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THE ROLE OF OBSTACLES AND THEIR ELIMINATION IN CASSAM'S MULTI-LEVELS FRAMEWORK

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1.

Even though the title may suggest otherwise, *The Possibility of Knowledge*[106] is not so much a book about the tenability of scepticism but rather about the nature of knowledge. This is due to the fact that Cassam is not primarily concerned with establishing the possibility of knowledge but with explaining it. Accordingly, the central question of the book is not "Is knowledge possible?" but rather, given that knowledge is possible:

(HP) How is knowledge possible?

Cassam tackles this question in a piecemeal fashion by answering more restricted questions such as:

(HP_{ew}) How is knowledge of the external world possible?

(HP_{pk}) How is perceptual knowledge possible?

(HP_{om}) How is knowledge of other minds possible?

(HP_{apk}) How is a priori knowledge possible?

Cassam calls questions of this kind *how-possible questions* or, in the case of epistemology, epistemological how-possible questions. As knowledge is not something we just have but rather something we have to acquire first, what makes knowledge possible are means of acquiring knowledge. An appropriate answer to an epistemological how-possible question will therefore have to name a means of acquiring knowledge. Cassam calls this a *Means Response* to a how-possible question. But the story doesn't end here.

In general, according to Cassam, how-possible questions arise only when we are baffled by the fact that something that seems impossible to us is still the case. If there is no reason to be surprised by something, we don't usually ask how it is possible. This, of course, applies to epistemological how-possible questions as well. They are therefore

[106] All page references are to this book.

obstacle-dependent, which is to say that they arise only when there seems to be an insuperable obstacle preventing the kind of knowledge in question. Due to this obstacle-dependence a Means Response alone won't do. In addition, the apparent obstacle has to be eliminated. This can either be accomplished by what Cassam calls an *obstacle-dissipating strategy*, i.e. by showing that the apparent obstacle is not a real obstacle after all, or by what Cassam calls an *obstacle-overcoming strategy*, i.e. by showing that the obstacle, though real, is not as insuperable as it may appear at first glance. A further question that can be asked, given a Means Response, is: what makes it possible to acquire knowledge by the given means? An appropriate answer to this question would list enabling conditions for the acquisition of knowledge via the means in question.

Because of the tripartite nature of this kind of answer to a how-possible question Cassam calls this a *multi-levels response*.[107] On the first level, in the Means Response, a means for acquiring knowledge is identified. On the second level the apparent obstacles to acquiring knowledge by the means in question are removed by either an obstacle-dissipating strategy or by an obstacle-overcoming strategy. On the third level enabling conditions for acquiring knowledge by the means in question are identified. Cassam offers an extensive discussion of Level 3 and its relation to Level 2, arguing that Level 3 responses are possible but usually not necessary (p. 36-50) and that the distinction between Level 2 and Level 3 may not always be sharp (see e.g. p. 20-21). In section II I will try to show that the distinction between Level 1 and Level 2 responses isn't always sharp either and that on occasion no (separate) Level 2 response is necessary. In section III I will argue that theories which offer obstacle-overcoming responses are more conservative than theories which offer obstacle-dissipating responses.

[107] Cassam introduces his notion of a multi-levels response in section 1.1 of *The Possibility of Knowledge* and explains and discusses it throughout the whole book. For a crisp summary see p. 9-10.

2.

Consider the opening paragraph of *The Possibility of Knowledge*, where Cassam gives an example (originally given by William Dray) of a (non-epistemological) how-possible question: a radio announcer reports that a fielder in a baseball game has just caught a ball that otherwise would have hit high up on the fence (p. 1). The obvious question, given that the fence is 20 feet high, is:

(HP_{cb}) How was it possible for the player to catch the ball 20 feet off the ground?

Cassam uses this example only to introduce the notion of a how-possible question and does not offer a multi-levels response to it. This is a little unfortunate as this seems to me to be an example where the first and the second level of Cassam's framework fuse. So, what could a multi-levels response to (HP_{cb}) look like? A first level response might be that the player moved within arms length of the ball, reached out and grabbed it. The obstacle then is the fact that it seems impossible for the player to get within arms length of the ball. So a second level response is needed. It is that the player used a ladder that was attached to the scorekeeper's platform. So we have a Means Response, an obstacle, and an obstacle-overcoming strategy. On this interpretation there is an obvious means for catching balls which in the case at hand seems to be insufficient to perform the task. Therefore we need to supplement the Means Response with an obstacle-overcoming response. But in the example we are not just asking about the means to catch a ball but about the means for catching a ball 20 feet off the ground. And there is no obvious means for a player to catch a ball 20 feet off the ground during a baseball game. So the problem is not that the obvious means are insufficient, but rather that there is no obvious means. So we can't overcome the obstacle by showing how the means can be sufficient after all, but rather by naming a means for catching the ball 20 feet off the ground in the first place. The obstacle consists not in the apparent insufficiency of means but in the apparent unavailability of means. Therefore calling attention to the ladder is not only an obstacle-dissipating response but also a Means Response. Once the Means Response is given, there are no more obstacles to be eliminated and accordingly there is no need for a separate Level 2 response. On this construal the first and the second level of Cassam's framework fuse in this case.

The baseball example is not a rare exception, as becomes clear when we take a closer look at one of Cassam's central examples for how-possible questions and multi-levels responses, viz. Kant's explanation of the supposed possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge. Cassam interprets Kant's answer to the question:

(HP_{sap}) How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?

as a multi-levels response. However, there seems to be an ambiguity in the characterisation of what Cassam takes to be Kant's Means Response. The question (HP_{sap}) arises due to what Cassam calls the *problem of sources*: the problem that there seems to be no source of synthetic a priori knowledge. The reason is that there are only two obvious sources of knowledge: experience and conceptual analysis. But as experience can't be a source of a priori knowledge and conceptual analysis can't be a source of synthetic knowledge, neither can be the source of synthetic a priori knowledge.

Before focusing on Kant's response to (HP_{sap}) Cassam sketches three possible *presupposed sources solutions* to the problem that, even though there seems to be no source of synthetic a priori knowledge, in mathematics we seem to have synthetic a priori knowledge, which try to show that either experience or conceptual analysis can be the source of mathematical knowledge by denying either that mathematical truths are synthetic or that they are necessary or that experience can't be the source of knowledge of necessary truths. Then he goes on to give a sketch of Kant's *additional sources solution* which posits construction in pure intuition as a third source of knowledge. It is important to note that Cassam categorizes these four possible solutions as obstacle-dissipating responses (p. 12-13). About Kant's response he writes:

> [Kant's] solution is an *additional sources* solution since it involves the positing of what he calls 'construction in pure intuition' as an additional source of knowledge by reference to which at least the possibility of geometrical knowledge be accounted for. [...] Viewed in one way, the additional sources solution looks like an obstacle-overcoming rather than an obstacle-dissipating response to (HP_{sap}) [...] Viewed in another way, however, Kant's solution to the problem of sources looks more dissipationist. (p. 12)

There can be no doubt that in this passage Cassam treats Kant's positing of construction in pure intuition as a Level 2 response. Yet, he also treats Kant's positing of construction in pure intuition as a source of knowledge as a Level 1 response to (HP_{sap}):

> To construct a figure in pure intuition is to 'draw' it in the imagination, and Kant's proposal is that the construction of geometrical concepts in pure intuition is a genuinely non-conceptual, non-empirical means of coming to know geometrical truths, and therefore a means of acquiring synthetic a priori knowledge. In my terms, this is a Level 1 response to (HP_{sap}). (p. 13)

So first Cassam treats Kant's proposal as an obstacle-dissipating and therefore a Level 2 response and then he treats it as a Means and therefore Level 1 Response. This is, in fact, completely appropriate. After all, the obstacle because of which (HP_{sap}) has to be asked is that there seems to be no means of acquiring synthetic a priori knowledge. Therefore the obstacle can only be eliminated by naming a means of acquiring synthetic a priori knowledge. But this would be at once a Means Response *and* an obstacle-eliminating response. So, like in the baseball example, the first and the second level get fused. Again, what we have is a response which is at once a Level 1 and a Level 2 response – just as you should expect when the obstacle which gives rise to a how-possible question is the apparent unavailability of means.

But Cassam argues that Kant gave a separate Level 2 response to (HP_{sap}) (p. 14-15). Doesn't that contradict my claim that the obstacle that motivates (HP_{sap}) is removed by the Level 1 response? So far I have pointed out similarities between the baseball example and the Kant example. But there is one very important difference between the two cases. In the baseball example the obstacle is that there seems to be no means available in the situation at hand. But of course we do know means of catching a ball 20 feet above the ground: standing on the roof of a building, using a ladder, using a net with a 15 foot handle, etc. The only problem is that we expect that none of these means is available to a player during a baseball game. In the case of synthetic a priori knowledge the problem is far more serious: the obstacle here is that there seems to be no means that could do the task at all. Whereas in the baseball example the question is how that player in that situation could catch the ball, in the case of synthetic a priori knowledge the question is how anybody could in any situation acquire synthetic a priori knowledge.

It is this general scope of the problem that makes an additional sources solution necessary. As Kant cannot simply point out that a means that we thought to be unavailable in a certain situation is available after all, he has to introduce the notion of a completely different source of knowledge. Accordingly, it is not enough for him to give a Means Response to (HP_{sap}) but, as Cassam points out, he has also to answer another how-possible question, viz.:

> [H]ow is it possible for construction in pure intuition to be a source of synthetic a priori knowledge? (p. 14)

And Kant's second level response is aimed at removing the obstacle which gives rise to *this* question. Thus in Cassam's reconstruction of Kant's theory of synthetic a priori knowledge there are two obstacles, not one. The first obstacle is that there seems to be no means of acquiring knowledge that is at once synthetic and a priori. This obstacle is dissipated by an additional sources response which is at the same time a Means Response and an obstacle-eliminating response to (HP_{sap}). But once the Means Response is given, there emerges a second obstacle, giving rise to the second how-possible question: it seems that construction in pure intuition cannot account for the universality of synthetic a priori knowledge. This problem, according to Cassam, is overcome by Kant's Schematism (p. 14-15).

So there is an important difference between the obstacle in the baseball example and the obstacle that gives rise to (HP_{sap}): unlike the latter the former is contingent. Still, in both cases Level 1 and Level 2 get fused, so both obstacles are different from those obstacles where the Means Response and the obstacle-eliminating response are clearly distinct. These come in a contingent and a non-contingent variety, too. We can therefore distinguish between four kinds of obstacles which can give rise to how-possible questions: the contingent insufficiency of means, the contingent unavailability of means, the non-contingent insufficiency of means, and the non-contingent unavailability of means. First, there are contingent obstacles which seem to make a given means insufficient for some task. This can be illustrated with a variation of Cassam's Eurostar example: when (unaware of the existence of the Channel Tunnel) we ask how it was possible for someone to get from London to Paris by train, we are not just asking how he could do this, say, on a Saturday, or at noon; we wonder how anyone can do this ever. On the other hand, we do not thereby doubt that there is such a thing as train travel

or that there is some reason why it should be impossible in principle to build a bridge across or a tunnel beneath the Channel but only that there actually is a bridge or tunnel and thus that train travel is a sufficient means to get from London to Paris. Second, there is the obstacle that even though sufficient means to achieve a certain aim exist, they seem to be unavailable in the situation at hand. This is the case in the baseball example. We do know means of catching balls 20 feet off the ground, but we simply assume that these means are unavailable to baseball players during a game. Third, there are non-contingent obstacles which seem to make a given means insufficient for some task. Sceptical hypotheses are examples of this kind of obstacle: if, in order to acquire knowledge, we have to know that sceptical hypotheses are false, then the possibility of sceptical scenarios is a non-contingent obstacle, as it is not a contingent feature but the nature of sceptical hypotheses that it seems impossible to rule them out. Still, it is not the purpose of these hypotheses to raise doubts about the existence of perception but rather about its sufficiency for the acquisition of knowledge. Finally, there is the obstacle that there seems to exist no means for achieving a certain aim at all. This is exemplified by (HP_{sap}). We are not just puzzled by the fact that synthetic a priori knowledge can be acquired in certain situations or using this means or that, but by the (supposed) fact that it can be acquired at all.

Obstacles of the first and second kind are rather harmless as they are completely contingent, in cases where they can be eliminated at all they can usually be easily eliminated by gathering further information about the situation in question. There can be obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge which belong to this category, e.g. we can ask how it is possible for a blind person to know that the sky is blue, but, being contingent, these obstacles are of no special interest to epistemologists.[108]

The third kind of obstacles is far more serious, especially when there is no other means available. This kind of obstacle makes how-possible questions far more pressing than the contingent obstacles of type one. A person who hears on the radio that a baseball player caught a ball 20 feet off the ground will wonder what kind of means the player may have used, but he probably won't be saying that it is plainly impossible. Yet, that is the typical reaction of sceptics to claims of knowledge.

[108] Cassam makes the same point about contingent obstacles in a different context (p. 29-30).

The apparent non-contingent unavailability of means is an even more pressing problem. The abundance of anti-sceptical theories in epistemology shows that, even though there seem to be obstacles to the acquisition of perceptual knowledge, someone who is convinced that we do have perceptual knowledge will most likely be able to at least speculate how it may be possible anyway. But almost no-one who is convinced that neither experience nor conceptual analysis can yield synthetic a priori knowledge and never heard about Kant or construction in pure intuition will even be able to think of a way how synthetic a priori knowledge might be possible after all.

Obstacles of the first and third kind, discussed by Cassam, are obstacles that seem to prevent the acquisition of knowledge by a given means. This kind of obstacle can, at least sometimes, either be dissipated or overcome. As illustrated in the baseball example and in Cassam's reconstruction of Kant's answer to (HP_{sap}) the second and fourth kind of obstacle can sometimes be dissipated. But is it also possible to overcome obstacles of these kinds? If, as I have assumed earlier, knowledge is something that has to be acquired, the answer is no. Given that there is no means for acquiring knowledge of some kind and knowledge is only possible if it can be acquired, then knowledge of the kind in question is simply not possible. If, on the other hand, not every kind of knowledge has to be acquired, i.e. if some knowledge is just "given", then for that kind of knowledge the obstacle that there is no means of acquiring it can be overcome by showing that this kind of knowledge doesn't have to be acquired because it is just there, e.g. because it is a form of innate knowledge.

3.

Even though Cassam distinguishes between two kinds of obstacle-elimination strategies, he does not discuss whether it makes any difference which kind of strategy is used. There is some good reason for taking them to be on a par: after all, we can expect that in most cases only one of them can be adequate. If the obstacle in question is real, we have to use an obstacle-overcoming strategy, if it is not, we have to use an obstacle-dissipating strategy. We cannot simply choose what kind of strategy we want to use. But on the other hand, it might still be the case that we can learn something of interest by paying attention to whether we have to use an obstacle-overcoming or an obstacle-dissipating strategy. That is, we might learn something about the kind of knowledge in

question by determining whether the apparent obstacle is real or not. As long as we are only interested in determining how knowledge is possible, it is not important how we eliminate the obstacle; all that matters is that we eliminate it. If, on the other hand, we want to learn something about the nature of the kind of knowledge in question, it may well be worth to give the matter a second glance.

Consider the following two examples of obstacle-elimination strategies:

(a) James, who lives in London, tells his friend Sarah that he is going on a trip to Paris. Being aware that James is afraid both of flying and of taking a ship, Sarah asks James how he will travel. James answers that he will take the train. Sarah asks him, "How is it possible to travel to Paris by train? You can't cross the Channel by train!" James reminds her that there is a tunnel beneath the Channel and tells her that he will take the Eurostar to Paris.

(b) George, who is in Europe for the first time in his life, has spent a couple of days in London and now wants to continue his travel with a short trip to Edinburgh. As he is afraid of flying, he asks the travel agent what alternatives there are to get to Edinburgh. The travel agent tells him that the easiest way would be to take the train. But believing that Edinburgh is the capital of Ireland, George asks: "How is it possible to travel to Edinburgh by train? You can't cross the sea between England and Ireland by train!" The travel agent informs him that Edinburgh is not the capital of Ireland but the capital of Scotland and that therefore train travel between London and Edinburgh is perfectly possible.

George and Sarah ask their how-possible questions for the same reason: both believe that between London and a certain place there lies the sea and that you can't cross the sea by train. But James and the travel agent give very different obstacle-eliminating responses. Whereas James gives an obstacle-overcoming response, explaining that it is possible to cross the Channel by train through the Channel Tunnel, the travel agent

gives an obstacle-dissipating response, explaining that George won't have to cross the sea, as Edinburgh is not the capital of Ireland but the capital of Scotland. Whereas Sarah learns that James can do something which she considered to be impossible, George learns that Edinburgh is not what he believed it to be and that therefore he doesn't have to do what he expected in order to get to Edinburgh. George is, so to say, wrong about the "nature" of Edinburgh.

So an obstacle-overcoming response claims that the person asking the how-possible question was mistaken about what is possible, whereas an obstacle-dissipating response claims that the person was mistaken about the "nature" of the thing in question. Thus, George is mistaken about where he is going (Scotland not Ireland) and therefore about what he has to accomplish to get there. Similarly, a person who wonders how the baseball player could catch the ball 20 feet off the ground is mistaken in believing that he had no aid available. And someone who asks how synthetic a priori knowledge is possible is, according to Kant, mistaken in believing that knowledge must be taken either from experience or from conceptual analysis. Sarah, on the other hand, is not mistaken in believing that James has to cross the Channel but in believing that there is no way to do this by train.

The same applies to epistemological how-possible questions. When someone, let's call him David, asks how a certain kind of knowledge is possible, he does so because he believes that there is an obstacle that prevents us from acquiring that kind of knowledge. In cases where an obstacle-overcoming response is given, David learns that we can do more than he thought we could, whereas in cases where an obstacle-dissipating response is given, he learns that we don't have to do what he expected in order to acquire the kind of knowledge in question. So in the first case he learns that our cognitive access to the world is less limited than he believed it was. In the second case he learns that the kind of knowledge in question is not what he thought it was, i.e. that he was wrong about the nature of knowledge. So when we give an obstacle-overcoming response to David's question, we tell him that he is right about the requirements for the acquisition of knowledge, but we correct him in explaining to him how these requirements can be met. When we give him an obstacle-dissipating response, we tell him that he is wrong about the nature of knowledge and ask him to revise his concept of knowledge. In this sense epistemological theories which give an obstacle-overcoming

response are more conservative than theories which give an obstacle-dissipating response and ask us to revise our concept of knowledge and are thus revisionist in nature. The two kinds of obstacle-removing responses are therefore not on a par, and we can expect some insights from paying attention to whether a response belongs to the obstacle-overcoming category or to the obstacle-dissipating category.

We can use the distinction between obstacle-overcoming and obstacle-dissipating strategies to evaluate the measure of conservativeness an epistemological theory has. In order to do this, we have to transpose theories of knowledge into Cassam's multi-levels framework and determine what kind of obstacle-removing response they imply. We can quite easily do this, because the obstacles which motivate epistemological how-possible questions also figure in the motivation for scepticism. Thus, in Cassam's framework scepticism is the theory that there are obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge which can be neither dissipated nor overcome. Therefore, we can extract the obstacle-eliminating strategies of epistemological theories by considering how they deal with the sceptical challenge. It has become common to present the problem of scepticism in the form of a paradox. The problem according to this presentation is that there are certain claims about knowledge which are all intuitively plausible to the extent that they appear to be mere platitudes but which are inconsistent taken together. These are:

> (1) We have knowledge about many things.
> (2) If we don't know that we are not the victims of systematic illusion, we know (almost) nothing.
> (3) We cannot know that we are not the victims of systematic illusion, because it is the very nature of illusion that it seems real, so that we cannot discriminate between illusion and reality.

The apparent obstacle to the acquisition of knowledge of the external world is therefore that it seems that, in order to acquire knowledge, we have to know that certain sceptical hypotheses are wrong, which we cannot possibly know. Thus, there are two basic possibilities for denying scepticism: denying that, in order to acquire knowledge, we have to know that sceptical hypotheses are wrong, or affirming that we can know that

sceptical hypotheses are wrong after all. These two possibilities correspond to the two varieties of obstacle-removing strategies described by Cassam: the first is an obstacle-dissipating response, whereas the second is an obstacle-overcoming response.

Thus, closure-denying theories like Dretske's conclusive reasons account or Nozick's truth-tracking account are highly revisionist.[109] This fact explains why so few philosophers are willing to even seriously consider discarding the closure principle. But this does not mean that all closure-retaining theories are conservative. They surely are less revisionist than closure-denying theories, but how conservative they are depends on how they propose to overcome the obstacle of having to know that sceptical hypotheses are false. For certainly there seems to be an obstacle to knowing this, too. Actually, the fact that knowledge that sceptical hypotheses are false seems to be a prerequisite for knowing anything else only poses an obstacle because there seem to be quite obvious obstacles to the acquisition of the knowledge that sceptical hypotheses are false. So when faced with an obstacle-overcoming response to (HP_{ew}) we can ask further:

(HP_{sh}) How is it possible to know that sceptical hypotheses are false?

The problem that gives rise to (HP_{sh}) is that we seem to be unable to rule out the possibility that all our experiences may mislead us to believe that we are not dreaming, or that we are not brains in a vat, etc. when in fact we are. We simply cannot, it seems, rule out all sceptical alternatives. Here we are again faced with two kinds of possible strategies: obstacle-dissipating strategies, claiming that in order to know that sceptical possibilities are not actualized, we do not have to rule out every alternative, and obstacle-overcoming strategies, claiming that it is possible to rule out sceptical scenarios. Again, the obstacle-dissipating strategy is revisionist as it claims that we were wrong about the nature of knowledge, whereas the obstacle-overcoming strategy is more conservative as it claims that our cognitive access to the world is less limited than it appears. But again, we have to enquire further how the apparent obstacle is to be overcome before we can determine just how conservative any given obstacle-overcoming response is. The reason is that, given an obstacle-overcoming response, we can always ask at this point:

[109] For Dretske's account see his (1971) and his (2005); for Nozick's account see his (1981).

(HP_{aa}) How is it possible to rule out all alternatives?

For it seems plausible that, in order to rule out sceptical scenarios, we have to be able to distinguish them from non-sceptical scenarios; after all, if I wouldn't notice if I were the victim of a sceptical scenario, then how can I rule out the possibility that I actually am such a victim? Here we are faced with an obstacle that clearly cannot be overcome, as it is the very nature of sceptical scenarios that they are indistinguishable from non-sceptical scenarios. Therefore, the only option available here is an obstacle-dissipating strategy, showing how we can rule out possibilities without being able to distinguish them from the actual state of the world.

Some readers will complain by now that on my construal the only conservative position is scepticism: there is no possible obstacle-overcoming response to (HP_{aa}) and therefore no anti-sceptical theory which is at no point revisionist. Moreover, since it seems reasonable to assume that conservatism is the default position, it seems that at each junction I lay the burden of proof on the anti-sceptic: closure-retaining theories are more conservative than closure-denying theories, infallibilist theories are more conservative than fallibilist theories, and internalist theories are more conservative than externalist theories. The rationale is that if there is a serious reason for asking a how-possible question in the first place, then an obstacle-dissipating response cannot be conservative. If it were conservative to assume that baseball players can use ladders during baseball games, there would be no point in asking (HP_{cb}). If it wouldn't be revisionist to assume that we can acquire synthetic a priori knowledge through construction in pure intuition, Kant wouldn't have had to raise (HP_{sap}). Therefore, epistemologists who want to count one of the theories which I have classified as being at one point or other revisionist as conservative would have to show that the apparent obstacles which the theory in question dissipates are not intuitive at all but the product of mistaken theorizing. This in turn would imply that scepticism has no pretheoretical bite and that really there is no such thing as a sceptical paradox, because the principles which would be needed to establish it are not platitudinous at all but rather highly artificial products of philosophical theory-building.

Considering that most epistemologists claim that their theories of knowledge capture our everyday concept of knowledge and best concord with our everyday use of the word "knowledge" and with our pretheoretical intuitions about knowledge claims, the claim that most of these theories are revisionist may easily be misunderstood as the claim that these theories are all wrong. For this reason I want to emphasize two points. First, as I have just noted, theories are only revisionist if the obstacles they dissipate are not just products of mistaken theorizing. So unless these principles really are as intuitively plausible as some epistemologists believe, theories which offer dissipating instead of overcoming strategies are not revisionist at all.

The second point I want to emphasize is that a theory of knowledge can be revisionist or conservative in more than one way. So far I discussed only the acceptance or denial of certain epistemic principles. Let's call a theory which denies an intuitively plausible epistemic principle *principle-revisionist* and a theory which accepts it *principle-conservative*. In these terms scepticism may be the only completely principle-conservative epistemology. But of course an epistemologist cannot simply rely on what epistemic principles people intuitively assent to; we also have to consider our everyday use of the word "knowledge" and our pretheoretical intuitions concerning knowledge claims. Call a theory which respects our everyday use of "knowledge" as well as our intuitive judgments about knowledge claims *use-conservative* and a theory which for some reason discards them *use-revisionist*. As we all know, when asked, people subscribe to many principles which they fail to live up to. Thus, there is no reason to expect that principle-conservatism will always go hand in hand with use-conservatism. It is therefore perfectly possible that some theory of knowledge best captures our everyday use of "knowledge" and our intuitions about knowledge-claims while at the same time being principle-revisionist. In fact, one possible explanation of the sceptical paradox is that no theory of knowledge can be principle-conservative and use-conservative at the same time. Thus denying (1) is certainly use-revisionist, while denying (2) or (3) is probably principle-revisionist.[110]

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