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Preface

Keith LEHRER: Metamind, Autonomy and Materialism 1

The human mind is essentially a metamind. Autonomy, knowledge, preference, acceptance, consciousness, and the content of thought all incorporate metamental ascent to a higher level beyond first level belief and desire. The primary function or role of metamental ascent is conflict resolution and higher order evaluation. An infinite regress of metamental ascent is avoided by a mental loop of *keystone* states which refer back to themselves yielding autonomy and knowledge without paradox. The metamental loop is, moreover, compatible with materialism, even eliminative materialism. Vector activation in the brain averages neural impulses, and conflict resolution in the brain, like interpersonal conflict resolution, is obtained from weighted averaging. The resolution of the conflict is a fixed point vector of integrative weights which yields itself back forming a neural loop. Thus, neurophysiology recapitulates metamentality.

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There are two ways to think about knowledge: From the *bottom-up* point of view, knowledge is an early arrival on the evolutionary scene; it is what animals need in order to coordinate their behavior with the environmental conditions. The *top-down* approach, departing from Descartes, considers knowledge constituted by a justified belief which gains its justification only in so far as the process by means of which it is reached conforms to canons of scientific inference and rational theory choice. Keith Lehrer's epistemology is analyzed as a *top-down* internalist position and criticised with examples that show that in certain cases obviously knowledge is attained without meeting the standards for reliability of sources and processing of the required informantion.

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Keith Lehrer's notion of acceptance and its relation to the notion of belief is analyzed in a way that a person only accepts some proposition p if she decides to believe it in order to reach the epistemic aim. This view of acceptance turns out to be untenable: Under the empirical claim that we don't have the power to decide what to believe it follows that we cannot accept anything. If reaching the truth is the epistemic aim acceptance proves ill-formed, it is impossible to pursue the aim of truth by believing or accepting something because belief itself is a truth-directed attitude. If the epistemic aim is formulated in a weaker sense, combined with other aims, the danger lurks that accepting a proposition p is in the end loosing any connection with the truth of p.

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Keith Lehrer describes in his *Theory of Knowledge* a Justification Game which is played by a Claimant who tries to establish his justification for some contingent claim and a rather harmless Skeptic who tries to stop the Claimant. The doubts of a serious philosophical skeptic are – in opposition to Lehrer – analyzed as doubts concerning the justification of our beliefs and not their contents. Making the reglementations for a solid philosophical argumentation more precise the setting of a Serious Justification Game is defined and thus replaying the game it turns out that the philosophical skeptic succeeds in providing a profound philosophical argumentation for his denial of Lehrer's positive claim for justification.

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Our trust in our own trustworthiness as evaluators of truth plays a uniquely important role in Lehrer's recent work in epistemology. Lehrer has claimed that a person who trusts in her own trustworthiness has a reason for accepting everything she accepts, including that she is trustworthy. This claim is too bold, trust in our trustworthiness cannot play the epistemic role Lehrer assigns to it. Neither does a suitably revised version of the claim succeed in assigning any important epistemic role to our own trustworthiness as evaluators of truth.

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The relationship between inconsistency and Lehrerian coherence is scrutinized. Like most coherence theorists of epistemic justification, Lehrer contends that consistency is necessary for coherence. Despite this contention, minimally inconsistent belief-sets prove coherent and rationally acceptable on Lehrer's account of coherence. Lehrer is left with the following dilemma: If consistency *is* necessary for coherence, then (i) he must revise his account of coherence accordingly and, more importantly, (ii) such coherence is *not* necessary for justification, since intuitively we are justified in accepting such minimally inconsistent belief-sets. If, on the other hand, minimally inconsistent acceptance systems can be coherent, then to prevent pairwise inconsistent statements form readily cohering with such systems, Lehrer must deny that rational acceptance is closed under deduction.

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The contrast between Thomas Reid's epistemological concerns and a common core of the classical approach to epistemology is the following one: Reid abandons the classical use for *criteria* of knowledge and pushes the problem of the justification of beliefs to the level of the mental faculties from which the beliefs arise. A similar shift plays various roles in Keith Lehrer's coherentist epistemology. However, this shift raises several difficulties: (i) the impact of epistemological concerns on actual intellectual inquiries gets lost; (ii) the favored model of justification lacks in generality; (iii) 'vertical justification' (which proceeds *via* the faculty) is not independent from 'horizontal justification' (not proceeding *via* the faculty).

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The method of *reflective equilibrium* implies that moral principles received from philosophical reasoning and *considered moral judgments* received intuitively are finally justified if they cohere with each other. This idea is combined with the proposal of *rational consensus* (Lehrer), which shows the way in which divergences of judgements could be made to converge. This second method is used to the end of rendering more plausible the intuitions used in *reflective equilibrium*, and, so, to show the appropriateness of the coherentist method in ethics.

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The paper tries to show that Lehrer's attempt to apply his consensual model to social theories of meaning and reference is misconceived and that Lehrer's belief that language is a fictitious consensus is not justified. It is argued that the idiolects are basically fragmented and eccentric. Underlying causal networks establish both speaker and conventional meaning. Experts are not essential for the creation of communal language. Indeterminacy of meaning is epiphenomenal in a sense that language is open to continual modifications but there is an underlying structure that forms our communal language which is stable. It is furthermore argued, that a full-blown causal theory of reference incorporates semantics but with different basic assumptions from those that Lehrer holds.

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It is shown that the Fisher smoking problem and Newcomb's problem are decisiontheoretically identical, each having at its core an identical case of Simpson's paradox for certain probabilities. From this perspective, incorrect solutions to these problems arise from treating them as cases of decisionmaking under risk, while adopting certain global empirical conditional probabilities as the relevant subjective probabilities. The most natural correct solutions employ the methodology of decisionmaking under uncertainty with lottery acts, with certain local empirical conditional probabilities adopted as the relevant subjective probabilities.

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If it is certain that performing an observation to determine whether P is true will in no way influence whether P is true, then the proposition that the observation is performed ought to be probabilistically independent of P. Applying the notion of "observation" liberally, so that a wide variety of actions are treated as observations, this proposed new principle of belief revision yields the result that simple utility maximization gives the correct solution to the Fisher smoking paradox and the two-box solution to Newcomb's paradox.

Contrary intuitions are explained as arising from mistakenly treating subjective probability as a measure of the intensity of conscious assent, whereas it ought to be regarded as measuring dispositions to action.

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