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Title: The truth about truth as a condition of premise adequacy
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As is well known, formal deductive logic proposes *soundness* as the criterion of argument cogency. An argument is *sound* if and only if its premises deductively entail its conclusion ——transfer their truth to it——*and* its premises are true. Although soundness is an ideal, many will regard it as too narrow to characterize argument correctness or logical cogency properly. According to the criterion, inductive arguments will not be good or logically cogent arguments because they are not deductively valid. But intuitively, many inductive arguments, although not guaranteeing that their conclusions are true, give us good reason to accept those conclusions. A broader definition then would say that an argument is logically cogent or correct just in case if its premises were true, its conclusion would be true or at least probable, and its premises in fact are true. Let us call this the formal logic criterion for argument cogency.1

There is something anomalous with the formal logic criterion. Although it gives us a definition of argument cogency, it also makes it impossible, in most cases, for logic as a discipline to tell us whether arguments *are* cogent. Formal deductive logic is *a priori*. Questions of deductive entailment and validity are settled *a priori* by considering logical form. Determining whether or not an argument is deductively valid does not involve empirical investigation. Although the concept of probability bristles with philosophical difficulties, according to the logical interpretation at least, determining probability is also *a priori*. Hence by applying the canons of logic, we may be able to determine that an argument is deductively valid or that its premises render its conclusion probable. Logic can tell us whether premises and conclusion are rightly related. But typically, logic cannot tell us whether the premises are true. Unless a premise is logically determinate ——either logically true or logically false——its truth is a matter of contingent fact, an issue to be decided by observation or other non-logical means. Logic can also tell us whether a set of premises as a whole is consistent or inconsistent, but of an inconsistent set of contingent statements, where at least one must be false, logic cannot tel us which one is false. Given the formal logic criterion of argument cogency, formal logic *as a discipline* can give us only half the answer to whether an argument is cogent. If the premises are true, then the conclusion is true or at least probable. If the premises are true, then the argument is cogent. But are the premises true? Should I accept the conclusion on the basis of this argument? Formal logic cannot give us a complete but only a conditional answer to that question.

By contrast, informal logic——or that part of logic nowadays counted as informal——has not been content with evaluating premises only for their logical status or overall consistency. Otherwise, begging the question would not be counted a fallacy. If *p* is true, then the argument

$$\overline{\backslash p}$$

is logically impeccable given the formal logic criterion. But clearly if one were to doubt that *p*, this argument would do nothing to remove that doubt. It would give us no reason which we might not doubt to justify accepting or believing *p*. From the point of view of justifying accepting that *p*, the argument is clearly faulty.

Begging the question is a special case of a more general problem of finding premises doubtful which has been recognized from the beginning of the informal logic movement as pertinent to argument evaluation. In *Logical Self-Defense*, Johnson and Blair included problematic premise among the three basic fallacies. According to their characterization, a premise is problematic just in case it is not defended but should have been. As Johnson and Blair see it, there are situations where an arguer is exempt from defending a particular premise, for example where the premise is self-evidently true, a matter of common knowledge, or the arguer has expert credentials to put forward the statement. (Compare Johnson and Blair 1977: 23-26.) But if no excepting condition holds for a given premise and the arguer has left it undefended, then the premise is problematic and the argument flawed.

If the opposite of being problematic is being acceptable, then to be cogent the premises of an argument must be acceptable. Given Johnson and Blair's characterization of problematic premise, acceptability is an epistemological notion. By assessing premises for acceptability, then, are we still doing logic? Is this rather an exercise in applied epistemology? Is informal logic confronted with a dilemma here? To be cogent from the informal logic point of view, the premises of an argument must be acceptable. But if assessing premises for acceptability is part of informal logic, is informal logic still logic?

Some would argue that we should settle this problem by embracing the second horn of the dilemma——informal logic is applied epistemology. This raises questions of disciplinary integrity. Formal logic is an *a priori* discipline. Although it honors soundness as a criterion of argument cogency, it recognizes that as a discipline it cannot in general decide questions of soundness. By incorporating issues of premise acceptability, what sort of discipline is informal logic?

We cannot answer this question unless we have a much more precise notion of acceptability. Notice that if one characterizes being acceptable as being not problematic ——and up to this point we have not characterized acceptability more explicitly——from a logical point of view our definition is not acceptable. Unless there is no positive characterization of acceptability, the definition is negative rather than positive. How may we give a positive characterization of acceptability? The clue, I believe, is already contained in Johnson and Blair's characterization of when a premise is not problematic. If I am presented with an argument where I recognize the premises as self-evident, or a matter of common knowledge, or advanced by an appropriate authority, I am right in regarding those premises as non-problematic. But surely, in such circumstances, the premises are justified from my point of view. I am justified in accepting or believing those premises.

Clearly, these are not the only circumstances in which such belief or acceptance would be justified. Even if a premise is not *self*-evident, it may be evident given the evidence available to me through my own cognitive or belief-generating mechanisms. If I have no reason to believe that these mechanisms are unreliable, if I am aware of no epistemic defeaters, I am justified in believing or accepting the premise. Acceptability amounts to justification; more precisely a premise is acceptable to me as critical challenger or assessor of an argument just in case I am justified in accepting that premise.

This, however, does not advance the question of the nature of informal logic without an understanding of justification——an epistemological notion. There are a plethora of concepts of justification. Surveying and critically evaluating them or their appropriateness for constructing a definition of acceptability is beyond our scope in this paper. Rather we shall present one concept of justification which we have argued is especially appropriate for a definition of acceptability:

> S is justified in believing that *p* iff S's belief that *p* is based on presumptively adequate grounds from S's point of view and S lacks sufficient overriding reasons to the contrary. (Freeman 1996: 67)

Let us consider some examples of what constitutes a justified belief on this definition. Suppose I perceive a tree outside my office window and on this basis form a belief that there *is* a tree outside my office window. My perceptual experience, my being appeared to in this way, is the ground of my belief. This ground will be adequate just in case it is a reliable indicator of the truth of that belief. Given that ground, the probability that the belief is true will be high. This probability would ordinarily be determined by the overall reliability of my (visual) perceptual mechanism. That mechanism will be *presumptively* reliable just in case there is a presumption for its reliability, just in case the burden of proof would be on someone to show that it is not reliable. As Rescher puts it, "A presumption indicates that in the absence of specific counterindications we are to accept how things `as a rule' are taken as standing, and it places the burden of proof on the adversary's side."(Rescher 1977: 30) But there is a presumption for sense perception. "Theses based on observation...are to have the benefit of doubt, a presumption of truth in their favor——they are to stand unless significant counterindications are forthcoming." (Rescher 1977: 37) Hence my perceptual experience is a presumptively adequate ground of my belief that there is a tree outside my office window. Now this presumption of adequacy can be defeated. There are perceptual illusions. My perceptual mechanism may possibly malfunction. But let us suppose that I am not seeing double and have no reason to think that my perceptual experience is caused by some trick. That is, I am aware of no defeaters to my belief; I have no reasons to the contrary. So I am justified in believing that there is a tree outside my office window.

Here is another example. Suppose a suitably qualified expert informs me that a certain phenomenon is to be explained in a certain way, and on that basis I form the belief that the explanation accounts for the phenomenon. The expert's word is the ground of my belief. But the expert is presumptively trustworthy and I am not aware in this case of any evidence or reason which would impugn his trustworthiness. I have no reason to think that

the expert is suffering from some temporary incapacity or that he has a vested interest in my accepting that explanation. So I am justified in believing this explanation.

These examples illustrate what our definition of justified belief amounts to. If I am aware of grounds for a belief, there is a presumption of reliability or trustworthiness for the source of these grounds, and I am aware of no defeaters of this presumptive reliability, the belief is justified. But if a premise in an argument is thus justified from my point of view, why should I not find it acceptable? What would be wrong in my taking that justified belief as a premise in an argument and reasoning from that belief, should it be relevant to the conclusion I am trying to establish? Accordingly, we offer this definition of premise acceptability:

> A premise that *p* is acceptable for S if and only if S is justified in believing that *p* (Compare Freeman 1996: 59)

where being justified is explicated according to our definition.

Given our definition, the notions of acceptability and justification are internal. We have presented an internalist theory of justification. What does this mean? We may speak of states of conditions as being internal. According to Plantinga, they are"states or conditions of which the cognizer is or can be *aware*; they are states of which he has or can easily have knowledge; they are states or properties to which he has cognitive or epistemic access." (Plantinga 1993: 5, italics in original) But this access is somehow special or privileged. This might mean that one could determine by reflection alone that these states or conditions held, or that one could determine this with certainty, or that one can be mistaken about these states or conditions only by making a mistake which is culpable. (Compare Plantinga's discussion, p. 5.) Although whether or not we possess evidence justifying a belief may very well be a matter of events and conditions in the external world, that a belief is based on a certain experience——perceptual or otherwise——is an internal condition. That one possesses evidence, for example recognizing that one has certain sense experiences, is an internal matter. One can see directly that one is appeared to in the manner of a tree outside one's office window. Whether or not a source *is* reliable, whether or not the objective probability is high that the grounds generated by a source indicate that the belief they ground is true, is an external matter. Those understanding justification in these terms are externalist. But presumptive reliability is again an internal matter. As Thomas Reid put it, it is a matter of our constitution, our epistemic constitution of which we are or can be directly aware. Finally, that we are not aware of defeaters, that we are not aware of reasons sufficient to override a presumption of reliability in a given case, is again a matter of our awareness. Hence a belief's being justified is an internal matter. Hence, given that acceptability is defined in terms of justification, it is an internal notion also.

I believe this has important implications for understanding informal logic as a discipline. Like acceptability as we have defined it, as a body of *a priori* knowledge formal logic is also internal. It may be self-evident that certain logically true statements are necessarily true and that certain inferential moves are necessarily truth-preserving. Recognizing certain

entailment relations is a matter of direct or internal awareness. I can immediately see the connection of ideas on which the entailment holds. Where this is not self-evident, one can nonetheless ascertain this by reflection alone. Indeed one may do this by constructing a formal derivation to show that one statement follows from a set of statements, breaking down that inference into a series of steps each self-evidently truth-preserving. A statement itself may not be self-evidently true but may be shown to be true through a similar series of steps constituting a logical proof.

By including questions of acceptability within informal logic, the scope of the discipline is extended beyond pure logic to include issues of applied epistemology. However, by defining acceptability as we have, informal logic like logic——deductive logic at least——remains an internal discipline. Identifying acceptable premises, acceptable at least from my point of view as the critical evaluator of an argument, like identifying validity, is a matter of taking into account states or conditions to which I have internal epistemic access. If a logically good or logically convincing argument, then, is defined as one whose premises are acceptable and so related to the conclusion as to transfer their acceptability to it (presumably by being relevant to the conclusion and constituting grounds adequate for accepting the conclusion), then the notion of a logically good argument is an internal notion.

This contrasts markedly with the truth criterion. Truth is an external notion. Certainly if one accepts the correspondence theory of truth, whether or not a statement is true depends upon factors in the world and not on matters internal to a given cognizer. Knowledge of that truth involves acquiring information about these states external to the cognizer and is not a matter of internal epistemic access. Certainly, one cannot determine by reflection alone or with logical certainty that some historical claim is true or that some law of physics is confirmed. A discipline that involved the resources to settle the truth of such historical or scientific claims would have to include history and physics besides logic. But what would be the unity of such a discipline? Making truth then a condition of premise adequacy means that logic as a discipline cannot ordinarily comment on the question of premise adequacy.

It does not follow from these considerations on the appropriateness of premise acceptability as a criterion of premise adequacy, of course, that truth is not also a condition of premise adequacy. If our epistemic goal is the acquisition of truth and the avoidance of falsehood and error, and if we have no reason to believe that from false premises we can reliably infer true conclusions, truth of premises will be a desideratum in arguments. Even if logic as a discipline cannot rule on the truth of premises in most instances, from our background knowledge or other available information we can judge in a number of cases whether the premises of an argument are true or false. In these cases, we would not need logic as a discipline to determine whether the premises are true or false. Should we recognize the premises as false, we would reject the argument. Our goal of truth would require truth to be a condition of premise adequacy. In those cases where we might not know that a premise is true but would have a justified belief that it is true, we could appeal to the acceptability criterion to judge whether the premises were adequate. We might then recognize both criteria——truth and acceptability——as being legitimate.

This has been proposed by several authors. Ralph Johnson has in public presentations endorsed the view that the criteria for a good argument should require the premises of an argument to be true in addition to being acceptable.

In "Assessing Basic Premises," Derek Allen distinguishes *logically* good arguments from cogent arguments, holding that we should not speak of good arguments *simpliciter*. A necessary condition for an argument to be logically good is for its premises to support its conclusion, and Allen holds that false premises give no support to the conclusion2. Thus, as long as the premises of an argument are statements which are either true or false, the premises of a logically good argument must be true3. Acceptability of premises will not be sufficient for their adequacy as premises in a logically good argument, since acceptable but false premises will fail to support their conclusions. By contrast, "an argument is cogent for an audience if the audience would be epistemically justified in believing the argument to be logically good." (Allen 1995: 222) Since audiences differ in what they are epistemically justified in believing, an argument which is cogent for one audience need not be cogent for another. But if an audience is epistemically justified in believing the premises of an argument, then those premises are acceptable for the audience. Acceptability, then, is a necessary condition for cogency: "the basic premises of an argument must be acceptable if the argument is cogent for its audience." (Allen 1995: 222)

In "Should We Assess the Basic Premises of an Argument for Truth or Acceptability?" Allen answers that we should make room for both. "I...think... that a theory of argument should make room for premise-acceptability as a criterion of argument goodness. At the same time I think that a theory of argument should also make room for premise-truth as a criterion of argument goodness."(Allen 1998: 5) Allen, following Goldman, distinguishes a logical sense or conception of a good argument from an epistemological conception, Feldman's notion. He points out that if we replace Feldman's first condition, "S is justified in believing the conjunction of all the premises of the argument" with "The argument's premises are acceptable for S," we may conceive of a theory of argument embracing both conceptions of good argument. The theory thus accords both premise truth and premise acceptability a place in the criteria for good arguments, although they would be criteria for different senses of good argument.

Allen argues that there is good reason for a theory of argument to incorporate both criteria. Agreeing with Govier that "The social institution of argument has as its typical function or purpose the rational persuasion of a rationally critical audience,"(Allen 1998: 6) entails for Allen that the member or members of the intended rationally critical audience need to consider whether the argument is good from their point of view, and the arguer and any external assessor also need to consider whether the argument is good from the intended audience's point of view. "Thus a notion of argument goodness that is relativized to a person (or person) has utility in typical cases for an arguer and his or her audience, and for an external assessor of the argument. And it is precisely such a conception of argument goodness that an epistemological conception of good argument provides."(Allen 1998: 6-7) Given just the epistemological conception, however, "we will not have a criterion of argument goodness relative to which an argument is defective if it has false premises."(Allen 1998: 7) But the logical conception constitutes just such a criterion. Since

we want to say both that a function of argument is to rationally persuade a rationally critical audience and that having false premises constitutes a defect in an argument, we would do well to have our theory of argument embrace both the logical and epistemological conceptions of argument goodness.

By holding that a theory of argument should embrace both of these conceptions and thus both truth and acceptability as criteria of premise adequacy, Allen raises a problem. Ralph Johnson refers to it in his commentary on Allen's paper as the *Integration Problem*: "How do we get the truth-requirement and the acceptability requirement together?" (Johnson 1998: 2) I believe that in the light of our definition of acceptability in terms of a specific concept of justification in section one of this paper that the integration problem can be solved straightforwardly. In moral theory, we may distinguish between an act's objective and subjective rightness, or whether an act is an objective or subjective duty. Whether an act is objectively right or an objective duty depends on certain features of the act. Philosophers may disagree on what exactly these features are. On an intuitionist analysis such as Sir David Ross's, for example, if by virtue of satisfying certain objective conditions an act is *prima facie* right and by virtue of satisfying others, it is *prima facie* wrong, yet the right making conditions outweigh or trump the wrong making conditions, the act is right or a duty *simpliciter*. This is an objective property of the act. For example, it is an objective feature or property of an act that it is an instance of promise-keeping. It is also an objective feature of an act that performing it denies some possible benefit to a given individual. It is also objectively true that my duty of perfect obligation to keep a promise outweighs my *prima facie* duty of beneficence to this individual in this case. Hence, absent further morally relevant conditions, the promise is my objective duty in this situation. If I fail to keep the promise, I fail to do my objective duty.

In a genuinely complex conflict of *prima facie* duties, one involving vexed issues, however, I may be honestly mistaken about what is my objective duty. I may choose to perform some act which is not my duty, even though I believe it to be my duty and I have arrived at that belief through conscientious consideration of the morally relevant factors of the situation. Am I guilty or blameworthy in this case? We would say no. As Plantinga points out, we "think that someone who has done no more than what she nonculpably things duty permits or requires, is not culpable or guilty in doing what she does, even if we think that what she has done is wrong." (Plantinga 1993: 15) The act, although objectively wrong, is subjectively right or permissible. Even an act which is objectively right may be subjectively wrong. If upon conscientiously considering the morally relevant features of a situation I conclude that a certain act is wrong but yet I commit that act anyway, my act is subjectively wrong and I am blameworthy, even though the action be objectively right.

I suggest that on analogy with the objective and subjective rightness of acts, we may speak of the objective and subjective correctness of arguments. An argument is *objectively correct* if it is logically correct in Goldman and Allen's sense, if and only if all its premises are true and they either entail the conclusion or support it with sufficient strength to render it probable. An argument is *subjectively correct* for a given critical receiver of the argument if and only if all the premises are acceptable to that person and the person is justified in believing that the argument is valid or inductively strong.

Are "objective" and "subjective" appropriate adjectives here? Whether the premises of an argument are true and whether the argument is deductively valid or inductively strong are objective features of the argument. What we call the objective rightness of an argument is thus an objective feature of arguments. Our analysis of acceptability in section one defined the concept in terms of an internalist conception of justification. For S to be justified in believing a premise, S must be aware of presumptively adequate grounds on which the premise is based and not aware of sufficient overriding reasons to the contrary. Whether or not S is justified in believing a premise p (or that a set of premises _ is properly connected to a conclusion *c*) is a matter of S's awareness. These are subjective features of the argument, relative to S. So the subjective rightness of an argument is subjective.

I believe we may profitably develop this analogy further. Although there may be cases where what one sees as his subjective duty may be not his objective duty, as Plantinga points out, there are cases where we would be very reluctant to say that objective and subjective duty diverge.

> I take part in a racist lynching: you will not be impressed by my claim that, after careful reflection, I considered that the right thing to do....There are many moral beliefs we don't think a properly functioning human being can (in ordinary circumstances) nonculpably acquire. (Plantinga 1993: 17)

So if a human being *does* acquire such moral beliefs, we regard the person as culpable, as long as we have no reason to think there is something cognitively wrong with the individual. When it comes to an act such as torturing the helpless or wantonly disregarding the feelings of others, we think that a person "ought not to think that action permissible or obligatory; and the fact that he *does* think so shows (if his cognitive faculties are functioning properly) that at some point he has culpably done something that has clouded his own moral vision."(Plantinga 1993: 18, italics in original) So in some cases objective and subjective duty coincide.

How does this apply to the integration problem, to integrating the objective and subjective conceptions of argument correctness? Consider the rule *modus ponens*. If an argument is an instance of this rule, its premises and conclusion will be adequately connected. This is an objective feature of the argument. But what would we think of someone who did not accept *modus ponens* as valid? "We think a human being whose faculties are functioning properly will accept *modus ponens* as valid but fail to pay the same compliment to Affirming the Consequent."(Plantinga 1993: 18) Thus, on the criterion of connection adequacy, at least, there are cases where the objective and subjective rightness of arguments coincide. But it is proper to logic to develop canons of objective connection adequacy and the methods by which one can ascertain whether or not the premises are properly connected objectively to the conclusion. But, as we reminded ourselves in section one, logic is *a priori* and thus something to which we have internal access. So, we may say that one point of the study of logic is to increase the overlap between the subjective and objective correctness of arguments, insofar as this deals with connection adequacy. By studying logic, we increase the number of cases in which we can determine whether or not the premises are properly connected to the conclusion. We increase our

ability to have justified beliefs that the premises and conclusions of arguments are adequately connected. But this is to recognize objective features of the argument. To be subjectively right on this issue of connection adequacy in these cases is to recognize the objective rightness of the connection.

Our discussion in section one indicates that the situation is different for premise adequacy. Objectively, a premise will be adequate just in case it is true. Subjectively, it will be adequate for a person S just in case S has a justified belief in that premise. Now although the procedures for determining in a given case whether or not a belief is justified for S, for judging whether S's belief is based on presumptively adequate grounds not overridden by any contrary reasons, are not proper to logic (at least as traditionally understood), they are proper to an extension of logic to which we have internal access. Determining acceptability, or at least determining the canons of acceptability, is proper to this discipline. Now clearly S, with cognitive mechanisms functioning properly, may nonculpably arrive at a justified belief that *p*, where *p* is false. Study of this extended discipline, be it called informal logic or applied epistemology, will not necessarily or systematically increase the overlap between the objective and subjective adequacy of premises. But what is the relation between subjective and objective rightness or adequacy for premises, between acceptability and truth? A premise *p* will be acceptable for S just in case S's believe that *p is true* is justified. The subjective rightness of a premise is the justified belief that the premise is objectively right.

I submit then that by seeing truth and acceptability related this way, we have an answer to the integration problem. Truth is the objective criterion of premise adequacy; acceptability ——understood as justification on an internalist analysis——is the subjective criterion. The subjective criterion is satisfied for S just in case S has a justified belief that the objective criterion is satisfied. Indeed, our considerations here give a full integration of both the logical and epistemological criteria for argument correctness. The logical criterion characterizes the objective rightness of arguments; the epistemological, the subjective rightness.

Endnotes

1By the term "argument" in this discussion, we understand a set of premises put forward to support one and only one conclusion. Hence we are not concerned here with arguments involving serial or divergent structure. For the sake of our discussion here, we are also operating with an intuitive sense of "probable."

2Allen carries out his discussion presupposing the framework of direct arguments. Indirect arguments, such as reductio ad absurdum, require certain refinements or conditions which we need not consider here.

3Allen expresses himself in this way since he does not want to engage metaethical noncognitivists are this point. Hence he allows it possible for an argument to be logically good and not all of its premises to be true, if some of them are of a sort to be neither true

nor false. If one holds that every statement is either true or false, one could dispense with the conditional clause and assert that all the premises in a logically good argument must be true. In 1998, Allen specifically argues against any non-cognitivist who would claim that certain premises in an argument are neither true nor false.

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