability has received vastly less attention than the idea that it is a kind of belief; and the question of whether it is possible to define knowledge has been mistakenly equated with the question of whether it is possible to define knowledge in terms of belief.

As soon as we conceive of knowledge as a kind of ability, the task of defining knowledge looks very different, and less intractable. For instead of asking what we need to add to believing to get knowing, this new conception of knowledge encourages us to ask how knowledge is exercised or expressed, since this is invariably how abilities are defined. Furthermore, it is not difficult to say how knowledge is exercised or expressed. For example, Pierre's knowledge that it is raining is exercised or expressed whenever a modification of Pierre's thought or behaviour is informed by the fact that it is raining—in other words, whenever the fact that it is raining is one of Pierre's reasons for modifying his thought or behaviour in some way. Generalizing, we can say that someone's knowledge that *p* is exercised or expressed in thought or behaviour whenever the fact that *p* is a reason for which she modifies—or refrains from modifying—her thought or behaviour in some way.

This theory of knowledge can be summarized in the claim that knowledge that *p* is the ability to be guided by the fact that *p*; or simply that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts.

§8 Let me immediately add some clarifying remarks about each of these concepts, beginning with the concept of ability.¹²

An ability is a type of possibility, which needs to be distinguished from other types of possibility, in particular, epistemic possibility, which is consistency with known fact, and circumstantial possibility, which is opportunity. As Kenny points out, both of these distinctions are marked linguistically in English.¹³ All three kinds of possibility are commonly expressed with the word 'can'; but epistemic possibility is also expressed with the word 'may'. Thus, 'Peter may still be in Rome' does not mean that he is able to remain there; it means that for all we know, he is still there. As for opportunities and

abilities, we refer to them differently in the future tense. Kenny's own example is that 'I can speak Russian tomorrow, we have guests coming from Moscow' is correct; but not 'I can speak Russian next spring, I'm taking a beginner's course this fall.' We refer to future opportunities either with 'can' or with 'will be able'; but we refer to future abilities only with 'will be able'.

The distinction between an ability and an opportunity is the easier one to lose sight of, in this context. But is important not to lose sight of it, for if we do, we may imagine that a person has the ability to be guided by a certain fact, without yet knowing it, if it is a fact he can easily ascertain. 'Surely,' we may say, 'Pierre is perfectly able to be guided by the fact it is raining; all he needs to do is look out of the window.' True, but the phrase 'he is perfectly able' refers here to an opportunity. It means, roughly, that Pierre's circumstances make it easy or straightforward for him to do the thing in question. Equally, we may say that if Pierre looks out of the window and realizes that it is raining, he will be able to take this fact into account. But this 'will be able' refers to an ability, and not to an opportunity to exercise an ability he already has. The distinction is not about on how difficult it is or how long it takes to become able to do something. Some abilities can be acquired easily and in moments—e.g. the ability to pronounce the name 'Luigi' or to spell the word 'fruit'. Rather, an ability is something internal to the agent, and a positive factor in accounting for a performance; whereas an opportunity is something external, and may be no more than a negative factor, the absence of circumstances which would prevent a performance or interfere with it. Kenny (again) points out that it is difficult to make the intuitive truth that abilities are internal whereas opportunities are external precise.¹⁴ For example, a broken leg will prevent me from skiing without taking away my ability to ski. But it is clear that acquiring knowledge enlarges our abilities rather than altering our circumstances.

How should the concept of being guided by a fact be understood? As I have said, to be guided by a certain fact is for this fact to be among one's reasons for doing or for not doing something; for believing or doubting or hoping or wanting something; or for not believing or doubting or hoping or wanting something; and so on. This list is not exhaustive. Any verb can be added which can occur in a sentence of the form, 'A's reason for ϕ ing was that p.'

The metaphor of guidance is a familiar one. We speak naturally of being guided by a certain fact when we mean that it informed our reasoning, or that we took it into consideration, when deciding what to think or what to do. (Readers are invited to confirm this for themselves by googling the phrases “guided by the fact(s)”.) But it is also helpful in this context because it points to the similarity between awareness of facts and awareness of things. Think of a cat stalking a bird. The cat’s awareness of the bird is expressed in the way it modifies its behaviour in response to way the bird modifies its behaviour. The bird hops this way, the cat turns this way; the bird flutters across the courtyard, the cat advances a few paces; and so on. In short, the cat’s movements are responsive to, are guided by, the bird. Being guided by the facts is comparable. As Kenny puts it, ‘to know is to have the ability to modify one’s behaviour in indefinite ways relevant to the pursuit of one’s goals’.¹⁵ Whether one is being guided by facts or by things, one’s thought and behaviour is responsive to what one is being guided by. But as Wittgenstein pointed out, this is not like a train being guided by the rails. For the expression of knowledge is infinitely plastic: that is the point of Kenny’s phrase ‘in indefinite ways’. How knowledge is expressed depends on one’s aims or purposes: that is the point of the phrase ‘relevant to the pursuit of one’s goals’. Above all, being guided by the facts is not passive and constraining, any more than reading is, although the reader’s thought (if she is reading silently) or speech (if she is reading out loud) is guided by the words she sees on the page.

It is helpful to see Kenny’s remark in full. Knowledge, he says, is ‘an ability of a unique kind’; but he doubts whether it is possible to say anything very definite about what it is an ability to do:

There is no simple way of specifying how knowledge gets expressed in behaviour, and indeed some pieces of knowledge may never affect behaviour at all. The most that we can say is that to know is to have the ability to modify one’s behaviour in indefinite ways relevant to the pursuit of one’s goals.

The theory that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts is simply an elaboration of this idea. The taint of behaviourism here is unnecessary, and needs to be removed, because knowledge is an ability whose exercise can consist in thought, just as well as

speech or behaviour. Apart from this, the main point of elaborating the idea is to explain what unites the limitless variety of things which can express the knowledge that p , as distinct from the knowledge that q —in other words, to show that this approach to understanding what knowledge is allows us to formulate necessary and sufficient conditions for the possession of a particular item of knowledge.

Finally facts. Perhaps facts are simply truths. Perhaps, as Strawson suggests, a fact is what a true statement states.¹⁶ If a fact is simply a truth, and if there are moral and aesthetic truths, then there are moral and aesthetic facts, and moral and aesthetic knowledge is knowledge of these facts. If not, the theory of knowledge defended here may need to be extended; but I believe this would be a relatively simple task. In any event, I shall not attempt to define the concept of a fact. The important fact about facts, for present purposes, is simply that they can be reasons. Every fact, however insignificant, arcane or banal, is potentially someone's reason for doing or for not doing something; for believing or doubting or hoping or wanting something; and so on. It would be tedious to illustrate this with examples; and besides, it is easily proved. For at a minimum, the fact that p is self-evidently a reason for believing that the proposition that p is true, or that the proposition that $\sim p$ is false, or that if p implies q , then q .

§9 Knowledge, then, is the ability to be guided by the facts. We cannot generally connect specific actions and mental acts with specific items of knowledge. In other words, we cannot generally say that a person is able to do x if and only if she knows y . For example, it would obviously be untrue to say that Pierre is unable to cancel a picnic, or to want to stay in, or to decide to travel south, unless he knows that it is raining. But if this theory of knowledge is correct, the fact that it is raining cannot be Pierre's reason for cancelling a picnic, or for wanting to stay in, or for deciding to travel south, unless he knows that it is raining. His reason may be that he believes (truly or falsely) that it is raining, or it may be that it is probably raining, or that it may be raining; but the simple fact that it is raining cannot be his reason.

But is believing truly not sufficient? The answer seems to be that it is not. One simple kind of case is where the fact in question cannot be known. For example, there was no way of knowing in 1997 which team would win the 1998 World Cup. But

suppose Pierre, who is deeply patriotic and has unshakeable faith in the strength of his national team, believed—sincerely and with complete conviction—that France would win. And suppose he placed a bet of 1000 francs on France to win, for this reason. We know now that France was going to win, but we also know that Pierre cannot have known this when he placed his bet. So, what was his reason for placing the bet? If knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts, the fact that France was going to win cannot have been his reason. And this seems to be right. It seems clear that the fact that France was going to win was not Pierre’s reason for placing the bet. His reason was that he believed—sincerely and with complete conviction—that France would win.

This example supports the claim that a certain fact cannot be one’s reason for doing something if one merely has the corresponding true belief. If we consider the cases that pack the literature, in which true belief is supplemented by a justification, or by another condition, but which still do not amount to cases of knowledge, we can confirm that nothing short of knowledge will suffice.¹⁷ I shall mention one example, and leave it to the reader to test the theory against others. This rather dated example—like disco music and the laminated wooden racquet—belongs to a time when the post-Gettier industry was more active than it is today:

Henry is watching the television on a June afternoon. It is Wimbledon men’s finals day, and the television shows McEnroe beating Connors; the score is two sets to none and match point to McEnroe in the third. McEnroe wins the point. Henry believes justifiably that

(1) I have just seen McEnroe win this year’s Wimbledon final.

and reasonably infers that

(2) McEnroe is this year’s Wimbledon champion.

Actually, however, the cameras at Wimbledon have ceased to function, and the television is showing a recording of last year’s match. But while it does so McEnroe is in the process of repeating last year’s slaughter. So Henry’s belief (2) is true, and surely he is justified in believing (2). But we would hardly allow that Henry knows (2).¹⁸

Now suppose that Henry, recalling that his brother backed McEnroe, and stood to win £100, infers that his brother has won £100. Is the fact that McEnroe is this year’s

champion Henry's reason for believing that his brother has won £100? No. His reason is that he believes that McEnroe is this year's champion. We can say truly that Henry believes that his brother has won £100 because he believes that McEnroe is this year's champion; but not that he believes that his brother has won £100 because McEnroe is this year's champion.

§10 These examples, and others like them, support the theory that knowledge is the ability to do or to refrain from doing things, to believe or doubt or hope or want things, for reasons that are facts. Interestingly, Williamson comments on this theory. He writes as follows:

Hyman argues plausibly [that] one knows that A if and only if one's reason for doing something can be that A. But it does not follow that one can explain knowing that A as being able to do things for the reason that A (as Hyman wishes to do). Someone ... who believes truly that A without knowing that A cannot do X_1 for the reason that A, and cannot do X_2 for the reason that A, But a single failure to know explains all these incapacities. If the incapacities constituted the failure to know, the correlation between the incapacities would be an unexplained coincidence.

((64), Williamson's italics)¹⁹

Williamson's objection seems to be this. He agrees that someone knows that p if and only if her reason for doing something can be that p . But he seems to think that her knowing that p cannot be the same state as her ability to do things for this reason, because if they were, the correlation between her ability to do a whole range of different things for the same reason (in the case in which she knows that p) or her inability to do a whole range of different things for the same reason (in the case in which she does not know that p) would be an unexplained coincidence.

I find this objection unconvincing. Of course, explanations vary with the context in which they are given and the purpose for which they are required, with what is assumed to be common knowledge, and so on. But it simply is not true that if the incapacities constitute the failure to know, the correlation between the incapacities will be an unexplained coincidence: it will be explained by whatever explains the failure to

know—the fact that the person hasn't seen this morning's paper, for example. Similarly, if the inability to do crawl, or breaststroke, or doggy paddle, ... constitutes the inability to swim, it does not follow that the fact that someone cannot do crawl, or breaststroke, or doggy paddle, ... is an unexplained coincidence. It is explained by whatever explains his inability to swim—the fact that he grew up in an arid country, for example.

I shall add two further points. First, I mentioned earlier the theory that being red is having the disposition to look red to standard observers in standard conditions. A variant on this theory is that to be red is to have some lower-level property \underline{P} which grounds the disposition to look red to standard observers in standard conditions. (The variant stands to the simple dispositional theory as functionalism stands to behaviourism in the philosophy of mind.) Similarly, a variant on the theory of knowledge I have proposed is that to know that \underline{p} is to have some lower-level property \underline{P}^* which grounds the ability to do things for the reason that \underline{p} . The variant on the dispositional theory of colour allows us to say that an object has a disposition to look red to standard observer \underline{x} , to standard observer \underline{y} , ... because it has the property \underline{P} . Similarly, the corresponding variant on the theory of knowledge I have proposed allows us to say that the individual in Williamson's schematic example is unable to do X_1 for the reason that A , and to do X_2 for the reason that A , ... because he has the property \underline{P}^* . This is not the theory of knowledge that I favour, but perhaps it should not be ruled out.

Finally, a final rejoinder *ad hominem*. Before Williamson expounds his claim that knowing is a mental state in detail, he explains that it is to be understood as the claim that there is a mental state being in which is necessary and sufficient for knowing that \underline{p} (21); and after he has expounded it in detail, he says that he has characterized the concept of knowing uniquely 'up to logical equivalence' (39). Bearing this in mind, his claim that knowing is the most general factive stative attitude should perhaps be understood not as meaning that knowing really is the most general factive stative attitude, but as meaning that there is a most general factive stative attitude, and that having this attitude to the proposition that \underline{p} is necessary and sufficient for knowing that \underline{p} . Now if the claim that knowing is the ability to be guided by the facts is glossed in a similarly cautious way, it will be understood as meaning that the ability to be guided by the fact that \underline{p} is necessary and sufficient for knowing that \underline{p} . I believe we are entitled to make the more ambitious

claim that these are one and the same state, and not two states, which are necessarily conjoined. This is the more parsimonious and to my mind the more plausible alternative. Be that as it may, if there is a convincing objection to it, the more cautious alternative remains available; and Williamson himself appears to accept that it is true.

§11 Is the theory that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts consistent with Williamson's claims that knowing is a factive mental state, and that the concept knows cannot be analyzed?

The first question has a straightforward answer. In the first place, the verb 'be able' does not have progressive tenses. For example, as we noted earlier, one can say that a cat was killing a bird, but not that a cat was being able to kill a bird. Hence, abilities are invariably states rather than processes, in the broad sense of the term 'state' Williamson prefers. Second, the ability to be guided by a certain fact is evidently a factive state. For example, the fact that it is raining cannot be Pierre's reason for cancelling a picnic if there is no such fact. Third, the ability to be guided by a certain fact is an intellectual state, and therefore a mental state par excellence. It is not a combination of a mental state with a further condition. For example, if the fact that it is raining can be Pierre's reason for cancelling a picnic, Pierre's ability to take this particular action for this particular reason does not consist in his ability to cancel a picnic plus the condition that it is raining. Indeed a little reflection shows that if Pierre is able to cancel a picnic, what needs to be added to ensure that the fact that it is raining can be his reason for doing so is that this is among the facts he is able to take into account, i.e. that it is among the facts he knows.

The question of whether the theory that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts is consistent with Williamson's claim that the concept knows cannot be analyzed also has a straightforward answer. In the generally accepted sense of the term 'analysis', the proposition that A knows that p if and only if the fact that p can be A's reason for doing something is evidently an analysis of the concept knows, because it provides necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing that something is so without making use of the term 'know' itself or a cognate term. Williamson's suggestion that 'once "know" and cognate terms have been removed, what remains of our lexicon may be too

impoverished to frame necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing' (31) is therefore false, if the theory is true.

However, this answer needs to be qualified, for as well as claiming that the concept knows cannot be analyzed, e.g. in the remark quoted above, Williamson makes several more cautious but related claims. He describes the attempt to state necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge in terms of belief as 'fruitless' (5). Obviously I have no quarrel with this claim. And he suggests that the concept knows does not have 'a non-trivial analysis in somehow more basic terms' (31); that 'the concept knows cannot be analyzed into more basic concepts' (33); and that the verb 'knows' 'is not synonymous with any complex expression whose meaning is composed of the meanings of its parts.' (34) These claims may not be equivalent; but in any event, the proposition that A knows that p if and only if the fact that p can be A's reason for doing something is consistent with them all.

In the first place, it is presumably a necessary condition, although not a sufficient condition, of one concept's being more basic than another that it is possible to grasp the more basic concept without grasping the less basic concept, whether or not this situation ever actually occurs. It follows, for example, that the concept of a prime number is not more basic than the concept of division. However, as far as I am aware, there is no reason to think that it is possible to understand the proposition that a certain fact can be someone's reason for doing something—and therefore to grasp the concepts needed to do so—without grasping the concept knows. On the face of it, it is difficult to believe that this is possible.

Second, the theory of knowledge I have proposed does not pretend to provide a complex expression synonymous with the verb 'knows'. Nor does it imply that sentences of the form 'A knows that p' and 'The fact that p can be A's reason for doing something' have the same meaning. Indeed, it is obvious that they do not have the same meaning. For example, 'The fact that it is raining can be Pierre's reason for doing something' is not a paraphrase of the sentence 'Pierre knows that it is raining'; and a faithful translation of the second sentence into, say, French will not include the word 'raison' or the phrase 'quelque chose'. What the theory does say is that 'A knows that p' and 'The fact that p can be A's reason for doing something' are logically equivalent; and

that this equivalence is explained by the fact that knowing that something is so and being able to be guided by a certain fact are one and the same state.

For these reasons, it seems that the theory I have proposed is consistent with Williamson's claim that knowing is a factive mental state and also with the relatively cautious claims he makes about the analysis of the concept of knowledge, although it is not consistent with the blunter claims that the concept is unanalyzable (2) or that it 'does not factorize' (33) or that it is unanalyzable in English (31). It is surprising that Williamson makes these blunter claims, given that he accepts my proposal 'that one knows that A if and only if one's reason for doing something can be that A' (64). But as I pointed out earlier, the project of defining belief in terms of knowledge has dominated the field to such an extent that the question of whether this is feasible is commonly equated with the question of whether knowledge can be defined at all.

§12 I shall now turn to the claim that 'one's total evidence is simply one's total knowledge.' (9) As the reader may recall, this involves the idea that an individual, or a community, has a stock or fund of evidence, which can guide her assessment of hypotheses. The claim is that this stock of evidence is the sum total of what she knows. I shall not summarize Williamson's painstaking and convincing argument for this claim, except in the barest outline.

Williamson argues, first, that evidence consists either in true propositions or in facts. Quine's doctrine, that evidence consists in the stimulation of nerve-endings, is therefore false; as is the more popular doctrine, that evidence includes physical objects such as bloodied knives, and experiences, such as perceptions. Equally, if there appears to be evidence in favour of (or against) a hypothesis, but what appears to be evidence is in fact untrue, then at most the counterfactual holds: had it been true, it would have been evidence in favour of (or against) the hypothesis:

If the convincing but lying witness says that the accused was asleep at the time of the murder, then it is part of the evidence for the innocence of the accused that the witness said that he was asleep then. It is not part of the evidence for his innocence that he was asleep. (201f; Williamson's italics)²⁰

Williamson then argues that a person's stock of evidence includes only what she knows. Hence, if she believes truly that something is so, but does not know it to be so, it may appear to her to belong to her evidence, but in fact it does not. This remains true whether the belief is justified or not. For example, suppose a doctor examines several students from the same college who have developed the same range of unusual symptoms. Tests confirm that the first $n-1$ students to be examined are suffering from an infectious disease D , which is known to cause these symptoms. Reasoning probabilistically, the doctor forms the justified belief that the n th student, whose test results have not yet been returned, is also suffering from D ; and as a matter of fact he is. In these circumstances, it is plausible to say that the doctor has evidence that the n th student is suffering from D , but that her evidence remains consistent with the proposition that he is not. But of course her evidence is not consistent with proposition that the first student she examined is not suffering from D . So, how should we explain this difference? The obvious explanation is that although the doctor's belief that the n th student is suffering from D is true and justified, she does not yet know that this is so. As Williamson suggests, the unsatisfied necessary condition for evidence here is knowledge (201).²¹

Finally, Williamson argues that if one is assessing a hypothesis, and knows something which speaks in favour of (or against) it, this is part of one's evidence in favour of (or against) the hypothesis. Hence, the currently unpopular doctrine that evidence must be indubitable is untrue.

The claim that a person's total evidence can be equated with her total knowledge follows from these three conclusions; and Williamson argues for them successfully, in my view.²² I shall not say anything further to defend them here. (I have mentioned the arguments of mine which support them in the notes.) What I shall do, in the final part of this article, is to pursue the question I raised at the beginning. If a person's total evidence and her total knowledge can be equated, what can we say about the kind of state that knowing is, to explain this?

§13 The two views about knowledge we are considering are, first, Williamson's 'modest' account, according to which knowing is the most general factive stative attitude; and second, the theory I proposed, that knowledge is the ability to be guided by

the facts. I shall now argue that only the second view can explain why a person's total evidence and her total knowledge can be equated.

If the theory of knowledge I have defended is correct, knowing that something is so and being able to be guided by a certain fact are one and the same state. Now if we assume that evidence consists of facts, the equation between a person's total evidence and her total knowledge follows straightforwardly. For a person's total evidence includes a certain fact if and only if it is one of the facts that can guide her assessment of hypotheses. And the theory implies that any fact which can guide a person's thought and behaviour in general, and hence any fact which can guide her assessment of hypotheses in particular, is one of the facts she knows. The equation between a person's total evidence and her total knowledge should therefore be obvious as soon as we consider how the theory of knowledge I have proposed applies to the particular case of assessing hypotheses, as opposed to any other kind of thought and action we engage in, which can be guided by the facts.

By contrast, there are several reasons for doubting whether the doctrine that knowing is the most general factive stative attitude can explain the equation between a person's total evidence and her total knowledge. Before I list them I shall make a preliminary point.

The most general factive stative attitude is 'that which one has to a proposition if one has any factive stative attitude to it at all' (34). Hence, if the doctrine can explain the equation, it is because for any factive stative attitude A, a person's having A to p entails that p is part of her total evidence, and the fact that A is a factive stative attitude explains this entailment. So, for example, if remembering that something is so is a factive stative attitude, that a person remembers that a storm was predicted must entail that the fact that a storm was predicted is part of her total evidence, and the fact that remembering that something is so is a factive stative attitude must explain this entailment. And similarly for every other factive stative attitude—and for every other fact.

The first objection is that according to Williamson, not all factive attitudes are stative. He acknowledges that forgetting that something is so is a factive attitude; but he says that it is a process rather than a state (34).²³ Now, if a person forgets that she once visited Peru it does not follow that the fact that she once visited Peru is part of her total

evidence. In this respect, forgetting that one has visited Peru differs from remembering that one has visited Peru. But it is hard to see how the difference between processes and states can account for this difference between remembering and forgetting. And yet it must, if the reason why remembering something ensures that it is part of one's total evidence whereas forgetting something does not is that remembering is a factive stative attitude whereas forgetting, although it is a factive attitude, is not a state.

I do not mean to suggest that we cannot explain why a person's forgetting that p does not ensure that the fact that p is part of her total evidence, whereas her remembering that p does. The explanation is obviously that if a person forgets that p , she no longer knows that p ; if she no longer knows that p , the fact that p cannot guide her assessment of hypotheses; and if the fact that p cannot guide her assessment of hypotheses, it is not part of her total evidence. Whereas if a person remembers that p , she does know that p ; if she does know that p , the fact that p can guide her assessment of hypotheses; and if the fact that p can guide her assessment of hypotheses, it is part of her total evidence. So the explanation is straightforward. But the idea of a factive stative attitude plays no part in it.

Secondly, Williamson argues that believing truly that something is so is not a factive stative attitude: it is the combination of a stative attitude and a further condition, namely, that what is believed to be so is so. Now, that a person believes truly that something is so does not ensure that the fact that it is so is part of her total evidence, whether the belief is justified or not. We saw this when we considered the example of the doctor who believes truly, and with good reason, that the n th student to be examined is suffering from a particular disease. But it is hard to see how the difference between a factive stative attitude and this kind of combination can explain why knowing that p places a fact in one's stock of evidence, whereas believing truly that p does not.

Williamson himself makes one remark which may be intended to address this difficulty; but if so, it is unconvincing. The remark is that 'factive mental states are important to us as states whose essence includes a matching between mind and world' (40)—in other words, states which necessarily involve being right about something. But it is hard to see why being in a mental state that includes a matching between mind and world in its essence ensures that a fact is part of one's total evidence, whereas being in a state which contingently involves a matching between mind and world does not. It is

hard to see why the simple fact of a matching between mind and world—in other words, simply being right about something—is not enough. If we can describe the difference between contingent and non-contingent matching figuratively in terms of possible worlds, the difficulty is that this difference is not about the situation in the actual world, it is about the situation in other worlds; and it is hard to see why the question of whether a fact is part of one's total evidence in the actual world depends on whether the mental state one is in in other possible worlds matches those other worlds.

Again, I do not mean to suggest that we cannot explain why a person's believing truly that p does not ensure that the fact that p is part of her total evidence. We can explain this—in the same way again. The explanation is that if a person believes truly that p , this does not ensure that she knows that p ; but if she does not know that p , the fact that p cannot guide her assessment of hypotheses; and if the fact that p cannot guide her assessment of hypotheses, it is not part of her total evidence. So again, the explanation is straightforward; but the idea of a factive stative attitude is not involved.

The third and final objection encompasses the two we have considered so far. Both of these objections amounted to denying that the fact that A is a factive stative attitude can explain why a person's having A to p entails that p is part of her total evidence, whereas being in some other condition does not. Now it is not difficult to see why A 's being a factive stative attitude cannot provide the explanation. The reason is that the only way of explaining why a person's having A to p entails that p is part of her total evidence is to show that a person's having A to p implies that she is able to be guided by the fact that p . So a 'modest' account, which merely says that knowledge is the most general factive stative attitude, cannot possibly explain the equation between a person's total evidence and her total knowledge, simply because it is more modest than the theory that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts. For 'more modest' here means 'less informative'; and of course even if the less informative description of a state describes it accurately, it cannot imply the more informative one.

It therefore seems reasonable to draw the following conclusions: First, Williamson's modest positive account of the concept of knowledge, viz. that knowing is the most general factive stative attitude, is too modest to explain why a person's total evidence and her total knowledge can be equated. Second, the theory that knowledge is

the ability to be guided by the facts is consistent with Williamson's claim that knowing that something is so is a factive mental state. Third, the theory that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts does explain why a person's total evidence and her total knowledge can be equated. Finally, Williamson's objection to this theory is unsound.

No doubt the theory can be elaborated and refined in various ways. It may even need to be modified—e.g. in the way mentioned in §10. But if we compare the three current approaches to understanding knowledge—the theory that knowledge is a kind of belief, the theory that it is a kind of ability, and the theory that it is an unanalyzable state sui generis whose essence includes a matching between mind and world—the first seems to have run into the sands, and the second seems to be the most promising. As we saw in §§3-5, it is doubtful whether there is a coherent interpretation of Williamson's claim that knowing is a mental state which makes it a step towards 'understanding epistemology in terms of the metaphysics of states' (22); and the idea that knowing is the most general factive stative attitude is too modest to advance our understanding of knowledge very far.

§14 The theories of knowledge we have compared are Williamson's 'modest' account, according to which knowing is the most general factive stative attitude, and the theory that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts. These theories are consistent, but they are miles apart in terms of what they achieve.

To begin with, Williamson's approach is based on the assumption that the concept of knowledge is unanalyzable, whereas the theory that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts implies exactly the opposite, on the most generally accepted understanding of what analyzing a concept is. For it implies that it is possible to formulate necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing that something is so—in simple and straightforward terms—without making use of the term 'know' itself or a cognate term. Thus, A knows that *p* if and only if the fact that *p* can be A's reason for doing or for refraining from doing something. (Remember: doing includes acting, intending, believing, doubting, hoping, wanting, etc.)

This result indicates that philosophers trying to analyze the concept of knowledge ran into a dead end because they were trying to analyze knowledge in terms of belief, and not because the concept is inherently resistant to analysis. It also indicates that

Wittgenstein's and Ryle's thought that knowledge is like an ability or a skill provides a more fruitful basis for understanding what knowledge is than Williamson's goal of 'understanding epistemology in terms of the metaphysics of states.' (22)

Broadly speaking, the difference between Williamson's 'modest' account and the theory that knowledge is the ability to be guided by the facts lies in their explanatory power. The latter theory explains what kind of factive mental state knowing something is; it explains how knowing something gets expressed in thought and behaviour; and it explains the equivalence between knowledge and evidence, which Williamson rightly regards as a fact of central importance in epistemology. By contrast, Williamson's 'modest' account is too modest to explain any of these things. Perhaps one lesson is that modesty is not always the best policy. Like the rational investor, the rational philosopher is not necessarily the most cautious one. The risk/return ratio is what counts.²⁴

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¹ Unless otherwise indicated, parenthetical page references in the text and notes are to this book.

² The qualification would be that when colleges or corporations—legal or artificial persons, as they are called—are credited with knowledge, knowing cannot be regarded as a mental state. I shall ignore this kind of case.

³ Hunter (1980); White (1982), pp.107–11.

⁴ However, it needs fine-tuning. See below, n.23.

⁵ White (1982), pp.74f.

⁶ In my view, there is a better way. See Quine (1960), p.216; Prior (1971), pp.18f. Quine's commitment to objectual quantification, which Prior does not share, prevents him from representing a valid argument of the form 'A believes whatever B believes; A believes that p ; therefore B believes that p ' in the predicate calculus. The relational analysis is also criticized in Rundle (1979), pp.278–306. See also Rundle (2001); Rumfitt (2003).

⁷ However there is some evidence that Williamson does not mean the term 'attitude' to be understood in the colourless or non-committal sense. First, he occasionally uses the term 'attitude to a proposition' or 'attitudes to propositions' instead of 'propositional attitude(s)' (21, 36)—adopting the form of words that Russell originally

used to express the idea that believing and knowing are relations to propositions. Second, he claims that if ϕ stands for a verb signifying an attitude, ‘A ϕ s that p ’ entails that A grasps the proposition that p . (36) This is presented as a claim, and not as a stipulation, but it is false if ‘attitude’ is taken in the non-committal sense. For a verb-phrase of the form ‘is ignorant that p ’ consists of a psychological verb followed by a ‘that’ clause; but if someone is ignorant that something is so, it does not follow that she grasps the proposition that it is so. However, the one remark in which Williamson explicitly mentions the idea that attitudes are relations to propositions is couched in hypothetical terms, perhaps to avoid committing to the idea. (21)

⁸ Hyman (1999) and Hyman (2001). The latter is an expanded version of the former. I have drawn freely on these articles in §§7-9.

⁹ See also White (1982), ch.6. The idea that knowledge is an ability can be traced to Plato, Republic, 477d.

¹⁰ Wittgenstein (1958), §150; Ryle (1949), p.129.

¹¹ See Ryle (1946); Ryle (1949) ch.2, espec. p.41; cf. White (1982), pp.14-29.

¹² The following remarks are entirely derived from Kenny (1975), ch.7.

¹³ Kenny (1975), p.132.

¹⁴ Kenny (1975), p.133.

¹⁵ Kenny (1989), p.109.

¹⁶ Strawson (1950), p.196.

¹⁷ I have defended this claim in greater detail in Hyman (1999).

¹⁸ Dancy (1985), p.25.

¹⁹ If facts should be distinguished from truths, Williamson’s objection and my reply to it can be adjusted accordingly.

²⁰ See also Hyman (2001), pp.180ff.

²¹ Hyman (2001), pp.184ff.

²² I do not mean that the argument is convincing in every detail. It is marred in some places by the (to my mind) implausible claim that the things we know are evidence for themselves (187f). But this does not jeopardize the conclusion.

²³ In fact it is debatable whether forgetting that something is so is a process. As Kenny points out, many verbs for states, including some explicitly acknowledged as such by Williamson, have an idiomatic progressive tense: ‘I am hoping’, ‘I am intending’, etc. What distinguishes these from verbs signifying processes is that for them the rule holds that A is ϕ ing if and only if A ϕ s. For example, I am hoping that Lucy will arrive soon if and only if I hope that Lucy will arrive soon; I am intending to visit George on the weekend if and only if I intend to visit George on the weekend; etc. (Kenny (1963), p.175.) However, forgetting that something is so appears to resemble hoping that something is so and intending to do something, in this respect. If that is right, forgetting may be a counterexample to the claim that knowing is the most general stative factive attitude, since the form of inference from ‘ A is forgetting that p ’ or ‘ A forgets that p ’ to ‘ A knows that p ’ is not deductively valid.

²⁴ I am grateful to Peter Hacker, Adrian Moore, Timothy Williamson, and audiences in Oxford, Nijmegen, Reading and New York for their comments on earlier drafts.