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CONTEXTUALISM: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

A SENSE OF OCCASION

By Charles Travis

A continuous Oxford tradition on knowledge runs from John Cook Wilson to John McDowell. A central idea is that knowledge is not a species of belief, or that, in McDowell's terms, it is not a hybrid state; that, moreover, it is a kind of taking in of what is there that precludes one's being, for all one can see, wrong. Cook Wilson and McDowell differ on what this means as to the scope of knowledge. J.L. Austin set out the requisite foundations for McDowell to be right. McDowell has shown why the tradition, and his version of it, need to be right. But he does not accept Austin's innovation. That is a shame. For, despite McDowell's very great insightfulness, precisely that much separates him from a very powerful, and correct, view of what knowledge is.

Some stances aim at the world: if all goes well, stance and world match. I take my pen to be on the dresser; indeed, there it is. Some stances *contain* the world: for one to *have* that stance towards something is for that thing to be so (or there). Some of these *simply* contain their object: taking them is *not* aiming at their object (which then, happily, is there to hit). John Cook Wilson saw knowledge (among other things) as a stance of this last sort. John McDowell showed why knowledge needs to be like that. But it was J.L. Austin who made the idea viable. He did it by showing how a sense of occasion is required for proper ascription of epistemic notions. This is the story of what that comes to, and why it matters.

I. COOK WILSON'S CORE CONCEPTION

What is it for knowledge to contain its object? For Cook Wilson, there are two strands in that idea. The first is that knowledge is irreducible. In his terms, it is an unanalysable frame of mind. In a letter to H.A. Prichard, for example, he says

> Perhaps most fallacies in the theory of knowledge are reduced to the primary one of trying to *explain* the nature of knowing or apprehending. We cannot *construct* knowing – the act of apprehending – out of any elements.[1]

[1] J. Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference* (Oxford UP, 1926), p. 803.

As a special case of this general rule, knowledge, he insists (p. 100), is not a species of belief, or opinion:

> There is no general character or quality of which the essential natures of both knowledge and opinion are differentiations.... There is no ... common mental attitude to the object about which we know or about which we have an opinion. Moreover it is vain to seek such a common quality in belief, on the ground that the man who knows that A is B and the man who has that opinion both believe that A is B. Belief is not knowledge and the man who knows does not believe at all what he knows; he knows it.

Cook Wilson insists, in fact, that when one knows, one does *not* believe. There is more in favour of that point than may at first appear. But for present purposes I will bracket it.

The main point is that believing, or thinking so, is not a highest common factor shared by knowing and *merely* thinking so. A highest common factor would be a frame of mind, or, more generally, condition, such that, under favourable circumstances, being in that frame of mind would just *be*, or just count as, knowing – say, that the kettle is on – while under unfavourable conditions it would, anyway, at least be such and such other frame of mind – say, thinking that the kettle is on, or, perhaps, one or another of such and such other frames of mind (supposing so, guessing so, being convinced, etc.). If there were such a condition, or frame, of mind – one which itself might or might not count as knowing, depending on further factors – then knowing would not as such involve recognition that those further factors were present. That is how things are on so-called 'externalist' accounts of knowledge. So it is part of the view here that no form of externalism is correct.

Cook Wilson opposes highest common factor, or 'hybrid', accounts of knowledge in passages like these:

> We want to explain knowing an object and we explain it solely in terms of the object known, and that by giving the mind not the object but some idea of it which is said to be like it – an image (however the fact may be disguised) (p. 803).

> It does not do to retain *simpliciter* the statement that Logic studies *thought* and that Science studies *things*, for the very vital reason that the *formula* usually conveys the implication that things are something outside thought altogether.... The *thought*, not being at all supposed to be the apprehension of the *thing*, but something self-contained, something entirely mental and only apprehension of the thing as being an apprehension of some sort of a replica of the thing (i.e., when you push them to say what *knowledge of* or *thought about* the thing is) (p. 813).

Here it is not just a hybrid conception of knowledge, but a hybrid conception of thought, or thoughts, that is under attack: it is not as if a

thought, say, that Pia is kind, could be factored into a thought one could have anyway, without Pia, and some relation of that thought to Pia. That is a very contemporary idea. In the case of knowledge, the point can take this form: the object of knowledge – say, its being so that $3 + 4 = 7$ – is just part (constitutive) of that frame of mind which is knowing – say, that $3 + 4 = 7$. For one to be in that frame of mind is, *inter alia*, for $3 + 4$ to equal 7. Thus does knowledge contain its object.

The second strand in Cook Wilson's conception is the idea that know-ledge is unmistakable: if N knows that p, then what he sees as to whether p leaves no possibility (for him) that p is not so. To see enough of how things are to qualify as knowing that p, one must see no less than p itself. He says, for example (p. 100),

> In knowing, we can have nothing to do with the so-called 'greater strength' of the evidence on which the opinion is grounded; simply because we know that this 'greater strength' of evidence of A's being B is compatible with A's not being B after all.

The point for the moment is this: if N knows that p, then he could not have the grounds he does for taking it that p while p was not so. There is simply *no* such possibility, not even a very remote or outlandish one. We can see this as rejecting a Lockean suggestion: that knowledge may be merely 'certainty as great as our frame can attain to, and as our condition needs'.[2] Consider an arithmetical case. N grasps certain facts – that an even number is a number divisible by 2, that a prime is a number divisible only by 1 and itself. There is no such thing as matters being otherwise in those respects. And those facts exclude *all* possibility that 2 is not the only even prime. There is no deceptive counterpart or ringer case where they hold, but, for all that, there is another even prime. N also grasps how those facts mean this – he sees these facts for the proof they are. He sees, say, how any even number other than 2 (or 0) would be divisible by 1 and a number other than itself – namely, 2 – and so would not be a prime. So it is not so that for all he sees, he could be in a ringer case, that for all he sees there remains even the slightest possibility that 2 is not the only even prime. That what he sees does not admit of ringers is part of what he sees in seeing the facts in question as the proof they are.

Now consider a perceptual case. N faces a pig, and, eyes open, sees it. Suppose N grasps that he is doing that – sees what he is seeing (in this respect) for what it is. N thus sees there to be a pig before him. To grasp, as he does, what he thus sees is to grasp himself to see what excludes all possibility of there being no pig (for all he can see) – to grasp himself as seeing what excludes a ringer case. If N can be in that position, then it is

as impossible that there may fail to be a pig for all he can see as it was in the arithmetical case that 2 might fail to be the only even prime for all he can see. If $\mathcal{N}$ can be in this position, then, in it, he knows there is a pig. If one cannot attain a position as good as this, then, on Cook Wilson's conception, one cannot know that there is a pig before one. Knowledge that one faces a pig, if available, is as unmistakable, secure, as arithmetical knowledge, if *that* is attainable. There is a describable position which, *if* attainable, would be knowing one faces a pig. Nothing less than this would do. There is (*pace* Locke) no second-class variety of knowledge.

Similarly for other sorts of knowledge. I do not know that Brassens was French if for all I know he might have been a closet Belgian, no matter how remote that possibility may be. As we ordinarily think of things, I *may* be in a position to dismiss such a suggestion about Brassens as nonsense. What I actually see of how things are may leave *no* such possibility, full stop. If, but only if, that ordinary view is sometimes right, one may know that Brassens was French. Knowing that, if possible at all, would be taking in that fact in no lesser way than one may take in facts of arithmetic.

On Cook Wilson's view, then, knowledge is never merely enough, though less than absolute, certainty. Suppose we think of evidence for p as something that makes p likely – perhaps, in the best case, extremely likely – but as something that falls short of proof as strict as in the arithmetical case, something that merely gives p some probability less than 1. Thus, on his view, having even the very best evidence for p will not, so far as that goes, count as knowing that p. Some may think that having good enough evidence is a paradigm of knowing. For those, this aspect of Cook Wilson's view may seem absurd. Austin will show why it is not. That is one face of his way of making Cook Wilson's view viable.

II. AN ACCRETION

Knowledge incorporates its object: if I know the toast before me to be burnt, then its being burnt is part of the frame, or state, of mind I am thus in. There is nothing in that idea as such to rule out environmental knowledge. I may know that the toast is burnt if, say, I see the burnt toast, and can make out what I thus see as burnt toast. The toast's being burnt will then be part of my frame of mind in the sense so far required. But there is a further idea in Cook Wilson that does jeopardise knowledge of one's environment. It occurs in passages like these:

> The consciousness that the knowing process is a knowing process must be contained within the knowing process itself (p. 107).

> [knowledge cannot be one of] two states of mind ... the correct and the erroneous one ... quite indistinguishable to the man himself. [For] as the man does not know in the erroneous state of mind, neither can he know in the other state (*ibid.*).

These passages, particularly the second, insist that there is no such thing as a ringer for knowing that p – a condition which, if N were in it, would be indistinguishable to him from the condition in which he is in knowing that p. N would not know that p if not-p. So this means that N knows that p – is in the right condition – only if there is no such thing as a ringer for his situation with respect to p – a situation in which not-p, but which, were he in it, he could not distinguish from his actual one in knowing that p. Conversely, in the knowing state, N can distinguish his condition from all conceivable states in which not-p. I will call this Cook Wilson's distinguishability principle, or, for short, *the accretion*. It insists on much more than just that knowledge must be unmistakable, or that it simply contains its object. And it spoils the account.

Given the principle, what sorts of things might one know? Arithmetical facts, one might suppose. What that would take, the idea would be, is a clear focus on the concepts involved – on what one means, or understands, say, by a number's being even, and by its being prime – together with a perspicuous organization of what one thus takes in. Being even – or what you understand by this – is something such that there is no such thing as being it without being divisible by two. And so on. The thought is that one's mastery of one's own concepts allows one to take in such facts in such a way that there is simply no such thing as one's being wrong about them. In Freud's phrase, in such matters we are masters in our own house. If that is so, I may get myself into a ringerless frame of mind with respect to there being only one even prime. For a ringer would be a condition in which I was mistaken as to what some understanding of mine ruled out. But that my understandings do or do not rule out such and such is something that is always transparent to me if I but focus. If this is right, then the accretion leaves (some) mathematical knowledge intact.[3] Prichard suggests that with this model for knowledge in place, its scope can be extended. For example,

> Consider instances: when knowing, for example, that a noise we are hearing is loud, we do or can know that we are knowing this and so cannot be mistaken, and when believing that the noise is due to a car we know or can know that we are believing and not knowing this.[4]

[3] Austin and Hilary Putnam should by now have disabused us of this idea of being masters in our own house. See, e.g., Austin, 'The Meaning of a Word', *Philosophical Papers*, 3rd edn (Oxford UP, 1979), pp. 55–75.
[4] H.A. Prichard, 'History of the Theory of Knowledge', *Knowledge and Perception* (Oxford UP, 1950), p. 89.

As Prichard conceives things, for the noise *we hear* to be loud just is for things to seem to us a certain way. Things *seeming* that way is, as such, without prejudice to the condition of our environment. It may unproblematically be a part of our being in some state of mind. Some such state of mind would be ringerless. Such a state might be knowledge. Matters change, though, where the candidate object of knowledge is a matter of how the environment happens to be arranged. That is why knowledge that a car backfired is problematic.

Cook Wilson and Prichard both accept that the accretion means that we know much less than one might have thought. Prichard (p. 97) says, for example,

> we are forced to allow that we are certain of very much less than we should have said otherwise. Thus, we have to allow that we are not certain of the truth of any inductive generalization, e.g., that all men are mortal, or that sugar is sweet, for we are not *certain* that anything in the nature of a man requires that he shall at some time die; we are not even certain that the sun will rise tomorrow.

What leads him to this is the idea that

> when we know something we either do, or by reflecting can, know that our condition is one of knowing that thing, while when we believe something, we either do or can know that our condition is one of believing, and not of knowing: so that we cannot mistake belief for knowledge or *vice versa*.[5]

This is the accretion in a new form. The emphasis on reflection highlights the problem for environmental knowledge. Reflection alone cannot, in the nature of the case, make one privy to how one's environment is anyway – how it would be, independent of one's enjoying one's present mental states. So reflection alone cannot distinguish a state which includes some given environmental condition – the toast's being burnt, say – from one which merely seemed like that, but in which, say, it was mere illusion that the toast was carbonized – or in which there was no toast at all. The accretion thus seems to rule out knowledge of such things, at first blush to rule out environmental knowledge altogether.

The accretion installs the argument from illusion. That argument, as here understood, moves from a premise to a penultimate, and then to an ultimate, conclusion. These moves can be expressed as follows:

Premise: there is a ringer for N's situation with respect to p (o)

Penultimate conclusion: N might be (for all he can tell/see) in a ringer situation with respect to p (o)

Conclusion: N does not V that p (or does not V o) [where the values of V are
such things as know (that p), see (that p), see o (e.g., a pig)].

When I speak of the validity of the argument, I do not mean to speak of its
being licensed, or not, by some particular apodictic rules of inference.
Rather, I take it, for the argument to be valid is for it to have no counter-
instances – cases where the premise is true, the conclusion, or penultimate
conclusion, false. If one *rejected* Cook Wilson's conception of knowledge, then
one might accept the penultimate conclusion, but reject the conclusion on
grounds of some supposed properties of the concepts expressed in relevant
values of V – for example, on the perhaps good ground that it may be a pig
one in fact sees for all that one *may* be in a ringer situation; or, in the case of
knowledge, on the supposed ground that (it is part of the concept of know-
ledge that) one may know that p, for all that, for all one can tell, perhaps
not-p. Within the present framework, though, the crucial move will be from
premise to penultimate conclusion. It is the validity of that move, in the
present sense of validity, that will be at stake in what follows.

    The value of 'ringer' here depends on the target of the argument. If, as at
present, it is knowledge that is in question, then what matters is that N
should be unable, if in the ringer situation, to distinguish it from his actual
one (with respect to p's obtaining). If p is that there is a pig before him, then
in the ringer, perhaps, he confronts a robotic 'pig' with artificial flesh; one
cannot tell it from a pig at his distance. (You would have to be much closer
and sniff carefully, or cut it open.) Again, perhaps, in the ringer, it is a
peccary before him; though peccaries do not look quite like pigs, they look
just like them so far as N can tell – for all he knows of what a pig looks like.
In the case of seeing o (a *thing* that one confronts), what matters is that in the
ringer things should look just as they would, or might, if o were present. So
the robotic pig will still make for a ringer. But the peccary will not.

    The crucial difference can be summed up this way: what one sees is a
matter of what one is responsive to; what one knows is a matter of the
quality of one's responses. If a ringer is to do the work required in the case
of seeing things, then it should confront N with just the same things to be, by
sight, responsive to. That is meant to be accomplished in this way: there is
no visual feature in it but missing from the case it is a ringer for, or missing
from it and present in that case – a feature whose presence or absence might
be detectable by sight, and which would show the ringer up for merely that.
For a ringer to do its work in the case of knowledge, there must be nothing
in the case it is a ringer for to give N's responses any credentials (relevant to
knowledge) that they would not also have in the ringer case. That is meant
to be accomplished in this way: anything present in the actual case that

might make *N*'s response well founded is also present in the ringer. The differences here point to a fundamental difference between seeing items one confronts, and knowing, or seeing, that; and warn against over-assimilating the first thing to those others, or *vice versa*.

Since it is validity that matters in what follows, it does not matter much for the present just what steps fill in the space between premise and penult-imate conclusion. But a guiding idea for filler might be this: in the ringer case, one is aware of everything one is aware of as things stand, and *vice versa*. For if not, one could be aware that one was in a ringer case if one was: one would fail to be aware of something one should be if it were not a ringer, or, again, be aware of something one would not be if it were not. And if, as things stand, one is not in a ringer case, one could tell that too, since one would be aware of something one would not be aware of in a ringer case (or fail to be aware of something one would be). So, for example, in the case of seeing a pig, if there is in fact a pig before me, I am aware of no more than I would be if it were only a ringer-pig. The ringer-pig would not look any different. If it did, I could tell. And similarly, supposedly, for the case of knowing that. I do not endorse such filler. The search for filler is a search for diagnosis, for what makes this argument so seductive. For the present, though, that is a secondary issue.

With the argument in force, the prospects for knowledge of one's en-vironment are bleak. One might resist its premise in one case or another. Norman Malcolm once suggested that it is possible to work oneself into a position such that one's understanding of what one judges in judging, say, that there is a lemon on the sideboard excludes one's proving wrong no matter what happens.[6] If one cuts a twist out of the lemon, and, biting on it, begins to blow bubbles, or taste soap, well, some lemons on some sideboards may behave like that, given what you meant by a lemon on the sideboard. Or else (one may insist) one has suddenly begun to hallucinate. Quine counts such policy as at least not irrational.[7] But, all else aside, Malcolm's tactic does not deliver what we want. If I judge there to be a twist in my glass, I do not want to be judging what is compatible with my blowing bubbles if I bite on it. Nor do I want to have left the realm of knowledge. Resisting the *premise* thus appears a futile tactic.

McDowell dismisses the accretion:

> The very idea of reason as having a sphere of operation within which it is capable of ensuring, without being beholden to the world, that one's postures are all right ... has

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[6] N. Malcolm, 'Knowledge and Belief', in his *Knowledge and Certainty* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963).

[7] See the last section of 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', in *From a Logical Point of View* (Harvard UP, 1953).

the look of a fantasy, something we spin to console ourselves for the palpable limits of our powers.[8]

Here McDowell is the very voice of reason. The accretion is *not* something with which we might live. But how do we earn our right to dismiss it? The idea of ringers deals only in the possible. It does not involve us with such things as talking teapots, or with any form of magic. If I am now staring down at a pig at close range, I think I do need to admit that it would be possible for there to be an animated dummy pig, so realistic that I could not tell it from the real thing by looking (even if, to my knowledge, no one has ever made one). But then just why is it not possible that my situation is a ringer, for all I can see or tell? If there are such possibilities, then with what right do I deny that I might be in such a ringer situation? At this point, we turn to Austin.

III. AUSTIN'S REVOLUTION

Austin joins Cook Wilson in rejecting the Lockean idea that knowledge may consist in mere 'certainty as great as our frame can attain to, and as our condition needs'. He differs, though, on where more than that is available. He says, for example,

> The quotation from Locke, with which most people are said [by Ayer] to agree, in fact contains a strong *suggestio falsi*. It suggests that when, for instance, I look at a chair a few yards in front of me in broad daylight, my view is that I have (*only*) as much certainty as I need and can get that there is a chair and that I see it. But in fact the plain man would regard doubt in such a case, not as far-fetched or over-refined or somehow unpractical, but as plain *nonsense*.[9]

On its face this is a remark about what the plain man thinks; about, in some sense, what we are prepared to say. The significance of such remarks must yet emerge. But suppose, *pro tem.*, that Austin may be in a situation where it really is just *plain* nonsense to (try to) suppose that he is not seeing a chair, or that there (perhaps) is none. Then the penultimate conclusion of the argument from illusion does not hold; so there is not that barrier to Austin's counting as knowing, in Cook Wilson's demanding sense, that there is a chair before him. If, in such a situation, someone were to suggest that Austin might be mistaken, he would be talking nonsense, *not* suggesting what was so.

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[8] J. McDowell, 'Knowledge and the Internal', in *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality* (Harvard UP, 1998), p. 405.
[9] J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford UP, 1962), p. 10.

This same idea – whatever exactly it comes to – occurs in Austin's comment on Geoffrey Warnock:

> Warnock condemns as ... non-minimal the form of words 'I hear a sort of purring noise', on the ground that one who says this is assuming that he isn't wearing ear-plugs; it might really be a very loud noise, which just sounds purring to him, because of the ear-plugs. But one can't seriously say to someone, 'But you might be wearing ear-plugs' *whenever* he utters that form of words; he isn't necessarily *assuming* that he isn't, he may *know* that he isn't, and the suggestion that he might be may itself be perfectly absurd.[10]

It surfaces again (p. 114) in his critique of Ayer on incorrigibility:

> ... if, when I make some statement, it is true that nothing whatever could in fact be produced as a cogent ground for retracting it, this can only be because I am in, have got myself into, the very best possible position for making that statement – I have, and am entitled to have, *complete* confidence in it when I make it. But whether this is so or not is not a matter of what *kind of sentence* I use in making my statement, but of what *the circumstances are* in which I make it.... if I watch for some time an animal a few feet in front of me, in a good light, if I prod it perhaps, sniff, and take note of the noises it makes, I may say, 'That's a pig'; and this too will be 'incorrigible', nothing could be produced that would show that I had made a mistake.

I may work myself into a situation with respect to the pig before me where it is not true (because just plain nonsense) to suggest that I might be (so far as I can tell) in a ringer situation. So we may agree that for me to know that *p* is for it to be, for me, unmistakably so that *p*; and, for all that, the scope of knowledge may be roughly what we always thought. I may, for all that, know things, for example, as to where there are, and are not, pigs or chairs. Here there is a hint as to what makes things this way: the circumstances in which I am to count as knowing, or not knowing, that there is a pig before me matter. But we have yet to see just how circumstances matter and why they should.

Austin tells us

> The human intellect and senses are, indeed, *inherently* fallible and delusive, but not by any means *inveterately* so.
>
> ... It is naturally *always* possible ('humanly' possible) that I may be mistaken, or break my word, but that by itself is no bar against using the expressions 'I know' and 'I promise' as we do in fact use them.[11]

That the human intellect is inherently fallible should not be understood as a psychological limitation. As Austin tells us (*Sense and Sensibilia*, p. 112),

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[10] *Sense and Sensibilia*, p. 138. The comment is on Warnock's *Berkeley* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953). See pp. 161–3.

[11] Austin, 'Other Minds', in *Philosophical Papers*, 3rd edn (Oxford UP, 1978), p. 98.

There isn't, there couldn't be, any kind of sentence which as such is incapable, once uttered, of being subsequently amended or retracted.

Where I judge, I cannot buy immunity to error simply by judging only about certain sorts of things – certainly not where I judge about an environment. There is principle behind that (p. 113, footnote):

But to stipulate that a sense-datum just is whatever the speaker takes it to be – so that if he *says* something different it must be a different sense-datum – amounts to making non-mendacious sense-datum statements true by *fiat*; and if so, how could sense-data be, as they are also meant to be, non-linguistic entities *of* which we are aware, *to* which we refer, that against which the factual truth of all empirical statements is ultimately to be tested?

There is a Fregean idea here.[12] I take something to be so only where there is that which I thus take to be so – something so, or not, independent of my so thinking. Where what I take to be so need not have been so (if not elsewhere), there is at least that much room for making sense of the idea of my being mistaken. Environmental judgements, in the nature of the case, always make for that much room.

It is always possible, in this sense, that I *may* be wrong: where I take *p* to be so, that fact, so far, always leaves it open that I might be wrong. But, Austin reminds us, for it to be *possible* that I may (might) be wrong is not yet for it to be *so* that I may be. That depends, he tells us, on circumstances (in ways not yet spelt out). If it does, that makes the situation this: there are, or may be, circumstances in which, though there is, recognizably, such a thing as a ringer for my situation with respect to *p*, it is not so that I might be in a ringer situation (for all I can see or tell). If that is right, then the argument from illusion is invalid. The accretion accordingly drops out. We may, with McDowell, reject as fantasy the idea of a sphere in which knowledge co-exists with the accretion. And Cook Wilson's core conception may fit with our ordinary ideas of the sorts of things one might know.

All of this, though, merely sets out the barest shape of a position. Nothing has been said about what might entitle us to it. Austin's route to entitlement is through his view of thought, and of language. At the centre of that view is his view of truth. Here is one crucial strand in that view:

There are various *degrees and dimensions* of success in making statements: the statements fit the facts always more or less loosely, in different ways on different occasions for different intents and purposes.[13]

The idea here is a radical departure from Frege.

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[12] See, e.g., Frege, 'Der Gedanke' ('The Thought'), *Logische Untersuchungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).
    [13] Austin, 'Truth', *Philosophical Papers*, p. 130.

Truth is a particular kind of correctness, settled entirely by things being as they are. Where one thinks, or speaks, truly, there is that which one thinks, or says, to be so, which, if true, is so on any thinking, or stating of it, and, if false, is so likewise. And one thinks, or speaks, truly if and only if *what* one thinks, or states, is true. Frege took that idea to impose a particular form, or standard, on thought, or talk, of what was true or false – to be reflected in particular relations between truth-bearers. That structure is, for him, unfolded in what he called the 'laws of truth', or logic. Such structure makes for standards of coherence, characteristic of, for him essential to, what is true or false. But consider a judgement that the toast is blackened. That judgement (as any other) must measure up to the way the *world* is: for it to be true, the world must be suitably arranged. No mere standard of *coherence* – governing, as it does, relations between some *truth-bearers* and others – could decide when the world would so count. Something must fill in what the standard of suitability is to be. For Frege, given *what* is judged, that standard is provided by the notion of truth itself. For Austin, one may fix what it is that is judged, and what *truth* is, so far as that goes, leaves room for any of many standards to be in force.

For Frege, the further standard enters the picture in this way: to grasp what it is one judges in judging the toast to be blackened – what it is for it to be blackened – just is to grasp what it is for that judgement to be true. And similarly for judging any object to fit any concept.[14] For him, a concept maps objects onto truth-values. To grasp the concept is to do no less than grasping how it does this – so in the case of the concept of being blackened (if there really is such a thing), it is to grasp just how an object must be for it to fit the concept, and so how the world must be where the concept fits. So if we think of the judgement that the toast is blackened as an application of some concept to some object,[15] then, for Frege, there is no substantive, or even sensible, question as to what standard *that* should come up to in order to be true – what arrangements of the world would make it so. All that is built into the judgement itself. Similarly for any other judgement.[16] So for Frege, for any truth-bearer, there can be only one thing it would be for it to be true, only one thing that could count as its answering, in that way, to the way things are.

[14] Frege might not agree that being blackened really is a proper concept. And similarly for any other example that would illustrate Austin's point. That would just shape the difference between Austin and Frege differently.

[15] For Frege, it is an *Aussage*, and not a judgement (*Urtheil*) that applies a concept to an object. A judgement, or thought, for him, has such a structure only relative to an analysis. See 'Über Begriff und Gegenstand' ('On Concept and Object'), in *Funktion, Begriff, Bedeutung*, ed. G. Patzig (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986). But the upshot stands.

[16] This is the main burden of Frege's claim that truth is undefinable.

   In the quoted passage, Austin denies precisely this Fregean idea. Suppose someone says the toast to be blackened; it is perfectly determinate that *that* is what he said. For all that, there may be a multitude of standards by which toast may be counted as blackened or not, a multitude of ways of deciding whether given toast is precisely *that* way. For all of these standards, it is whether the toast is blackened that would be what was decided. Nothing about what it is, as such, for toast to be blackened rules any of these out *tout court.* And it may well be that by some of these, it would be true that the toast is blackened, whereas by others, it would be false (or otherwise not true). Nor have I chosen an example particularly favourable to this case. The point would hold, Austin tells us, for any way for things to be that is capturable in words of a human language – for any description of things that we can arrange for words to give. If words of a human language can express, or mention, concepts, then it applies to any concept.[17] If we know that someone said such and such to be thus and so, we do, in some sense, know what he said (to be so). The point is: whether *that* is so depends not merely on the fact that it is *this* that is to be so or not, and on the way things are, but also on what one is to count as things being that way, where this last is a genuinely substantive question. Just how black does toast need to be to count as blackened? If it is covered with Marmite, is it blackened? The con-cepts expressed in the words used to call the toast black do not answer such questions univocally. There is not just one thing that might count as toast being blackened. And so it is in general.
   But to say that a question is left open by given factors is not to say that it is left open *tout court.* Whether a given description is true (of things as they are) is not decided by its being the description it is. It may, for all that, be decided by something. Suppose that, one fine day, someone calls a certain lake blue. There is an understanding of a lake's being blue on which, under a sunny cloudless sky, this lake would be blue. On that understanding what was said is true. There is also a way of deciding the matter by drawing a bucket from the lake and looking in it. By that standard, what was said is false. Here, then, are two standards by which the truth of what was said *might* be decided. What it is for a lake to be blue does not as such rule in favour of the one and against the other. But there are occasions on which if someone called a lake blue, and one drew a bucket and confronted him with it, what one did would be, to say the least, foolish. It would be un-comprehending. Clearly the speaker was not to be taken as speaking of its being blue in *that* way. On the reasonable understanding of his words, what he said is thus true. That may be what it is for what he said to be true

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[17] For convenience, let us leave such things as *pure* mathematics to one side here.

full stop. Here we appeal to the circumstances of his speaking for fixing adequately a standard for truth. That is, in brief, how, for Austin, circumstances matter.

Given that circumstances play this role, there are (as a rule) many – perhaps indefinitely many – different things to be said (to be so) in saying things to be some given way (where that is a way some words of a language speak of). What produces such variety is the circumstances in which things are said to be that way. These close off some otherwise possible ways of assessing whether or not things are the way in question. They may close off enough of this for what was thus said to be determinately true, or, at worst, false – for *it* to bear no two understandings on only one of which it would have the given value. This role for circumstances flows from Austin's view of truth. It is the core of his view of language and of thought.

If circumstances work like that, then what one does say (to be so), in saying things to be such and such, will depend on the circumstances in which one says it.[18] One may (depending on one's circumstances) speak truly in saying things to be that way where, again, in some circumstances one may speak falsely in saying them to be just *that* way. Among the many things to be said to be so in saying things to be that way may be both true things and false ones, where it is up to circumstances, if anything, to decide which sort of thing (whether something true or something false) one did say on a given occasion. We may thus speak of what it would be true to say, on an occasion, as to what is, and what is not – and what would, and what would not, be – some given way. And what it is true to say about that on one occasion may not be what it is true to say on some other.

Where circumstances have such work to do, that is work that some circumstances may shirk. They may not choose between standards by which what was said would be true, and ones by which it would be false. Suppose that there are various things to be said to be so in saying some lake to be blue. Suppose that some of these are true, and some false. Suppose someone calls the lake blue in circumstances which do not decide whether what was thus said (if anything) lies among the true things, or among the false ones. Then nothing true will have been said – for all that the lake was called blue. Nor, equally, will anything false have been said. For what was said (if anything) is no more governed by standards by which it answers to the way things are than by standards by which it fails to – standards of both sorts are equally eligible, on this occasion, for deciding whether truth was told

[18] There is a myth in philosophy that what a speaker in fact says in speaking given words is identical with what he *meant*, or meant to say. That would not erase the main lines of Austin's picture. It is, anyway, nothing but a myth. (If what one said is, inevitably, what one meant to say, why speak of the latter at all?)

in calling the lake blue. That matter, then, is not decided. Whether circumstances do thus shirk the work required depends on what work is required – on the standards by which, in fact, the lake would be blue, and those by which, in fact, it would not. What those are depends on how the lake is. This kind of failure of circumstance is a failure to which our statements, or certainly those meant to be contingent, are always liable.

So one cannot in general say such and such to be such and such, just whenever one likes, and expect to pay no higher penalty than speaking oddly – expect, anyway, to say something either true or false. For speaking oddly can be saying nothing either true or false. What we would or would not say can thus have serious significance. If one would not use a given description in given circumstances, or of given things, that may be because using it would not then be a way of saying anything either true or false. This completes the main lines of Austin's revolutionary view of thought and language.

IV. EPISTEMOLOGY REVISITED

In *Sense and Sensibilia*, Austin states the new view of thought, and applies it to epistemic notions (pp. 110–11):

> ... if you just take a bunch of sentences ... impeccably formulated in some language or other, there can be no question of sorting them out into those that are true and those that are false; for ... the question of truth and falsehood does not turn only on what a sentence *is*, nor yet on what it *means*, but on, speaking very broadly, the circumstances in which it is uttered.... for much the same reasons there could be no question of picking out from one's bunch of sentences those that are evidence for others, those that are 'testable', or those that are 'incorrigible'. What kind of sentence is uttered as providing evidence for what depends, again, on the circumstances of particular cases; there is no kind of sentence which *as such* is evidence-providing, just as there is no kind of sentence which *as such* is surprising, or doubtful, or certain, or incorrigible, or true.

Notions such as *evidence* depend on circumstances for truth-evaluable content in just the way notions such as *being blue* do: what counts as evidence for what depends on the occasion for saying what is evidence for what. I will now consider, briefly and sketchily, some ways in which that matters to Cook Wilson's view.

One noted feature of that view is that merely having evidence for *p*, no matter how good, never counts as knowledge – not, that is, if evidence merely weighs, no matter how heavily, in favour of *p*, but is compatible with not-*p* – not if, for all that evidence, *p* still *might* not obtain. That clashes with an intuition some will have, that if one has good enough evidence for *p*,

then one knows it. Where might that intuition come from? Sid, for example, comes home reeking of a strange perfume – evidence that he is seeing someone. That empty beer bottle on the kitchen counter is evidence that Zoë, who eschews beer, is also seeing someone. Perhaps these things are merely evidence. But suppose the incident is repeated – a few days later, Sid reeks again. Or the evidence is supported by more – strange hairs on Sid's coat, mysterious receipts in the pocket, more and more late nights at the office. Then, depending on circumstances, surely Zoë is entitled to claim to *know* what is going on? And surely, all that has changed is that evidence has got better?

No doubt, one may come to *know*, in such ways, that one's partner is seeing someone. But consider the tell-tale signs – that strange perfume, the receipt for lunch at a secluded spot, Sid's suddenly depressed libido. There are at least two statuses such things might have. That scent may be evidence that Sid is seeing someone. But it may also *mean* that he is. Here 'mean' is factive: if *a* means that *b*, then given *a*, *b*. If, despite *a*, *b* does not obtain, or happen, then *a* did not mean *b* after all. Suppose Zoë sees that *a*, and recognizes it as meaning *b*. (Thus, 'recognize' being factive, *a* does mean *b*.) Then Zoë has, not mere evidence that *b*, but proof in the strictest sense: it is not just so that, for all the grounds that Zoë has, perhaps not-*b*. Zoë sees, unmistakably, that *b*. She thus knows, on Cook Wilson's conception of knowledge. Evidence is beside the point. Strange scents can be acquired in many ways – crowded elevators, over-zealous department store personnel. But suppose Sid manifestly had no such opportunities. Then in his case that strange scent may mean that he is seeing someone. If Zoë is *au fait* enough with his wonts, she may recognize the scent to mean that.

Does the scent *mean* that Sid is seeing someone? Or is it merely evidence? What does that depend on? Suppose that, though Sid *might* have got the scent through seeing someone, he also might have got it in other ways – elevators, for example. Then the scent is at best evidence. (If seeing someone is a likely way for Sid to have got the scent, then it is good evidence. If it is an unlikely enough way, then perhaps the scent is no evidence at all.) But if Sid would not have come by the scent in any other way – if no such scenario is actually a way things might be – then the scent means that he is seeing someone. It is then up to Zoë to appreciate what is there to be appreciated.

So what means what depends on what might be, or, equally, on what would be, given such and such circumstances. What factors form the truths as to what might be? Here I oversimplify. But we can detect some factors. First, what might be, where that bears on factive meaning, depends on how the world is arranged. If both sheep and goats bleat, then, in general, where there is bleating, there might be sheep about, but there also might be goats.

So bleating does not in general mean sheep (as opposed to goats) – though there is still room for *that* bleating to mean sheep to one expert enough to detect just that quality of bleat. Bleating might still mean sheep in goatless parts: if there are no goats in Umbria, then, perhaps, it is not so that Umbrian bleating might be from goats. But there would be goats in Umbria were they recently imported. Such *may*, sometimes, for some purposes, count as a possibility. Where it does, one speaks the truth in saying that Umbrian bleating *might* come from goats, and so does not as such mean sheep. Again, Umbrian bleating might be from goats if Umbrians had, so far, successfully concealed them (perhaps to avoid the goat tax). That may sometimes mean that certain bleating might be from goats. It *might* be even where it is not.

What might be thus depends, for one thing, on how things are. To that extent, it is a matter for discovery. But it also depends on what is (needs) to be treated as fixed in how things are, and what is allowed to vary. *That* is a matter liable to vary from occasion to occasion for saying what might be. *Might* Umbrians have been concealing goats? Why would one ask that? How are they to be supposed to have done it? Is the idea that they might have secret caves, or ancient ways of shrinking goats? Or is it just that no non-Umbrian has ever bothered to look in an Umbrian barn? If it is intelligible *how* this should be unknown to us, and if there is genuine uncertainty, then, perhaps, this is a way things might be. If not, not. The notions in play here – intelligibility, in the sense in which it is intelligible that a friend might be in Paris, but not intelligible, cannot be sensibly supposed, that your university may have moved there; certainty, there being reason to doubt – all these are surely occasion-sensitive. (One can *make* something uncertain (to those listening) by speaking in its favour long enough.) So, too, then, is the notion of what might be.

And so factive meaning, too, is an occasion-sensitive notion. With that idea in place, the Cook Wilsonian conception no longer clashes with clear intuition. Zoë sniffs the scent; she notes the long hairs on the collar. At once, she is certain. All becomes clear. Does she know? There are occasions for asking that question on which the scent, or the hairs, or the combination, counts as *meaning* that Sid is seeing someone. On such occasions it is not (just) evidence. On some such occasions, Zoë may count as seeing these things to mean what they thus do. For her so to count is for her to count as having proof. One may then say truly that she knows the depressing truth. There may also be occasions on which the scent, and the hairs, count as merely evidence (though perhaps rather persuasive evidence) that Sid is seeing someone. On such occasions, Zoë counts as (understandably) certain, but as not actually knowing. Mere evidence never yields knowledge. But on

our new understanding of what it is for something to be evidence, that does not mean that such things as scent and hairs cannot allow Zoë to *know* that Sid is seeing someone. They sometimes count as mere evidence; for all of that, they may sometimes count as more.

Occasion-sensitivity, once in the picture for factive meaning, is automatically in the picture for knowing as well, on Cook Wilson's core conception. If those red hairs on his lapel mean that Sid is seeing someone, and if Zoë appreciates that fact, then she knows. But whether they do mean that – or, more exactly, whether it is true to say so – depends on the occasion for saying so. Where they do not mean it, and they are all the grounds Zoë has for thinking so, then, for Cook Wilson, she does not know. Once there is occasion-sensitivity in what might be, occasion-sensitivity pervades knowing. One does not know that p where p might not be so, or where it might not for all that one can see. Whereas if one's grounds for saying so leave no such possibility, there is no cause for denying that one knows. Indeterminate or null grounds might fit the bill here – e.g., my grounds for saying that Brassens was French. Someone else does not know whether p if, for all his grounds, or for all he can see as to what those grounds show, p might fail to be so. Whereas, again, where there is no such possibility (where it is determinate enough what that would come to), he may well count as knowing whether p. But, again, what it is true to say as to what might be, or what might be for all N can see, is liable to vary with the occasion for speaking to such issues. So, too, then, is what it is true to say as to what N knows. I may count as knowing that Napoleon won at Jena, on some occasions for saying what I know, and for all that, fail so to count on others.

The points so far flow out of Austin's view of thought, applied, as he suggests, to epistemic notions. I have not argued that Austin's view is right. Nor will I do much in that direction here. To make the points is not to go far into a complex phenomenon, knowledge, but far enough to make Cook Wilson's core conception viable. It makes it a conception of what is recognizable to us as knowledge. Plausibly, it would not be *knowledge* that was in question if it were a notion on which we could not, sometimes, count someone as knowing that he faces a pig or a chair, or that his partner has returned home. Someone may know there is a pig before him if he sees the pig, and can take in, or make out, that this is what he does – if he can have this as his reason for taking there to be a pig. He *may* do that, provided it is not so that, for all he can tell, he might be seeing something other than a pig (or not actually seeing at all). The point now is: there might sometimes count as no such way things might be (for him, as he now is), precisely because that does not require that things *always* so count, on every occasion for considering how things now stand. For the facts as to what might be are

intrinsically occasion-sensitive ones. There are not, in addition to these, further facts as to what, occasion-insensitively, (really) might be. Just this allows it sometimes to be true (and nothing less) to say that someone, as he then is, knows there is a pig before him. If Austin has the workings of language right, it will be true to say this roughly when (outside philosophy) we would want to.

Cook Wilson's core conception could be right only if his accretion is not. Austin's view (once established) earns us our right to jettison the accretion. It earns us a right to reject the argument from illusion. For, on some occasions for stating the argument (of particular cases), its premise may be true while its penultimate conclusion is false. Sid faces a pig – in plain daylight, and he knows as well as most of us what a pig looks like. There is plainly such a thing as a ringer for his situation. There is such a thing as facing a robotic pig with artificial flesh. Might Sid, for all he can see or tell, *be* in a ringer situation? Might he be facing a robotic pig? Perhaps yes, perhaps no, de-pending on the occasion for discussing Sid. Where not, the argument from illusion, as then stated, is invalid. It is not generally reliable.

What about the filler? The idea was that there should be nothing in Sid's actual situation to give his response to the pig, in taking one to be before him, any credentials relevant to knowledge that it would not also have in the ringer situation. If the ringer is a ringer, then there will be nothing, save for one thing. It may be that in the actual situation, Sid can see there to be a pig before him. If he can see this, that is good reason for taking there to be one. And, of course, he can see no such thing in the situation with the robotic pig. The way in which the argument has proved invalid leaves room for us to say this. For if it does not count as so of Sid's actual situation that it might be one of his facing a robot, for all he can see or tell, then there is no bar to saying that he does see there to be a pig before him. This point about the credentials one may have in an actual situation but lack in a ringer has been pressed hard by John McDowell – correctly. The only problem for Mc-Dowell is what entitles him to it. What is now on offer is an account of that entitlement.

Austin has thus accomplished what Cook Wilson himself did not. He has held onto the idea that knowledge does not come in various grades – various degrees of authority as to whether p, the lower as well as the higher. He has made good on the idea that knowledge is not merely all the certainty our condition needs, by showing how knowledge conceived as Cook Wilson conceives it is a phenomenon with the scope we recognize. Without Austin, the problem of empirical knowledge may easily seem to be this: how can one know that there are pigs about, despite the ways there undeniably are (in principle) for one to be wrong about this – the undeniable possibilities of

error, for all there is for one actually to take in as to how things are? There are accounts of knowledge which are responses to that question: we take in what we do, have the grounds we have, and we do so in a hospitable environment, one in which, with those grounds, we do not run much chance of being wrong. Any form of externalism, or, more generally, highest common factor theory, is such a response. But Austin shows, rather, how the question is misbegotten. When I know (or count as knowing) that there are pigs about, that is not despite the possibilities there are for me to be wrong: there are then (or then count as) no such possibilities, *punkt*.

V. COROLLARIES

There is a kind of philosophical *mauvaise foi* exhibited, for example, in Hume's inability to maintain his philosophical beliefs when he hit the streets. One recent form of it is in the idea that there are *ordinary* knowledge ascriptions which are true enough so far as they go, but there are also the sorts of ascriptions a philosopher would make, or withhold, and these are quite another matter. So Pia may report to Max that Zoë has seen those long red hairs, and now knows that Sid is seeing someone; and Pia may thus speak truly. But if a philosopher asks whether Zoë *really* knows, then the correct answer may be that she does not. The idea will then be that the philosopher holds to higher standards, and that it is these that matter for answering *philosophical* questions. That idea may also go with this one: Pia's report is true because its content is formed by contextual factors – all she is saying is (say) that there is no *presently relevant* doubt as to whether Zoë is right – whereas what the philosopher says, or asks, depends only on what knowledge itself is – what the word 'know', as such, speaks of. Austin provides things to say about these ideas.

Taking the second idea first, suppose I were to announce, out of the blue, that Chirac is just like (or just the same as) Blair. You might well ask me what I mean by that. I might reply that I mean nothing special by it, but only what those words, as such, say: I spoke of Chirac being just like Blair, and whether I spoke truly should depend precisely and only on whether he *is* just like Blair. ('You say to me: "You understand this expression, don't you? Well, then – I am using it in the sense you are familiar with"': Wittgenstein, *PI* §117.) I should not expect a sympathetic reaction. It is clear here, at least, that if I am to have said anything at all to be so, there will have to be some special content attaching to my words 'just like', thanks somehow to the circumstances in which I spoke them. If 'might be' expresses the occasion-sensitive notion I have said it to do, then knowledge

ascriptions fit just this pattern. There *is* nothing one would say to be so in saying N to know that p, merely by virtue of 'know' meaning what it does. Rather, for one to say something to be so, one's use of 'know' must some-how acquire special content thanks to the circumstances of one's using it. So the second idea as to what the philosopher would be doing in his special circumstances (in Hume's study) is just fantasy.

If this is so, then for a knowledge ascription to *have* content that might make it true or false, circumstances must do their job: sufficient special content must be acquired. Given the philosopher's airy lack of interest in practical affairs, there is a standing suspicion that his special circumstances will be ones that do no such work, in which case his attempted verdicts about knowledge will be neither true nor false. One need not overplay that hand, though. Suppose that instead of 'just like' we compare 'is blue'. As we have seen, this expresses an occasion-sensitive notion *par excellence*. Still, for some descriptions of some things as blue, circumstances may not need to do much work, or at least not conspicuously. Consider a new royal blue bath towel, exhibited in plain daylight. It may be difficult to devise circumstances in which it would not be true to call this blue. Perhaps even in his study a philosopher may speak truth in so speaking. What matters here is that there are not (conspicuously) two contrasting understandings of being blue, on one of which the towel is blue, on another of which it is not. It would be drawing the wrong moral from this example if one supposed it to show that it was settled in general what the philosopher, in his study, would be saying if he called something blue (or denied that it was), or that this shows that the towel is blue by a higher standard for being blue than items which are blue on some understandings, but not on others. (Nothing so far so much as settles what 'higher' is to mean here.) That settles the second point. Perhaps, in his study, the philosopher can say *some* true things to the effect that people know this, do not know that. It does not follow that in saying what he thus does, he is speaking of knowledge in the strictest possible sense, as opposed to the rest of us, who, most of the time, speak of knowledge only in some looser sense. Again, it is not yet even fixed what this is supposed to mean.

There is a sort of worry some have had about occasion-sensitivity, both in general and for knowledge in particular. It is that the various things that are to be said truly – each on some occasion – as to whether such and such, where occasion-sensitivity obtained, are not mutually consistent: the (sup-posed) occasion-sensitive facts to the effect that things are that way do not cohere with those to the effect that they are not. That, the idea is, shows it-self in this: one could not, while in a position to say some one of those things truly, consistently acknowledge the truth of some others. For example, where it is true to say that Sid does not know there are sheep behind the

barn, Max cannot consistently countenance the truth of any supposed fact
to the effect that Sid does know. So he cannot consistently recognize the
existence of occasion-sensitivity.

The worry might be elaborated in a variety of ways. The following will
do. Others are mere variants. If knowledge is occasion-sensitive, there
should be situations of this form. Pia, in given circumstances, speaks truth in
saying Sid to know there are sheep behind the barn: on the understanding
there would then be of what knowing this would be, Sid does know. Max,
(at that very time) in different circumstances, similarly speaks truth in saying
Sid not to know. Max does so because of what, on his occasion, counts as
what might be – the truths there are *then* to tell about this, the understanding
might be then would bear. As it may be, on that understanding, goats might
have been flooding in; some may have washed up behind the barn. But if
there might be goats, then Sid does not know there are sheep. Nothing he
can see distinguishes between *those* possibilities.

If Pia spoke of *knowledge*, then what makes what she said true cannot be
merely some fact about (at best) second-class knowledge. For second-class
knowledge would not be knowledge on *any* understanding *knowing* bears. So
what makes for the truth of what Pia said cannot be that though Sid might
have been wrong, that possibility, such as it is, may be *neglected* for the pur-
poses of what she said. Max, though, tells truth in saying there might have
been goats. If there might have been,[19] then Sid might have been wrong. So,
it seems, if Pia told the truth, then there must be a possibility to be ignored
for purposes of what she said. So she cannot have spoken of knowledge. Nor
can Max consistently admit she might have.

This worry is rooted in not taking occasion-sensitivity completely
seriously. Several factors are at work, some endemic to occasion-sensitivity,
some peculiar to the case of knowledge. I begin with the endemic. This
should manifest itself as well for occasion-sensitivity in being blue. As it may
be, Pia speaks truth in calling a lake blue: the way it reflects the sky on this
fine day ensures that. Sid speaks truth in saying the lake not to be blue:
absence of dye, copper sulphate, etc., ensures that. Suppose Sid admits that
Pia spoke truth *in speaking of the lake's being blue*. Then he seems committed to
this: Pia said that the lake is blue; what she thus said is true. From which it
follows (the idea is) that the lake is blue, to which he is thus committed. But
the truth for him to tell was meant to be that the lake is not blue. Contra-
diction has arrived.

It has arrived because occasion-sensitivity is allowed only half-sway.
The truth Sid sees Pia to have told is that the lake is blue, on a certain

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[19] Hint: note the 'disquotational' move from 'Max spoke truth in saying there might have
been' to 'there might have been'. This will not turn out to be legitimate.

understanding of its being so: that imposed by her occasion. Recognizing this truth does not commit him to what he would then say in saying the lake to be blue. For in so speaking, he would be speaking of its being so on a different understanding of what that would be. Nor is he committed to the lake's being blue *tout court*. In fact, there is no fact to that effect. So if we put it to him 'that the lake is blue', nothing so far compels him to accept that. Thus far Sid is committed to no contradiction.

This points to two senses of 'say that', and of relatives using 'that'. 'Said that p' (say, that the roses are red) can mean: did what would then be saying that – so saying them to be red on the understanding there would then be of their being so. Or it can mean: said what one would now (in the position of the one saying 'said that') say in saying the roses to be red – said them to be red on the understanding of their being so which that position requires. It is on the first reading only that Sid, or we, need admit that Pia said that the lake is blue. But it is the second only that licenses the move from the truth of what she thus said to that which we, or the reporter of what she said, would say in saying the lake to be blue. There is no route here to saddling anyone with contradictory commitments. If being blue is an occasion-sensitive matter, then so far there is no problem.

Now for something specific to knowledge. If I do not know whether p, then I cannot know Sid to know this. For if not-p, then Sid does not know. And for all I know, perhaps not-p. This does not mean that Sid does not know, or that I am committed, on pain of contradiction, to denying that he does. (If I know Sid to be reliable, and that he says that p, I may thus know at a stroke both that p and that he knows it. So if I do not know whether p, I do not know all of these further things.) Similarly, if, from my perspective, it might be that p (say, that goats have been flooding in), I cannot *know* that there is an occasion on which this does not count as a way things might be. (I can know there is one on which one would not intuitively suppose it was a way things might be. That is a different matter.) For all that, there might be such an occasion. People better informed than me (to take one example) might enjoy it. What Pia sees might make it untrue to say what she then would in saying that caprine presence is a way things might be. To know her to enjoy such a position would be to know that those worries which need contending with in my position are, in fact, unfounded; at which point they cease to be worries that need contending with. In allowing that there might be such an occasion, though, I do not contradict what it is currently true for me to say as to what might be.

Max speaks truth in saying there might be goats. The truth he speaks is that there might be, on a certain understanding of something's being what might be: what one ought to understand by this on this occasion. Again, if

there is occasion-sensitivity, then there are not, in addition to such facts as to what might be when one understands *might be* in this or that way, further facts as to what might be anyway, occasion-insensitively. It is facts of the first kind, and not such supposed further facts, that bear on the truth of knowledge ascriptions, different ones on different ascriptions. Where Sid does not know, he is not to be treated as authoritative; where he does, he is. That rule applies equally in Pia's situation and in Max's. There is no difficulty in the idea that some people, engaging with the world in given ways, ought to treat Sid as an authority while others, engaged in other ways, ought not – even if the latter cannot recognize what the former ought to do.

Max ought not to treat Sid as an authority. For he ought to treat goats behind the barn as a way things might be. If he does so treat it, he will see what Pia said as indifferent to a possibility. But what Pia's statement is indifferent to is what might be *on a certain understanding of what might be.* It need not thereby be indifferent to any way things might be, on that understanding of *might be* which its occasion calls for. (Nor is that more than Max, on his occasion, can recognize consistently.) So it need not be understood as crediting Sid with any status he might enjoy despite the existence of possibilities that he is wrong. It may be crediting him with a status he can only enjoy in having proof he grasps as proof. What may vary from one occasion to another (from Max's, say, to Pia's) is what would count as enjoying *that.*

What, if right, would demonstrate occasion-sensitivity is this. For us, both Pia's occasion and Max's may be fully in view. We can see all that would make things count one way on the one occasion, another on the other – if the relevant notions are occasion-sensitive. If there is not occasion-sensitivity, then at most one of these occasions exhibits the facts as they really are. For there are then only occasion-insensitive facts as to what (really) might be, no matter what else passes for that on one occasion or the other. So either it really might be that there are goats behind the barn, or, really, that is not a way things might be, *punkt.* So which is it? What Austin and I think is that this question has no motivated answer. Nothing in the way things are gives the one answer any better credentials than the other as an answer to the question what (really) might be. If we are right, and if the point holds, not just for goats behind the barn, but reasonably systematically, then there can be no facts about what might be (or surely not enough) if those facts are not occasion-sensitive ones. That is always the mainspring of occasion-sensitivity. I think it is easy to confirm in the case at hand.

It is incumbent on any contextualist view of knowledge to speak, manifestly and demonstrably, of *knowledge*, and nothing less. It must not merely

speak of certainty good enough for one or another condition we may be in. For that reason it will not do to speak of higher and lower, or stricter and looser, standards for knowing, as if variation is merely in what we let *pass* for knowledge. It will not do to allow that there is any occasion on which, when it comes to who counts as knowing what, there are possibilities to be ignored. I have just sketched the lines on which Austin showed how this trick is to be turned. I hope also to have indicated why the trick is needed if knowledge is to fit, as it should, Cook Wilson's core conception.

VI. STATUS

John McDowell has argued compellingly that (what is in fact) Cook Wilson's core conception of knowledge had better be right. He focuses on what he calls sometimes 'the highest common factor view', sometimes 'the hybrid conception' – a view that knowledge is decomposable into some condition for which we are completely responsible, and some surrounding conditions for which we are not. On the view he opposes,

> knowledge is a status one possesses by virtue of an appropriate standing in the space of reasons when – this is an extra condition, not ensured by one's standing in the space of reasons – the world does one the favour of being so arranged that what one takes to be so is so.

> The upshot ... is that knowledge of the external world cannot be completely constituted by standings in the space of reasons. The hybrid view concedes that this is partly a matter of luck.[20]

He opposes, equally, the idea that knowledge may be anything less than seeing, *unmistakably*, that *p*:

> One's epistemic standing on some question cannot intelligibly be constituted, even in part, by matters blankly external to how it is with one subjectively. For how could such matters be other than beyond one's ken? And how could matters beyond one's ken make any difference to one's epistemic standing?

When one knows that *p*,

> The obtaining of the fact is precisely not blankly external to [the subject's] subjectivity, as it would be if the truth about that were exhausted by the highest common factor.[21]

Thus on the core points McDowell and Cook Wilson are one.

[20] 'Knowledge and the Internal', in *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* (Harvard UP, 1998), pp. 400, 405.
[21] 'Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge', in *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*, pp. 390, 391.

McDowell sides with Austin (against Cook Wilson and Prichard) in making the scope of knowledge (roughly) what we ordinarily suppose it to be. On his view, Cook Wilson's core conception allows one to know, say, that there is a chair a few feet in front of one. He also joins Austin in replacing talk of frames of mind with talk of statuses – in his case, standings in the space of reasons. It is easy to see how whether someone is to be accorded a certain status – expert on baseball, elder statesman, athlete – may depend on the occasion for, or point in, according it. (Even I, to my surprise, count as an expert on baseball when among those raised on cricket.) So one might well see talk of status as a special invitation to Austin's view of the occasion-sensitivity of epistemic notions. But that is an invitation McDowell declines, or at least does nothing to take up. That, I suggest, engenders problems.

If one declines the invitation, then for any thinker N and anything p one might sensibly be said to know, whether N knows that p depends only on how N is, and how things are, or how N's environment is. It depends not at all on the circumstances in which to count N as knowing or not. Thus it is ever true to say that N knows that p (at a given time) if and only if it is always true to say this. And if it is ever true or false to say this, then one will always say something true or false in saying it, no matter in what circumstances. Similarly for whether N might be wrong as regards p – for whether there is a possibility for him to be wrong, or that he is. These two occasion-insensitivities create (at least within the context of the core conception) a tension which, so far as I can see, has no well motivated resolution.

Passing the free-range pig farm near Leuchars, I note, with pleasure, the happy pigs – one, in particular, his snout poking through the railings. Eschewing Austin's view, either I know, *tout court*, that a pig has poked his snout through the rails, or I do not know this, *tout court* (unless there is something odd about this case, so that in it, as opposed to most, I neither clearly know, nor clearly do not – a possibility I rule out by *fiat*). If there are cases where someone knows such things, this case must surely be one. I may report that I saw a pig poking his snout between the rails, and it would be wrong to suggest that perhaps I do not know this. At least it would sometimes be wrong to suggest that. On the counter-Austinian view, it is sometimes wrong only if it always is.

On the other hand, if I do know, then it is not so that I might, or may, be wrong. There is simply no possibility that I am wrong. For any way for one to be wrong about a thing like that, it is not true to say that I might (may) be wrong in that way. For this not to be true to say is for this to be something it would *always* be untrue to say. So we may factor out 'true to say': it is flatly not so that I might (may) be wrong in that way. But it is really hard to see

how things could be like this. We must admit that there are ringers for my situation with respect to that pig. It is not, so far as we know, beyond the reach of some future robotics to build robot pigs indistinguishable by sight (at my distance) from pigs, and disposed to stick their snouts through railings. If I were to suppose that such had already been done clandestinely (at the local air base) and was being tested on this 'farm', I would not have exceeded the bounds of sense (at least in any absolute sense). I would not have strayed from the world of possibilities into a world of pure fantasy, where teapots talk, and so on. So if whatever is possible is possible full stop, on any occasion for saying so, then, it seems, we must say that it is possible for me to be facing a robot pig, even if that is an outrageous possibility, the chances are vanishingly small, and so on. Or, if this is not so, on this particular occasion of my passing that farm, it is hard to see what a properly motivated way might be of distinguishing the cases where it is so from those where it is not (again, within our counter-Austinian framework).

It is this tension, I think, that drives some to externalism. If I, or you, dismiss the possibility of robotic pigs, with regard to my experience near Leuchars, then, within the present framework, that must appear as only amounting to saying that it is not a possibility to be taken seriously – that we need not worry about such things – and not that there really is no such possibility at all. But in that case my claim to know must stand or fall despite the (perhaps negligible) possibility that I am in a situation with robotic pigs – despite the fact that, after all, though the possibility is negligible, I might be wrong. And then, given all that I can actually see to be so, I must, after all, rely on favours from the world, even if only negligible ones, for being right. That is just what externalists maintain. It is just what McDowell (rightly) says must not be so. But it remains mysterious how we can be entitled to deny it.

I think this unresolved tension shows up in McDowell himself. For example, he says this:

> We cannot eliminate what the interiorized conception ... conceives as a quite alien factor, the kindness of the world, as a contributor to our coming to occupy epistemically satisfactory positions in the space of reason.... When someone enjoys such a position, that involves, if you like, a stroke of good fortune, a kindness from the world.... Whether we like it or not, we have to rely on favours from the world: not just that it present us with appearances ... but that on occasion it actually is what it appears to be. But that the world does someone the necessary favour, on a given occasion, of being the way it appears to be is not extra to the person's standing in the space of reasons.... Once she has achieved such a standing, she needs no extra help from the world to count as knowing.[22]

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[22] 'Knowledge and the Internal', pp. 405–6.

The favour the world must do me if, as I find myself at time *t*, I am to know that *p*, is that 'it actually is what it appears to be' – that *p* actually is so, rather than (for me, then, undetectably) merely appearing to be so. But, the idea is, once that favour is done, that it has been may be part of my standing in the space of reasons: part, that is, of what it is for me to know that *p*. In which case, my enjoying the standing means that I need no favours.

The human intellect and senses are, to be sure, inherently fallible, though hardly inveterately so. As Austin reminds us ('Other Minds', p. 98), 'a "theory of knowledge" which denies this liability' ends up 'denying the existence of "knowledge"'. But though there is this inherent liability, there is no room, I suggest, for the sort of favour McDowell here envisages. I face a pig, just on the other side of the railing from me. What I see (whether I realize this or not) is a pig before me. If I take in (register, am aware of) my doing *that*, then I have that – that I see a pig before me – as my reason for taking there to be a pig before me; in which case I have proof, in the strictest sense of proof, that there is one before me. To take this in – to *register* it, and not merely, say, to surmise it – I must have a suitable ability. I must be able to tell *when* I see a pig before me. If I have such an ability, then one favour I do not need from the world is that things 'be what they appear'. My ability is precisely one to tell how (in the relevant respect) things are. If I lack such an ability, then I cannot be said to know there is a pig before me – in the crucial instance, to register, rather than surmise. In that case, favours from the world cannot help me. So there is no room for McDowell's envisaged favours. True, any such human ability is an ability at all (alternatively, one someone has) only in an hospitable environment. I know a pig when I see one; but I could not claim this were my environment in fact rife with peccaries, and were peccaries indistinguishable (to a non-expert) from pigs. So I may, if so inclined, thank the world for providing an hospitable environment. But that is far from owing it thanks for things' being, on this particular occasion, 'what they appear'.

McDowell's picture thus makes room for a possibility that should not be there. I owe thanks to the world, in the indicated way, only if there is a possibility that things are not 'as they appear'. That it makes this room is unsurprising, since it leaves out Austin's contribution: occasion-sensitivity. Without that, things may always fail to be what they appear. For they may so fail if there may be a ringer pig (a peccary) before me. But, without Austin, there may be, full stop, if it is ever true to say there might. And surely *sometimes* (in philosophy, for example), it would be true to say this. Nothing in nature makes it strictly impossible for a peccary ringer pig to be before me. Sometimes *that* fact can be expressed by saying that it is possible for me to be seeing such a ringer. So, without Austin, it is always true to say

this. So (with the pig plainly before me) I might be seeing a peccary, full stop. But then I cannot know myself to see a pig before me. That result makes Austin's revolution obligatory.

McDowell speaks of cases of knowledge as our 'taking in the layout of reality'; of our being directly receptive to this. Without Austin, this can seem, and has seemed to some, to be positing some sort of supernatural capacity. Whereas if we accept Austin's transformation of Cook Wilson, it is nothing of the sort. It is simply our standing towards the way things in fact are – the actual layout of reality – in some of the ordinary, familiar ways in which we sometimes do stand to that. It may be seeing the pig before you, or being familiar with where the sheep are kept, in the very mundane ways we do these things – by looking, by having spent some time (alert and awake) on the farm. Such perfectly mundane things may just *count* as taking in the layout of reality – on the one side, the layout, on the other the looking at it. But – Austin's point – they *may* so count only on condition that sometimes they would not. I look at the pig, and now, depending on the occasion, or the purposes, for saying what I did, I may sometimes count as having seen a pig to be there, and sometimes not. What varies here is not the way the world is, but something like the point of crediting me with such a thing, or refusing to. Our ordinary accomplishments, of an 'inherently fallible' sort, may be just what it is like to take in the layout of reality. There is nothing supernatural about them. They will do for taking this in, only because whether one has taken it in or not is an occasion-sensitive matter.[23]

Northwestern University, Illinois