Non-Accidentally Factive Mental States

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ABSTRACT: I offer a counterexample to Timothy Williamson's conjecture that knowledge is the most general factive mental state; i.e., that every factive mental state entails knowledge. I describe two counterexamples (Ernest Sosa's and Baron Reed's) that I find unpersuasive, and argue that they fail due to a specific feature they have in common. I then argue that there is a primitive mental state that is factive but does not entail knowledge, and that constitutes a counterexample to Williamson's conjecture that is not subject to the problems faced by Sosa's and Reed's counterexamples.

RÉSUMÉ : Je propose un contre-exemple à la conjecture de Timothy Williamson selon laquelle la connaissance est l'état mental factif le plus général, c'est-à-dire que tout état mental factif implique la connaissance. Je décris deux contre-exemples (développés par Ernest Sosa et Baron Reed) que je considère comme étant peu probants, et je souligne que l'un et l'autre échouent à convaincre de par une caractéristique spécifique qu'ils partagent. Je soutiens ensuite qu'il existe un état mental primitif, factif mais n'impliquant pas la connaissance : ce dernier constitue un contre-exemple à la conjecture de Williamson sans être sujet aux problèmes rencontrés par les deux contre-exemples précédents.

Keywords: knowledge, analyzability, Williamson, factive, mental state, primitive

1. Introduction

Traditionally, epistemology has it that knowledge is a combination of an internal and an external element—belief and truth, respectively—together with one or more additional elements that tie the two together. The standard analysis normally takes justification as the third element, though there are several suggestions for a fourth condition, or an alternative third, to rule out Gettier cases.

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Timothy Williamson's work, however, radically opposes this picture. He considers the failure of alternative analyses throughout the post-Gettier era to have undermined the view that knowledge can be analyzed at all, and takes knowledge to be a state of mind, denying that it can be factored into more basic elements:

> [T]he claim is that knowing itself is a mental relation such that, for every proposition P, having that relation to P is a mental state. Thus for some mental state S, being in S is necessary and sufficient for knowing P. We abbreviate that claim by saying that knowing is a mental state.[1]

For Williamson, knowing is a factive mental state because "necessarily one has it only to truths."[2] In this respect, knowing resembles seeing, regretting, and remembering. Now, Williamson's proposal is that "knowing is the most general factive stative attitude, that which one has to a proposition if one has any factive stative attitude to it at all."[3] That is, every factive stative attitude entails knowing, and it is impossible to have a factive attitude to a proposition without knowing it. This conjecture is significant because it is supposed to show the importance of knowledge: "The point of the conjecture is to illuminate the central role of the concept of knowing in our thought. It matters to us because factive stative attitudes matter to us."[4] In addition, Williamson takes it to be a "modest positive account of [knowledge]."[5]

The realization of factive mental states in language is by Factive Mental State Operators (FMSO): "[w]e can give substance to the category of factive stative attitudes by describing its realization in a natural language. The characteristic expression of a factive stative attitude in a language is a *factive mental state operator* (FMSO)." An FMSO's syntactic behaviour resembles that of verbs, and "[s]emantically, [it] is an unanalyzable expression."[6] That is, taking F to stand for an FMSO, "[F] is not synonymous with any complex expression whose meaning is composed of the meanings of its parts."[7] It is not entirely

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1 Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, 2000, 21.

2 Ibid., 34.

3 Ibid. 'Stative' means denoting a state, as opposed to a process like proving or remembering.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., 33.

6 One might worry that I have not really shown that unanalyzability is part of Williamson's notion of an FMSO. Williamson himself, however, takes unanalyzability to be a characteristic of an FMSO and uses it in his arguments to show that, say, 'believes truly' and 'believes safely' are not genuine counterexamples to his conjecture (see Section 2 of this paper for relevant quotation). So it is reasonable to assume that one can use it in argumentation against his position. (Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this point.)

7 All three quotes are from Willimson, 2000, 34.

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clear what is meant here by 'synonymous,' but, vague as it is, it seems reasonable to assume that something is semantically analyzable only if there is some complex expression that exhausts its meaning. This becomes clearer when we consider an example from Williamson himself. In response to Sosa, who thinks that 'believes safely' is an example of a factive mental state that does not entail knowledge, Williamson argues that "believes P and would believe P only if P were true" is an analysis of 'believes safely.'[8] This should give us a rough grasp of what Williamson has in mind when he discusses the criterion of analyzability.

An FMSO satisfies three conditions: its subject is a term denoting 'something animate' and its object is a proposition designated by a that-clause; it is factive; and 'S Fs that A' attributes a propositional attitude to S.[9] Williamson summarizes his discussion of FMSOs as follows[10]:

(i) If F is an FMSO, from 'S Fs that A,' one may infer 'A.'
(ii) 'Know' is an FMSO.
(iii) If F is an FMSO, from 'S Fs that A,' one may infer 'S knows that A.'

Williamson argues that 'believes truly' does not count as an FMSO, since it is semantically analyzable into two separate elements, one of which is non-mental. This is important because if 'believes truly' was a mental state, then Williamson's characterization of his claim would have the absurd conclusion that believing truly entails knowing.

In this paper, I propose a counterexample to Williamson's conjecture that knowing is the most general factive mental state, arguing that there is a primitive factive mental state that does not entail knowing.[11] I will first consider two

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8 I come back to this example in Section 2.

9 Ibid. 34-35.

10 Ibid., 39.

11 John Hyman ("The Most General Factive Stative Attitude," 2014, 74) discusses two quotations from Williamson. He believes that the second clause of Williamson's claim that "knowing is the most general factive stative attitude, that which one has to a proposition if one has any factive stative attitude to it at all" (Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, 2000, 34) is not synonymous with his description of it as "a modest positive account of the concept *knows*" (ibid., 22). That is, he believes that (i), knowing is the most general factive stative attitude is not equivalent to (ii), knowing is the factive stative attitude one has to a proposition if one has any factive stative attitude to it at all. His reason is that (i) states that knowledge is a genus whilst (ii) states a necessary condition, and "a genus is not the same as a necessary condition, even a uniquely necessary condition." He takes the latter to be true and the former to be false. I'm not going to inquire into this here. However, my counterexample applies to the latter, more modest claim, and so applies to the former claim as well, which entails the latter.

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counterexamples that I find unpersuasive. Then I endeavour to diagnose what the problem with them was, and offer my own counterexample that I take to be immune to the argument against those two counterexamples. I will then consider some objections to my own counterexample and try to show that they are inconclusive.

2. Two Counterexamples

Sosa[12] argues that 'believes safely' is a counterexample to Williamson's claim that knowledge is the most general factive mental state; that is, it is a factive mental state that does not entail knowledge. According to Sosa, Williamson's notion of safe belief requires that one believe P only if it is true; i.e., one's belief is safe only if one believes P and "[o]ne would believe P only if it were true (or, alternatively, one would not believe P without its being true)."[13] So understood, as Williamson himself concedes, 'believes safely' is factive, because "[t]he two conjuncts together imply that P is true by *modus ponens* for the counterfactual conditional."[14] In other words, 'S safely believes P' entails 'P.' But safely believing does not entail knowledge. For, as Sosa notes, belief in necessary truths, such as mathematical truths, is always safe because they are necessarily true and one cannot believe them unless they are true. The belief, however, could be ill formed and therefore not constitute knowledge. So, there is a mental state that is factive but does not entail knowledge; so Williamson's claim is false.[15]

But Williamson's account is given in terms of FMSOs, which must be semantically unanalyzable. As mentioned, an operator F is semantically analyzable only if there is at least one complex expression that is synonymous with F. Now the natural question is whether there is an expression that is synonymous with 'believes safely.' As Williamson argues, it is synonymous with "believes P and would believe P only if P were true."[16] Due to its semantic analyzability, then, 'believes safely' is not an FMSO, and therefore Sosa's counterexample fails.

Reed[17] offers a counterexample based on a famous Gettier-style case. Suppose that Henry is looking at a real barn in a field full of fake barns in normal visual conditions, without being aware of the fake barns. Henry forms a belief, P, that he sees a (real) barn, and it is clear that his belief is both true and justified. His belief, however, does not count as knowledge; were he looking at a fake barn, he would still form the belief that he sees a genuine barn. Call the

12 Ernest Sosa, "Timothy Williamson on Knowledge and its Limits," 2009, 203-216.

13 Ibid., 206.

14 Timothy Williamson, "Replies," 2009, 364.

15 Sosa, "Timothy Williamson on Knowledge and its Limits," 2009, 205-207.

16 Williamson, "Replies," 2009, 364.

17 Baron Reed, "Accidentally Factive Mental States," 2005, 134-141.

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state Henry is in in such cases 'gnowledge.' Reed argues that gnowledge is a mental state if knowledge is. That is, by the very same line of argument as Williamson relied upon to show that knowledge is a mental state, it can be shown that gnowledge is a mental state too.[18] But gnowledge is a factive state: 'S gnows P' entails 'P,' since one is in a state of gnowledge only if one is in front of a real barn and forms one's belief based on this. Therefore, we have a factive mental state that does not entail knowledge. If true, this defeats Williamson's claim.

Describing the case, Reed writes:

> [h]is belief, though both true and justified (by any reasonable account of justification), does not have the stability that is essential to knowledge. Therefore, [Henry] does not know that there actually is a barn in front of him … Let us introduce a semantically unanalyzable term for cases of this sort: let us say that, in the above case, [Henry] gnows (but does not know) that there is a barn in front of him; [Henry] has a state of gnowledge (but not knowledge).[19]

On the face of it, it seems that Reed is trying to make an actual mental state (i.e., belief) factive by setting a restriction on it. In other words, gnowledge is a belief that satisifes a certain condition, i.e., being formed based on perceiving a real barn in a field full of fake barns without being aware of the fake barns. But, if gnowledge is belief plus a restriction to make it factive, it would be semantically analyzable and therefore would not satisfy the criteria of being an FMSO. More precisely, understood in this way, 'S gnows P' would be synonymous with 'S believes P and believes P based on perceiving a real barn in a field full of fake barns without being aware of the presence of the fake barns.'[20] This makes it semantically analyzable, and therefore it would not be a genuine FMSO. So, although it does not entail knowledge, it does not touch Williamson's claim.

A more charitable reconstruction, however, is that Reed is introducing a new primitive factive mental state (though his text does not clearly indicate such a reading). Put another way, Reed's claim would be that gnowledge is a new mental state such that one is in that mental state if and only if one sees a real barn in such and such a field. Since Williamson allows that one can be in two

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18 Ibid. 139

19 Ibid., 138.

20 Note that 'gnowledge' is to be understood in a way that it is not restricted to fake barns. That is, Reed probably wants to introduce a mental state for this kind of Gettier case, so it would not be unreasonable to say that whenever one sees a, say, real spider in a field full of fake spiders one gnows that there is a spider in the field. For simplicity, however, I focus on what Reed actually discusses, i.e., the example of fake barns. My arguments, if sound, would count against all of them.

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different mental states, e.g., knowledge and belief, at the same time, it would be unproblematic to suggest that a subject could be in two different mental states, gnowledge and belief, in the fake-barn Gettier-style case.[21] On this reading, gnowledge is a primitive factive mental state, not analyzable in terms of belief or some other mental state plus a restriction on that mental state. Understood in this way, an obvious response is that there is no such mental state in the actual world, and Reed offers no argument in support of its existence. Reed, of course, did not consider this possibility, but he can retort that we may consider a counterfactual situation in which there is such a mental state; and, since it is not incoherent or inconceivable to allow that there can be such a mental state, the existence of a primitive factive mental state that does not entail knowledge is possible, and therefore Williamson's claim is refuted. I am in principle sympathetic with such a line of argumentation, but some worries remain.

In considering the counterfactual situation in question, Reed either stipulates that gnowledge is a primitive factive mental state, or he imagines a far more simple scenario and then shows that the mental state in question in that scenario is primitive, i.e., cannot be analyzed in terms of other mental states. Let us consider the first disjunct. Recall that Reed was trying to argue that there is a primitive factive mental state that does not entail knowledge. But, if he is simply going to stipulate that there is such a primitive factive mental state, he is stipulating the very conclusion he was trying to support. This hardly counts as a refutation of Williamson's claim because it obviously begs the question against him. So, we are left with the second disjunct, i.e., that he is trying to show that there is a mental state in a counterfactual situation or in another possible world, and then arguing that it satisfies the conditions that are necessary for it to be counted as a counterexample to Williamson's conjecture. But Reed offers no such argument. In fact, it is reasonable to claim that Reed has misdescribed the counterfactual scenario, and that gnowledge is in fact a kind of belief that satisfies a further condition, and Reed did not offer any argument to rule this out. Thus, we are back to the problem of analyzability raised at the outset. All the possibilities are wanting, and Reed's counterexample fails.

3. Another Counterexample

There is a common feature shared by the two previous counterexamples.[22] Recall that a mental state M is factive only if one can validly infer 'A' from 'S Ms that A.' Keeping this in mind, the general method used in both counterexamples is as follows: the critic tries to find a factive mental state that does not

[21] Thanks to Baron Reed for this point.

[22] Of course, the two counterexample mentioned share this feature, if we grant that Reed does not simply stipulate that there is a primitive factive mental state with such and such a property.

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entail knowledge, and does so by choosing a non-factive mental state (in these two cases, belief) and setting a restriction on that mental state to satisfy the criterion of factivity. The restriction in question in the former case is the belief being safe, and in the latter case is its being formed based on seeing a real barn in a field full of fake barns. One can, therefore, always validly derive 'A' from that alleged mental state, so it would seem that we have a factive mental state. The critic, then, sets the stage in such a way that the subject does not have knowledge that A, and thus, ostensibly, we have a counterexample to Williamson's conjecture. But the trick of setting a restriction on a non-factive mental state makes the counterexample ineffective, for it makes the alleged mental state analyzable, and therefore it fails to be a genuine FMSO. Note that this problem would not be solved by finding another known mental state (desire or intention, say) and setting a restriction on that mental state. Setting a restriction on a non-factive mental state to make it factive always leads to an analyzable mental state, since there would always be a complex expression synonymous to that alleged factive mental state, and by Williamson's criterion it would be semantically analyzable. With this in mind, then, a better suggestion would be to find a primitive mental state that is itself factive but does not entail knowledge—that is, its factivity is not established by setting a restriction on another, non-factive, mental state. If there is such a mental state, and if it does not entail knowledge, that would be a counterexample to Williamson's conjecture. In this section, I propose a candidate for such a mental state and try to defend it against possible objections.

3.1. Describing the Case

Sherrilyn Roush's[23] Fairy Godmother case against safety is closer to providing a legitimate counterexample to Williamson. In Roush's case, S has a fairy godmother who makes all S's beliefs true at the very moment S forms her belief. In this case, the mental state in question is factive, and to provide a counterexample to Williamson's conjecture it would be sufficient to describe a scenario in which the subject has a belief but does not have knowledge. Roush's case, of course, also faces the problem of being analyzable, i.e., being a restricted version of belief. However, if one could find a similar mental state that is not a restricted belief (or some other mental state) and is both primitive and factive and does not entail knowledge, it would suggest a promising case against Williamson. In this section, I endeavour to offer such a state.

Consider a possible world inhabited by a goddess, G. G is a sentient creature whose mind is causally related to the external world in such a way that whenever she is in a certain mental state that entails she has a certain propositional attitude toward P, P (instantly) becomes the case. Call this mental state 'gelief.' Gelief is a kind of mental state that works as follows. First, it is a mental state

[23] Sherrilyn Roush, *Tracking Truth*, 2005.

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that only those creatures can be in whose minds are causally related to the external world in such a way that their minds can *directly* cause changes in the world. Second, gelief works in such a way that whenever someone gelieves that P, if P is true nothing happens and P remains true; if P is false, however, it instantaneously becomes the case. In other words, whenever someone gelieves that P, if P is true it remains true and if P is false it becomes true.[24] For example, if one gelieves that Obama is the president of the United States, nothing happens in this world since it is true now, but if one gelieves that there is a golden mountain under the Pacific Ocean, assuming that there is not one now, then a golden mountain under the Pacific Ocean instantaneously comes about. Add to this story, however, that G's father has made her falsely believe that whenever she gelieves that P, her father brings about not-P—a kind of parental evil genius problem for G.[25] So, whenever G gelieves that P, she falsely forms the belief that not-P.

In his discussion of the relation between knowledge and belief, Williamson accepts the following: "if S knows that P, then S believes that P." He offers a non-disjunctive analysis of 'believes' in terms of knowledge that, he admits, validates the above-mentioned proposal that if one knows P then one believes P.[26] Therefore, he accepts that whenever one knows P, one believes P, and arguably this must be understood in a way that it is true in every possible world, since he offers an analysis of belief in terms of knowledge. So, if G is to know that P, she must also believe P. But, in this case, whenever G gelieves that P, she believes that not-P, and therefore by Williamson's criterion she does not know that P. Therefore, we may assume that whenever G gelieves that P, she does not know it. But gelief is a factive mental state, since one can have that state only to truths—if P is false, it would become true instantaneously when G gelieves that P.

Our example of the golden mountain under the Pacific Ocean would make the case clearer.[27] Suppose that, as a matter of fact, before G's act of gelieving, there is no golden mountain under the Pacific Ocean, so G cannot know that there is one by memory or testimony. In addition, at the time G forms her gelief, she is in a land far from the Pacific Ocean, so she does not have any perceptual access to the golden mountain she brings about by gelieving. So, when she forms the gelief that there is a golden mountain under the Pacific Ocean, she also forms the belief that there is no golden mountain under the Pacific Ocean,

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[24] Some philosophers attribute such a direct causal relation between one's mind and the external world to God. In their view, God's beliefs are such that, whenever He forms a belief toward P, instantaneously P becomes the case. For a discussion, see Linda Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge*, 1991.

[25] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for the suggested analogy.

[26] Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, 2000, 42-46.

[27] There is, we assume, a Pacific Ocean in the goddess world in question.

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since she thinks that her father has made it the case that there is not one there. Therefore, G does not know that there is a golden mountain under the Pacific Ocean.

Note that, by Williamson's standards, gelief must be counted as an FMSO. It behaves syntactically like verbs and is semantically unanalyzable.[28] In addition, it satisfies the three conditions mentioned above for being an FMSO. First, its subject term denotes something animate—it must be a term for some sentient creature whose mind is such-and-such—and takes as object a proposition referred to by a that-clause. Second, it is factive. And third, 'S gelieves that P' attributes to S an attitude toward a proposition, since one must grasp the proposition that P to gelieve that P. In addition, Williamson argues that factive attitudes, like knowledge, are similar enough to paradigmatic cases of mental states and dissimilar enough to non-examples of mental states: "[t]o call knowing a mental state is to assimilate it, in a certain respect, to paradigmatic mental states such as believing, desiring and being in pain. It is also to contrast it with various non-examples of mental states [such as believing truly]."[29] So, knowing is a mental state since it is sufficiently similar to, say, believing, and sufficiently dissimilar to things that are not mental states, such as believing truly. Now, whatever one can offer in favour of the similarity between knowledge and paradigmatic cases of mental states, and dissimilarity with their non-examples, one can also offer in favour of the similarity and dissimilarity of gelieving and paradigmatic cases of mental states and paradigmatic non-examples, respectively. In sum, I suggest that gelief can be considered as a primitive factive mental state, in exactly the same way Williamson introduces knowledge as a primitive factive mental state. Therefore, gelief is a primitive factive mental state that does not entail knowledge, and so can be regarded as a counterexample to Williamson's claim.

Now, one can see the difference between Roush's case and mine. In Roush's example, the subject S has a fairy godmother who makes all S's *beliefs* the case at the very time she forms them. In my example, quite to the contrary, the mental state in question is not belief. In addition, in my example what brings about the content of G's gelief is the causal relation of G's mind to the world, not a fairy godmother's intervention, which is essential to my argument for the unanalyzability of gelief below.[30]

Before proceeding to Section 3.2, Objections and Replies, there are two immediate worries that need to be addressed. First, one might argue that G can gradually become aware by inductive inference that whenever she gelieves that P, P rather than not-P becomes the case, and therefore gain knowledge that

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28 See the related discussion in Section 3.2, Objections and Replies.

29 Ibid., 27.

30 See Roush, *Tracking Truth*, 2005, 122, quoted in Alvin Goldman, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence," 2009, 73-91.

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gelief is factive. That is, after gelieving propositions several times and observing that, whenever she forms that attitude, the proposition she gelieves and not its negation comes about, she would correct her false belief. After that time, whenever she gelieves that P she believes that P as well, and therefore there would not be any problem in her knowing that P. But gaining such knowledge based on inductive evidence takes time, and before that evidence has accumulated she does not have any knowledge or belief as to the factivity of the mental state.[31] Note that all we need to refute the conjecture is to show that there is at least one case such that one is in a factive mental state and does not have knowledge. So the evidence accumulation does not touch the example.

The second worry is about the factivity of gelief. One might argue that I have, in explaining the notion of 'gelief,' said that, whenever one gelieves that P, 'P would become the case.' That is, one might continue, when P is false before gelieving, it is 'after' forming that mental state that P comes about and there is a time gap between the mental state gelief and P's becoming true. If this is true, gelief would not be factive after all, since there is a time *t* in which one gelieves that P, but P is still false, and this is contrary to the definition of factive mental states, i.e., mental states that one has necessarily to truths. It is important to note that the term 'instantaneously' here is essential, since, as described, there doesn't need to be any time gap between gelieving that P and P's coming about. That is, it is an assumption of the case that exactly at the time of gelieving, P becomes the case. Put another way, there is no need to assume a time gap between forming a gelief and the respective proposition coming about, so there is no problem with the factivity of gelief. Exactly at the same time that one gelieves that P, P becomes true and so one can only have that mental state to truths.[32]

3.2. Objections and Replies

The first objection might be that gelief is not a different mental state than belief. That is, the objector might complain that every characteristic satisfied by belief is also satisfied by gelief. According to the objector, then, it is possible for there to be more than one concept of a single mental state, and gelief

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[31] The objection and reply concerning the inductive evidence is from Goldman, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence," 2009, 77.

[32] Note that, Williamson's criterion of being factive, i.e., that "A propositional attitude is factive if and only if, necessarily, one has it only to truths," (Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, 2000, 34) is not sensitive to the underlying causal mechanisms guaranteeing the truth of the content of the mental state. More particularly, it does not consider mental causal relations, if any, between the mental states and the external events explaining the truth in question. (Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this point.)

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and belief are two concepts for one and the same mental state.[33] If true, this shows that in fact we have been unsuccessful in finding a new primitive mental state, and gelief is in fact belief, restricted to satisfy the factivity condition. In other words, this counterexample falls victim to exactly what made the previously mentioned examples ineffective, i.e., using an actual non-factive mental state and restricting it to make it factive.

The objection, however, fails. Williamson offers an identity condition for mental states as follows: "states S_1 and S_2 are identical if and only if necessarily everything is in S_1 if and only if it is in S_2."[34] That is, if one can be in a state S_1 and at the same time not be in state S_2, they are not one and the same mental state. To show that belief and gelief are not one and the same mental state, therefore, one must show that belief and gelief don't satisfy this condition. That is, one must show that, first, there are propositions one can believe but cannot gelieve, and second, there are propositions that one can gelieve but cannot believe. In other words, given Williamson's criterion, once one has shown this, one has shown that belief and gelief are different mental states.

First, consider how the identity between belief and gelief can fail in the left-right direction, i.e., that there are propositions one can believe but cannot gelieve. That there are beliefs that are not geliefs can be shown by the goddess's believing necessarily false propositions. Suppose that, as a matter of fact, Goldbach's conjecture (GC) is true. In that case, 'GC is false' is a necessarily false proposition and a belief in it would be a false belief. We can reasonably allow that in G's world there is a common belief that GC is false, and that G believes that GC is false.[35] But, not surprisingly, she cannot gelieve that

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[33] If the objector accepts that belief and gelief are different concepts, it would not be difficult to show that, from a Williamsonian point of view, they are different mental states. According to Williamson, though neither the conceptual nor the metaphysical contrast entails the other, it is reasonable to accept that they are co-extensive: "Of the conceptual and metaphysical contrasts, neither immediately entails the other … Nevertheless, it is hard to see why someone should accept one contrast without accepting the other." (Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, 2000, 19). So, if one accepts that belief and gelief are conceptually different, on Williamsonian grounds, one has good motivation to accept that they are metaphysically different. However, I set this aside for present purposes.

[34] Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, 2000, 28.

[35] Where mathematical propositions are sufficiently complicated, arguably one can rationally believe either their truth or their falsity. That is, although it is reasonable to allow that one cannot rationally believe that, say, $2 + 2 = 3$, it still seems reasonable to allow that one can believe either that GC is true or that it is false. Generally put, there may well be quite able mathematicians who believe that some—sufficiently complicated—mathematical proposition is true, and some other able mathematicians who believe that it is false, until a conclusive proof in favour of one side is found.

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proposition, since it is a necessarily false proposition and no one, including G, can gelieve something that is necessarily false. Therefore, there is a proposition that one can believe but cannot gelieve; so, according to Williamson's identity condition of mental states, there are beliefs that are not geliefs.[36] Note that assuming that one cannot gelieve necessarily false propositions is not as odd as it may seem at first. There are restrictions on the range of propositions toward which one can have other factive mental states, and assuming such a restriction in the case of gelief would not be strange. For example, one cannot know false propositions, and one cannot perceive unobservable ones. Allowing that there is a restriction in the case of gelief is no different.[37] In addition, mental states like intention are arguably very special mental states that one cannot have toward necessarily false propositions or (false) propositions about the past. So, it is reasonable to assume that one cannot gelieve necessarily false propositions or (false) propositions about the past, or propositions such that gelieving them would make gelieving such propositions possible—such as the proposition that I can gelieve necessarily false propositions or (false) propositions about the past. There is no disanalogy here between intention and gelief, unless otherwise proved.[38] It is important to bear in mind that, as it is possible for S to falsely believe that S knows a false proposition, it is possible for S to falsely believe that S gelieves a necessarily false proposition or a false proposition about the past.

As for the right-left implication, i.e., that there are geliefs that are not beliefs, one must show that there is at least one proposition that one can gelieve but cannot believe. Consider the proposition that G cannot believe anything. Call this proposition P. It is obvious that G cannot both gelieve and believe P at

[36] Of course, as an anonymous reviewer observed, if we allow something like Cartesian notions of theological voluntarism, God might be able to gelieve that GC is false, and thereby make it false. It is out of the domain of this paper to argue that this Cartesian outlook is false. I assume its falsity.

[37] Note that this is similar to what some theists believe about the propositions God can bring about. In their view, for instance, God cannot make true the proposition that P and not-P.

[38] Note that one cannot reply that it is not 'necessarily false' propositions one cannot intend, but that 'false' propositions generally cannot be intended. I doubt this, since, for example, one can intend the (contingently) false proposition that he lives in New York city to be true, and made it true by moving to that city. There is, then, no problem in intending false propositions; the problem is about intending *necessarily* false ones, such as intending that 2 + 2 = 3. However, even if we grant that to the objector, we still have propositions about the past. Arguably one cannot intend to be the second president of the United States, since this concerns the past—one can wish, desire, etc., it, but cannot *intend* it. So, the argument can go as follows: one can believe that Barack Obama was the first president of the United States, but cannot gelieve that.

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the same time. Instantaneously, when she gelieves that P, she would not be able to believe anything, including P. The case would be more evident if we can find a single proposition that G cannot at the same time both gelieve and believe. Self-referential propositions would be helpful here. Consider the proposition that G cannot believe this proposition, where 'this proposition' refers to the very proposition denoted by the that-clause.[39] In this case, insofar as G gelieves this proposition, she cannot believe it. This shows that there are geliefs that are not beliefs. I conclude that gelief and belief are not identical mental states.

This objection, of course, might be repeated for other mental states like desire, fear, and hope. For any such mental state, however, the very same argument shows that gelief is not identical to it. For example, G may desire that GC is false, but G cannot gelieve that GC is false. Also, she cannot at the same time gelieve that she cannot desire anything and desire not to be able to desire anything. This argument, of course, can be repeated for other mental states, such as fear and hope, and the conclusion would be that they are not one and the same mental state as gelief.

The issue becomes more complicated, though, when we consider mental states like intention, that one cannot have to necessarily false propositions. For instance, one cannot intend that $2 + 2 = 3$ or, if we allow that GC is true, that GC is false. So, the argument above that there are beliefs that are not geliefs cannot be applied to the case of intention, since, although one cannot gelieve that GC is false, one cannot intend that proposition either. Put another way, the argument we offered to falsify the left-right direction of the identity between belief and gelief is unavailable in the case of intention, or other mental states similar to it, if there are any. So, the objector might conclude, there are intentions that are geliefs, and therefore they are not different mental states after all.

It must, however, be clear that, for my argument to work, it is enough to block the right-left implication. That is, the only reason I argued against the left-right implication was to make the non-identity of belief and gelief more evident. In other words, to show that gelief is analyzable, one needs to show that it is synonymous with a complex expression such that it is a known mental state, say intention, plus some other condition. But showing that there are some intentions that are also geliefs is not sufficient, or even necessary, for showing this. What one must show is that every gelief is intention plus something else, not that there are some intentions that are some kind of gelief. So, simply showing that there is a gelief that is not intention, i.e., showing that there is a proposition one can gelieve but not intend, is enough to refute the objection.

[39] It is no help to the objector to appeal to propositions like 'G cannot gelieve anything' or 'G cannot gelieve this proposition.' The goddess can gelieve both of these propositions, but at the very same time as gelieving them she would lose her ability to gelieve any proposition whatsoever, or that single self-referential proposition, respectively.

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But, as a matter of fact, the very same argument used above for showing that there is a gelief that is not a belief can show that there is a gelief that is not intention, i.e., gelieving the proposition that G cannot intend P, for whatever proposition G is in principle in a position to grasp. Therefore, whether there is a proposition one can intend but cannot gelieve is unnecessary for my argument. So, gelief is not intention either and the objection fails.

By this line of argument, however, another trick of the objector would be blocked, i.e., introducing a new mental state belief* (desire*, fear*, etc.) by restricting belief (desire, fear, etc.) to those beliefs (desires, fears, etc.) whose object is a contingently true proposition about the present or future, and so make it a mental state that works like intention. G can gelieve and at the same time cannot believe* (desire*, fear*, etc.) the proposition that G cannot believe* (desire*, fear*, etc.) anything.

Note that the trick used here to show that gelief is not identical to any other mental state is unavailable to Reed. Above, I noted that a charitable reconstruction of his example is that he introduces a new primitive factive mental state, but fails to do so because he gives us no argument to support the claim that gnowledge is not a combination of belief and some restriction. The reason that I can use the argument offered here, and Reed cannot, is the direct causal relation of the goddess's mind to the external world, so it is impossible for her to gelieve and believe (desire, intend, etc.) a certain proposition, and this shows that gelief is different from all other mental states. But I am aware of no proposition that one can gnow but cannot believe, desire, etc. Perhaps Reed has an argument in mind to show this; I have no idea what it would be.

All these arguments are designed to show that gelief is analyzable and therefore falls victim of the very same objection I made to the counterexamples offered in the literature. That is, all these objections were endeavours to show that gelief is another mental state, such as belief or intention, that is restricted to make it factive. The arguments discussed above, if successful, show that gelief cannot be analyzed in terms of actually known mental states. But the objector might argue that, even if one accepts that gelief is not identical to actually known non-factive mental states such as belief and desire, one can after all offer an analysis of gelief. Put another way, one can find an expression that is synonymous with gelief, and this shows that it is analyzable after all, albeit not in terms of other actually known mental states: 'a propositional attitude the content of which comes about (is made *true*) due to the formation of the attitude' is a case in point.[40]

Williamson offers some arguments in favour of the unanalyzability of knowledge that, to my mind, can be used against the analyzability of gelief as well. The argument, which I, following Cassim Cassam,[41] call the 'distinct

[40] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

[41] Cassim Cassam, "Can the Concept of Knowledge Be Analyzed?," 2009, 12-30.

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concept argument' (DCA), runs as follows. Williamson maintains that knowledge is a mental concept. He offers no definition of a mental concept, but as Cassam[42] suggests, a concept can be counted as mental if it makes a reference to a subject, or, conversely, it is not mental if it "makes no reference to a subject."[43] This is, as Cassam stressed, far from being a definition, but it shows why he considers *knows* but not *true* as a mental concept. Now, according to Williamson, the criterion for a conjunctive concept to be mental is as follows: "if the concept C is the conjunction of concepts C_1, …, C_n, then C is mental if and only if every C_i is mental."[44] On this account, *believes truly* as well as *has a justified true belief* are not mental concepts, since *true* "makes no reference to a subject," and therefore it is not a mental concept. But, Williamson continues, every traditional analysis of knowledge must contain the conjunct *true*, and therefore "[g]iven that the concept *knows* is mental, every analysis of it of the standard kind is therefore incorrect as a claim of concept identity, for the analyzing concept is distinct from the concept to be analyzed."[45]

The very same argument, I suggest, can be reproduced to defend the unanalyzability of the concept gelief. Since *gelieves* like *knows* makes reference to a subject, it must be considered as a mental concept by Williamson's own lights. Every suggested analysis of *gelieves*, however, must contain the conjunct that the mental state makes the proposition true, i.e., like every analysis of *knows*, it must contain *true* as a non-redundant conjunct and this very non-mental conjunct makes the concept non-mental. So, to draw on Williamson's own words, "every analysis of [the concept *gelieves*] … is therefore incorrect as a claim of concept identity, for the analyzing concept is distinct from the concept to be analyzed."[46]

There are two worries about this argument that need to be addressed. First, one might worry that DCA is fallacious, or at any rate doesn't work. It is beyond the domain of this paper to argue in favour of DCA; I presuppose for the sake of argument that it works and this is what Williamson and I share. However, it is noteworthy that Williamson himself defends this argument, and so he must accept it in the case of gelief, unless proved otherwise, and it is his burden to do that. Second, one might reasonably argue that there is a linguistic and explanatory practice of attributing knowledge to subjects to which Williamson can appeal in order to defend the premise that the concept of knowledge is a concept of a mental state. There is no such linguistic and explanatory practice to which I can appeal in order to defend that the concept of gelief

42 Ibid. 13.

43 Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, 2000, 30.

44 Ibid. 29.

45 Ibid. 30.

46 Ibid.

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is a mental concept. The only reason Williamson offers in favour of the mentality of the concept knowledge, however, is that it makes reference to a subject, and one can say that gelief makes that reference as well. However, the objector can reply that such a reference in the case of knowledge is well established, contrary to the case of gelief. My reply is that we can arguably assume an extension of English in which there is such a linguistic practice in case of gelief as well as knowledge, or that there is such a language in the goddess world in question. So, there would be no problem about gelief being a mental concept. Put another way, in the extended English, or the goddess world's English, 'gelief' is rather like 'knowledge': people use it to refer to a subject and this linguistic practice makes it a legitimate candidate for a mental concept. I conclude that gelief is a primitive factive mental state that is not semantically analyzable.

The last objection would be that I have not shown that there really *is* such a mental state. To show that Williamson's conjecture is false, then, I must find a real mental state that does not entail knowledge. Seemingly, the objection is that the mental state in question is not actual. But it is important to bear in mind that Williamson's conjecture that knowledge is the most general factive stative attitude is a necessary claim. That is, he is to be understood as saying that there is no possible world in which there is a factive mental state that does not entail knowledge. If it was not a necessary claim, it would not be of any philosophical interest. Rather, it would be simply an inductive claim about the actual world and therefore couldn't account for the importance of knowledge, nor comprise the "modest positive account of [knowledge]" that Williamson takes it to be. In addition, when summarizing his account of FMSOs in three principles (as mentioned above), he offers an argument for the conclusion that the two latter principles "characterize the concept of knowing uniquely, *up to logical equivalence*, in terms of the concept of an FMSO."[47] Showing the mere possibility of a factive mental state that does not entail knowledge, then, is enough to refute the claim.

A more promising line of argument would be that I did not show the possibility of the case. That is, the objection is that I merely stipulated that there is a mental state such as gelief, and did not show its possibility. In response, I suggest that it is conceivable that there is a mental state such as gelief, and its conceivability can be considered as an evidence in favour of its possibility. It is important to bear in mind that I do not claim that this conceivability *entails* the possibility in question, rather it is simply evidence for that conclusion. Put another way, unless we have strong reason to doubt the possibility of a conceivable situation, and unless that possibility were defeated, it is reasonable to assume its possibility, and the burden of proof here is on the side of the opponent to find such a defeater. That is, since we can imagine such a scenario, our

[47] Ibid., 39, my emphasis.

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intuition is that it is possible; it is, then, the objector who is in charge of offering an argument against its possibility. Of course, it is a controversial matter whether conceivability is a sign of possibility; if the objector is on the other side of the debate, he can consider my argument in this paper as a conditional: if conceivability—in the absence of any reason to believe otherwise—is evidence for possibility, then gelief is a counterexample to Williamson's conjecture.

Finally, note that the objection against Reed—that he simply stipulated the conclusion—does not work against my proposal, since I merely put forward that there is a mental state with such-and-such a property, and then argued in favour of its primitiveness and endeavoured to show that it satisfies whatever features it needs to be a counterexample to Williamson's conjecture. I didn't assume that it is a primitive factive mental state in the first place, and therefore I didn't beg the question against Williamson. Therefore, if the arguments are sound, it is indeed a counterexample to the conjecture in question.

4. Concluding Remarks

My arguments, if sound, show that there is a counterexample to Williamson's claim that knowledge is the most general factive stative attitude. But it is noteworthy that Williamson's claim works for most normal situations in which we are confronted with ordinary mental states like seeing and hearing. To put this another way, I'm sympathetic to Williamson's concern with actual mental states like seeing or perceiving, and I allow that his conjecture probably does justice to some of the possible mental states as well. My argument in this paper, however, if successful, shows that his conjecture fails as a necessary, philosophically interesting claim, since there are some (non-actual) cases in which his conjecture fails. That is, my claim in this paper is not that the conjecture does not capture the normal ordinary situation, but that it fails to capture all the actual and possible scenarios. Williamson, however, wants his conjecture to play a role in a "modest account of knowledge"[48]; since it fails to be a necessary claim, it is ineffective in this role.

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[48] Williamson, 2000, 33.

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