

## *On Always being Right (about What One is Thinking)*

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### **I Introduction**

There are a number of strands to the knowledge we have of our own minds; two strands are these: we often know with ease what we are thinking and we often know with ease what it is we believe. This paper concerns the knowledge of what we are thinking; it pursues questions as to what kind of judgment subjects make about their own thoughts, how those judgments are formed and why they constitute knowledge; it also asks how these judgments relate to the judgments subjects make about their own beliefs when they know with ease what they believe. It focuses on the account developed by Tyler Burge (1988, 1996, 2003) as part of his project of reconciling externalism about thought content with privileged self-knowledge. Burge's account is well known and influential; as such it is a fitting target for examination and criticism.

By choosing these questions as those to pursue, I am already making some assumptions about self-knowledge — I am assuming that knowledge of our own thoughts is continuous with knowledge of other things, in the following sense. When investigating the nature of subjects' knowledge of *X*, one asks about what *judgments* subjects make about *X*, about the truth-conditions of those judgments, about the faculty by which these judgments are made, and about the reliability and so on of that faculty. The assumption I am making about self-knowl-

edge is that it is to be investigated in just the same way — one knows what one's thoughts are by *making knowledgeable judgments* about one's thoughts, and so the way to investigate this kind of self-knowledge is to investigate the nature of these judgments.

Burge calls the judgments that constitute subjects' knowledge of their own thoughts *cogito*-like judgments, and he defends the thesis that *cogito*-like judgments are self-verifying — let's call that thesis *Burge's Thesis*.<sup>1</sup> Burge's Thesis will be at the centre of my investigation of the nature of the knowledgeable judgments subjects make about their own thoughts. I will ask whether there is any account of the nature of these judgments — about their truth-conditions, and about the nature of the process by which these judgments are made — on which Burge's Thesis is true. Most of this paper will be spent investigating whether Burge's own views yield an adequate account. I will conclude that Burge's own view is crucially unclear; he offers hints at a direction in which a careful account might be developed, but I argue that this account would be fatally flawed. I end by sketching an account that looks like a far more promising way to develop Burge's suggestions.

## II *Cogito*-like judgments

*Cogito*-like judgments are a sub-class of propositional attitude self-ascriptions. A *propositional attitude self-ascription* is a judgment that ascribes a propositional attitude to oneself. Propositional attitudes are typed along two dimensions: attitude and content. So a belief that the world moves and a belief that water is a liquid are tokens of the same attitude-type — the type *belief* — but different content-types. In contrast, a belief that it is not raining and a hope that it is not raining differ along the attitude dimension but are two tokens of the same content-type (or, as I shall say *as shorthand for this*: they share the same content — the content it is raining).<sup>2</sup> When I talk of a *self-ascription* of a propositional attitude, I mean a judgment which ascribes a propositional attitude to oneself, typing along both the attitude and the content dimensions. So the judgment that I believe that water is a liquid is an example of a self-ascription; on the other hand the judgment that I am thinking is not a propositional attitude ascription as I mean it here, as it does not specify

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1 This name is due to Sarah Sawyer (2002).

2 I will use the convention of underlining to denote contents and their parts — concepts.

the ascribed thought along both the attitude and content dimensions (it specifies only the attitude dimension — *thinking*).

*Cogito*-like judgments are (present-tense) propositional attitude self-ascriptions that along the attitude-dimension ascribe merely the broad attitude-type *thinking*. *Thinking* is the *most general* determinable on the attitude-dimension; if 'Φ' predicates some determinate attitude-type (*believing, desiring, hoping, entertaining-the-thought, doubting, etc.*), and 'T' predicates the determinable attitude-type *thinking*, then the following conditional is always true:

$$\Phi(p) \rightarrow T(p).$$

As I am using the term, *propositional attitudes* include both states (such as beliefs) and events (such as judgments), so both *judging* and *believing* are determinates of the determinable *thinking*; both of the following conditionals are true:

$$(2) \quad J(p) \rightarrow T(p);$$

$$(3) \quad B(p) \rightarrow T(p).^3$$

So, then, the general form of the content of a *cogito*-like judgment is I am thinking that *p*.

There are advantages to characterising *cogito*-like judgments in this way — as a sub-class of propositional attitude ascriptions. One is the methodological virtue of familiarity of principle: we have well-developed theories of propositional attitudes and propositional attitude ascriptions (and healthy debate between these theories). A second is that this characterisation is neutral about the relation between *cogito*-like judgments and conscious episodes of thought; given the open nature of the debate about conscious thought, this neutrality is arguably an advantage.

A third advantage is that by choosing a characterisation that relates *cogito*-like judgments to propositional attitude self-ascriptions, the prospects are improved for finding an explanatory connection between the knowledge we have of our thoughts and the knowledge we have of other propositional attitudes (our own and other people's). In particular it nourishes the hope of finding a theoretical connection

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3 It might be that the ordinary way of construing thinking is not as being *the most general* determinable attitude-type (that hence satisfies all instances of (1)), but merely as being a *quite general* determinable (that at least satisfies all instances of (2) and (3)). Nothing that I say hinges on choosing between these options.

between *cogito*-like judgments and the knowledge we have of our own beliefs.<sup>4</sup>

### III The *cogito*

Burge picks the name ‘*cogito*-like judgments’ because he thinks that *cogito*-like judgments resemble Descartes’ *cogito* in being self-verifying (1988, 66; 1996, 92). Descartes’ *cogito* is the judgment I am thinking; it is self-verifying because in making this judgment, one is thinking (making a judgment is one kind of thinking). One *instantiates the property* of thinking by making this judgment. So we have in the *cogito* a model of how certain judgments can be self-verifying: one way one can make a self-verifying judgment is by predicating a property which one instantiates in the act of making the judgment. Let’s call this model *the instantiation model* of self-verifying judgments. So judging that I am thinking fits the instantiation model because in making the judgment one instantiates the property (*thinking*) that one is predicating of oneself.

First-person, present-tense predications of thinking and judging (i.e. judgments with the contents I am thinking and I am judging) fit the instantiation model. So too does the more cautious judgment of Lichtenberg (the judgment with the content there is thinking going on). In judging there is thinking going on, one instantiates the property which one is not predicating of oneself but which one is saying is instantiated in an existential generalization. So in judging there is thinking going on, one is oneself a witness for this existential generalisation. Once again, judging it makes it true. Self-verification by instantiation is not limited to thought and judgment: some speech acts are self-verifying by instantiation too. Saying “I am talking” or saying “There is talking going on” are self-verifying by instantiation: when I say “I am talking”, I instantiate the property of talking, while predicating it of myself.

Tom Stoneham (1998) holds that *all* propositional attitude self-ascriptions are self-verifying (*incorrigible* is his term), but he claims that the *cogito* is different from other self-ascriptions. He claims that the *cogito* is incorrigible because it cannot coherently be doubted (for doubting that one is thinking entails that one is thinking); in contrast, he thinks that *cogito*-like judgments can be coherently doubted and so must be incorrigible for other reasons (which I will not go into here). But Stoneham’s

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4 Although in his early paper Burge closely connects knowledge of one’s own thoughts to self-knowledge more widely (Burge, 1988), the connection is less explicitly made in his more recent papers (Burge, 1996, 2003). Thanks to an anonymous referee for this journal for pointing this out to me.

test — the ‘is it coherently doubtable?’ test — is too demanding to capture what is distinctive about how the *cogito* is self-verifying. This test is failed by judgments that are self-verifying and are seemingly self-verifying for the same reason the *cogito* is. Judging I am judging is like the *cogito* (it is self-verifying by instantiation), but it fails Stoneham’s test: doubting I am judging does not entail that I am judging.<sup>5</sup> Likewise saying ‘I am talking’ fits the instantiation model, and is self-verifying; but doubting that I am talking does not entail that I am talking. So Stoneham finds that the *cogito* unique is because his test is too demanding; it excludes cases which are self-verifying, and are self-verifying for recognisably the same reason as the *cogito*. In the end of this paper, I will agree with Stoneham that if *cogito*-like judgments are indeed self-verifying, then they are so for different reasons than the *cogito* itself.

#### IV *Cogito*-like judgments

Now that we have identified how the *cogito* is self-verifying we are in a position to ask whether Burge is right to claim that *cogito*-like judgments are like Descartes’ *cogito* in this respect. The *cogito* is self-verifying by instantiation because of its maximal generality along both the attitude and content dimensions. In the *cogito*, no content is specified, so an attitude with any content will satisfy it.

Are *cogito*-like self-ascriptions self-verifying by instantiation, like the *cogito*? Although they are like the *cogito* in ascribing the most general determinable attitude-type (*thinking*), *cogito*-like judgments are more substantial than the judgment I am thinking in the following respect: unlike I am thinking, *cogito*-like judgments ascribe content. In a *cogito*-like judgment, what one judges is not just I am thinking, but the richer, content-specifying I am thinking that water is a liquid — or more generally I am thinking that *p*. The inclusion of a content-specifying component in *cogito*-like judgments *prima facie* precludes their fitting the instantiation model. On the instantiation model, a person makes a true judgment when she judges I am thinking because judging is a species of the predicated kind: thinking; judging and thinking stand to each other as determinate to determinable. But, disanalogously, judging I am thinking that water is a liquid and thinking water is a liquid *prima facie* do not seem to stand as determinate to determinable: judging water is a liquid is a species of thinking water is a liquid, but *prima facie* judging I am thinking that water is a liquid is *not* a species of thinking

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5 This point assumes that doubting is not a species of judging.

water is a liquid. In section VI, I will tighten up this *prima facie* case into an argument to the conclusion that *cogito*-like judgments are not self-verifying.

To put that argument clearly, it is worth introducing a piece of terminology — the idea of a propositional attitude *making true* a propositional attitude ascription. Consider the contents:

- (4) water is a liquid
- (5) Jack believes that water is a liquid,

If I judge (5) about Jack, then I judge truly when Jack believes (4), and I judge truly *in virtue of* Jack's believing (4) — we can say Jack's believing (4) *makes* my judgment of (5) *true*. We can state Burge's Thesis in terms of the notion of making true, and in doing so we can say what it is for a *cogito*-like judgment to be self-verifying by instantiation (like the *cogito*). Consider the *cogito*-like judgment, (6):

- (6) I am thinking that water is a liquid

We can say that (6) is self-verifying by instantiation just if the judging of (6) makes (6) true.

## V The Truth-Condition Principle

The argument I will present in the next section uses the *Truth-Condition Principle* as a premise. Consider again the two contents:

- (4) water is a liquid
- (6) I am thinking that water is a liquid

Clearly if I judge (4), then it is true of me that I am thinking that water is a liquid — i.e., if I judge (4), then (6) is true of me. But what about if I judge (7)?

- (7) H<sub>2</sub>O is a liquid.

Is judging (7) an instance of *thinking that water is a liquid*? There is, of course, a long-running debate about how finely everyday propositional attitude ascriptions<sup>6</sup> cut the contents of the ascribed propositional at-

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6 In fact, the debate centres not around this question about propositional attitude

titudes. Some, with Russellian inclinations, think they are cut no finer than truth-conditions; others, with more Fregean inclinations, think that the contents of thoughts are more finely distinguished than the grain of truth-conditions. Note that there are potentially *two* issues at stake here: the first is as to what is the correct account of propositional attitudes *themselves*; the second is as to what is the correct account of propositional attitudes *ascriptions*. We can think of the first as asking how finely should *our best theorising* about propositional attitudes cut their contents; and we can think of the second as asking how finely *our everyday thinking* about propositional attitudes cuts their contents. It is the second of these questions which concerns me here. Giving a Fregean answer to the first question does not preclude giving a Russellian answer to the second question; it might be that although the contents of beliefs are fine grained, we do not discriminate this fine grain in our everyday propositional attitude ascriptions. With this possibility in mind, we can assume that Jack's believing (4) and (7) are beliefs which differ in content, yet still have room to ask the question: how finely do *cogito*-like judgments such as (6), and other propositional attitude ascriptions like (5)

(5) Jack believes that water is a liquid,

specify the contents of the thoughts and beliefs they ascribe? The Russellian answer in this debate would be to say that (5) does not discriminate the cases where Jack believes (4) and (7); the Fregean answer says that (5) *does* discriminate (truly describing Jack when he believes (4), and falsely describing him when he believes (7)).

Both sides of this Russellian/Fregean debate agree that sameness of truth-condition is *necessary* for sameness of ascribed content-type; the debate is over whether this is *sufficient*. Sameness of truth-condition is the common denominator of these opposing views, both parties agreeing that propositional attitude ascriptions specify the contents of propositional attitudes at least to this grain. In the argument which follows, we will agree with this common denominator, endorsing the *Truth-Condition Principle*:

### The Truth-Condition Principle

- **Propositional attitude ascriptions specify the content of the ascribed attitude at least to the grain of sameness of truth-condition.**

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*ascriptions* (judgments about propositional attitudes), but around the corresponding question concerning propositional attitude *reports* (sentences about propositional attitudes).

The argument which follows in the next section uses the Truth-Condition Principle as a premise.

## VI The argument from truth-conditions

Consider again (4) and (6):

- (4) water is a liquid;
- (6) I am thinking that water is a liquid.

Here is the argument from truth-conditions:

- I (4) and (6) differ in truth-conditions
- II my judging (4) makes (6) true
- III (6) satisfies the Truth-Condition Principle
- so IV my judging (6) does not make (6) true
- V (6) is self-verifying iff one's judging of (6) makes (6) true
- so VI (6) is not self-verifying

Spelling out the step to IV from I, II and III might be worthwhile. Premise III states that a necessary condition on two propositional attitudes' both making a *cogito*-like judgment true is that they have the same truth-conditions, but (4) and (6) do not share truth-conditions (by I) and judging (4) makes (6) true (by II). So judging (6) fails a necessary condition on making (6) true — the condition of that the content judge should share truth-conditions with (4). Hence (as IV says) judging (6) does not make (6) true.

If sound, this argument shows that Burge's Thesis is false; any defender of Burge's Thesis, then, is going to have to argue that it is not sound. Premise I is clearly true — it is clear that (6) and (4) have different truth-conditions ((6) is true iff I am thinking a certain thought; (4) is true iff water is a liquid).<sup>7</sup> Premise II is clearly true also. So the controversial premises are III and V. One of these premises must go. In the next section I will examine what Burge says on this matter; we

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7 One way to resist the argument from truth-conditions would be to claim that the *cogito*-like judgment (6) has more than one set of truth-conditions. Heal (2002) seems to have a view along these lines about belief self-reports (sentences in which one self-ascribes a belief); she compares such reports to performative speech-acts such as acts of promising, stressing the fact that promises have both a truth-condition and a satisfaction-condition (the promise 'I promise that I will go to Carlisle' is true iff I promise to go to Carlisle; it is satisfied iff I go to Carlisle).

will see that he is not clear on this issue, but that there are some passages where it looks as though he might be denying III — he seems to deny that *cogito*-like judgments satisfy the Truth-Condition Principle. Later I will argue that it is a mistake to deny that *cogito*-like judgments satisfy the Truth-Condition Principle, and so I explore the possibility of denying V — concluding that Burge would be better off denying that the instantiation model exhausts the ways in which judgments can be self-verifying.

## VII Burge's account of *cogito*-like judgments

Burge discusses *cogito*-like judgments in two places (1988, 1996). In both places, what he says is uncharacteristically unclear. One of the clearer things he says about the content of the content of *cogito*-like judgments comes in his (1996) paper. The passage seems to involve a denial of the thesis that the Truth-Condition Principle applies to *cogito*-like judgments (and so it is here that Burge gains room to resist the argument from truth-conditions). It is worth quoting the passage at length; he says:

So I begin with some remarks about a judgment that:

(1) I am thinking that there are physical entities.

This judgment is an instance of *cogito*-like thoughts, an elaboration of Descartes' *I am thinking*. Let us construe 'thinking' in (1) minimally — as *engaging in thought, or having a thought*, regardless of whether it is merely entertaining a thought, making a judgment, or whatever. In this sense, one 'thinks' all propositional components of any thought one thinks (including negated ones, antecedents of conditionals, and so on). (1) is the content of my judgment. I accept it as true. To be true, (1) requires only that I am engaging in some thought whose content is that there are physical entities.

We do not rest this judgment on an observation or perception such as was traditionally called 'inner sense.' The judgment is direct, based on nothing else...But once one makes the judgment, or indeed just engages in the thought, one makes it true. The thought is contextually self-verifying. One cannot err if one does not think it, and if one does think it one cannot err. In this sense such thinkings are infallible. (1996, 92)

This passage ends with a clear statement of Burge's Thesis; earlier on, comes the claim that the property of 'thinking' some proposition, *p*, (which we ascribe to ourselves in a *cogito*-like self-ascription) is a 'minimal' one. Let's give a name to the property that a propositional attitude has when it is describable as a case of minimally thinking that *p*; let's call the property MT(*p*). There are two ingredients to Burge's

claim that the property,  $MT(p)$ , predicated by a *cogito*-like judgment is 'minimal.' First is that  $MT(p)$  is highly general (in the sense of being a determinable with a wide range of permissible determinates) along the *attitude*-dimension: *entertaining, judging...* that  $p$  are all determinates of the determinable  $MT(p)$  (this is just the way we have been using the term 'thinking'). Secondly  $MT(p)$  is highly general along the *content*-dimension: judging *any* truth-functional compound of  $p$  is an instance of  $MT(p)$ . From the quoted passage (and from all Burge says on the matter), it is left unclear whether thinking *non*-truth-functional compounds of  $p$  count as instances of  $MT(p)$ . All we are told is that if  $p$  is a 'propositional component' of a thought, then that thought has the property  $MT(p)$ , and there follows a list of examples to illuminate what is meant by 'propositional component'; that list consists entirely of truth-functional compounds — hence the unclear status of non-truth-functional compounds. We can delay further exploration of this unclarity, and sum up Burge's claim about the nature of *cogito*-like judgments as:

(MIN) The *cogito*-like judgment I am thinking that  $p$  predicates to oneself the property  $MT(p)$ .

(MIN) implies that *cogito*-like judgments fail to specify content even to the grain of sameness of truth-conditions; hence it implies that the Truth-Condition Principle does not hold for *cogito*-like judgments. The two judgments with the following contents, (8) and (9), differ in truth-condition, but both judgments satisfy the property  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ :

(8) water is a liquid and snow is white

(9) either water is a liquid or sand is dry.<sup>8</sup>

So both in judging (8), and in judging (9), I satisfy  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ , and if (6) really does predicate  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ , then both my judging (8) would make my judging (6) true, and so would my judging (9).

Denying that *cogito*-like judgments are subject to Truth-Condition Principle blocks the argument from truth-conditions (by denying premise III). But *blocking* an argument that shows that *cogito*-like judgments are *not* self-verifying is not yet enough to show that they *are* self-verify-

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8 That is not to say that there are *no*  $MT$ -properties that distinguish (8) and (9): the properties  $MT(\text{snow is white})$  and  $MT(\text{water is a liquid and snow is white})$  are examples of such properties — (8) instantiates these properties; (9) does not.

ing. Even after claiming that a *cogito*-like judgment merely predicates a ‘minimal’ property  $MT(p)$ , Burge must still further defend the claim that, in virtue of predicating such a minimal property, *cogito*-like judgments succeed in being self-verifying by instantiation.

In the next section we will see that showing this still requires some work to achieve. It is clear that if a *cogito*-like judgment predicates merely a very general property such as the property  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ , then a greater range of propositional attitudes can make the *cogito*-like judgment true. Nevertheless, to show that *cogito*-like judgments are self-verifying by instantiation, one must show not only that the range of propositional attitudes that make it true is broad, one must show that the *cogito*-like judgment *itself* falls within this broad range. Although it is clear that (8) and (9) satisfy  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ , it is less clear — until we are told more about the property  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$  — whether (6) itself satisfies  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ .

### VIII Attempting an account of cogito-like judgments as self-verifying by instantiation

We can say in quite general terms what Burge requires for (6) to be self-verifying by instantiation; he requires both:

- a judgment of (6) *satisfies*  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ ,
- a judgment of (6) *predicates*  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ .

Giving an account of the judgment (6) and the property  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$  such that they stand in both these relations to each other is a tricky exercise.

If (6) itself is to satisfy  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ , then  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$  will need to be more general than just applying to any truth-functional compound of water is a liquid, since the content of (6) — I am thinking that water is a liquid — is not a truth-function of water is a liquid. Let’s suppose that *any* compound of water is a liquid, truth-functional or otherwise, satisfies  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ ; this supposition does not yet ensure that a judgment of (6) will satisfy  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ . To ensure this we need to add a thesis about the structure of (6) — we need to claim that (6) is a compound of water is a liquid. Claiming this, though, is tricky to square with the claim that (6) predicates  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ . I’ll use an example of an account of how  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$  might be predicated to illustrate why.

A judgment of any of (8), (9), and (10) count as instances of  $MT(\text{water is a liquid})$ :

- (8) water is a liquid and snow is white;  
 (9) either water is a liquid or sand is dry;  
 (10) necessarily water is a liquid.

They are all instances of MT(water is a liquid) because in each judgment, the conceptual complex water is a liquid is used (that is: the concepts water and is a liquid are used, combined in the right way). One way, then, that (6) could predicate MT(water is a liquid) is by (6)'s *saying that* one is thinking a content containing the conceptual complex water is a liquid (i.e., (6) is paraphrasable as saying "the conceptual complex water is a liquid is included among the concepts with which I am thinking"). If (6) is to say this, then it needs to contain a term (or terms) that *refers to* the conceptual complex water is a liquid.

One account of how we refer in thought to first-order concepts says that we possess a set of *second-order* concepts, each of which refers to a first-order concept. An obvious notation suggests itself, so we can say that there is a second-order concept water which refers to the first-order concept water; also London refers to London; gold refers to gold; and so on. On this view, the way to understand (6) would be:

- (6S) I am thinking that water is a liquid.<sup>9</sup>

Four concepts<sup>10</sup> are used in (6S), the first-order concepts I and am thinking that, and the second-order concepts water and is a liquid. (6S) is true iff one is thinking with (using) the first-order concepts water and is a liquid — i.e., it predicates MT(water is a liquid) of oneself. But, of course in judging (6S) one is not using these concepts at all (one is using their second-order 'cousins'), so (6) doesn't satisfy MT(water is a liquid) and so is not self-verifying. If (*per impossible*) (6S) were one's *only* thought, then it would be false.

Of course, this second-order concepts view of how we refer to concepts is not the only one, but it serves as an example of how an account of how (6) *predicates* the property MT(water is a liquid) might be in tension with the claim that (6) *instantiates* the property MT(water is a liquid). In the next section I outline an account that escapes this tension, before moving on to say why any account that involves denying that

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9 The 'S' in '(6S)' stands for *second-order*. Perhaps a more perspicuous way of putting things would be to say I am thinking with water is a liquid.

10 It might be that there are more than four concepts used; exactly how one counts concepts does not matter to the point at hand.

*cogito*-like judgments are governed by the Truth-Condition Principle is a poor account.

## IX Conceptual Redeployment

Peacocke (1996), in his supportive reply to Burge's (1996), offers an account of the content of propositional attitude ascriptions and *cogito*-like judgments. On his account, only first-order concepts are used in *cogito*-like judgments such as (6), but these first-order concepts exhibit a certain kind of context-sensitivity that allows them sometimes to refer to first-order conceptual complexes. Peacocke calls his theory the *Redeployment View*, because the central claim (the *Redeployment Claim*) is that the same concepts that one would use in a first-order propositional attitude are redeployed in propositional attitude ascriptions (Peacocke, 1996, 131).

On Peacocke's view, believing any of (8), (9), or (10) are cases of having a first-order propositional attitude using the concept water. On his view, believing the *cogito*-like content (6) is a case of having a second-order propositional attitude (a propositional attitude ascription) in which one is nevertheless still using the *same* first-order concept water. Whereas, when used in (8), (9) or (10), the concept water refers to the stuff water, when used in (6), the reference of the concept shifts; in this propositional attitude ascription context, the concept water refers to *itself*: water.

If one puts together Burge's view that in the *cogito*-like judgment, (6), one is ascribing only MT(water is a liquid) — one is judging only that one has some attitude towards some content containing the conceptual complex water is a liquid — with Peacocke's Redeployment View about how one refers to this conceptual complex, the result that (6) is self-verifying follows easily. (6) is true iff one is thinking a thought using the conceptual complex water is a liquid; but in judging (6) one *is* using this conceptual complex. One is using the concept water (to think about the concept water) and using the concept is a liquid (to think about the concept is a liquid). Hence the act of judging (6) makes (6) true — (6) is self-verifying.

Here, then, we have an account of the nature of the act of making a *cogito*-like judgment and of the content of *cogito*-like judgments — a view on which *cogito*-like judgments are self-verifying by instantiation. In particular this account fits with the claim (MIN) — that in a *cogito*-like judgment one is only ascribing thought in the sense of minimal thinking; in the next section I will say why endorsing (MIN) is a serious defect of this or any account.

Burge does not offer this account in all its details (we needed to add Peacocke's Redeployment View). As I have said, Burge is uncharacteristically vague in the places he discusses *cogito*-like judgments; nevertheless his views on self-knowledge have been favourably received. I suspect that the account sketched in this section is close to the picture that those who are sympathetic to Burge's view of self-knowledge have in mind — though none of these philosophers have worked out the details of the Burgean picture they favour. In this section I have elaborated a Burgean view in detail; it is not an acceptable view, though, as the arguments that follow make clear. No acceptable view of *cogito*-like judgments, self-knowledge and propositional attitude ascription can deny that the Truth-Condition Principle applies to all of these.

## X The importance of the Truth-Condition Principle in folk psychology

There is a large literature on everyday ('commonsense' or 'folk') psychology. It is a commonplace that we possess a sophisticated ability to predict and explain the behaviour of others, and that this ability involves the capacity to ascribe propositional attitudes (most notably beliefs and desires) to others, and to reason with these ascriptions. It is crucial to our ability to reason effectively about others' psychological processes that our belief and desire ascriptions satisfy the Truth-Condition Principle.

Consider the following short piece of psychological reasoning, in which I engage to predict the action of a person, Walter:

(11) Walter wants to fly to Hesperus,

(12) Walter believes that this spaceship flies to Hesperus,

so: (13) Walter will board this ship.<sup>11</sup>

Reasoning such as this is not a *perfect* way to predict Walter's behaviour; he might not board this spaceship despite the accuracy of the propositional attitude ascriptions I deploy as premises: (11) and (12). But such pieces of reasoning are often routes to correct predictions of behaviour, and a good account of how we reason about others' minds

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11 I am representing the piece of reasoning here by listing the sequence of *contents* of the judgments made in the process of reasoning. This example is due to Segal (2005).

should explain how we are often successful. And an account of propositional attitude ascriptions should contribute to this explanation of our success in understanding others and their actions — by showing how our propositional attitude ascriptions are often detailed and accurate.

If propositional attitude ascriptions (such as the belief ascription which forms premise (12) of this argument) violate the Truth-Condition Principle in the way that Burge's minimal thinking does, then there is *no prospect* of explaining my ability to predict Walter's behaviour by appeal to my performing an inference such as (11)-(13), above. If my belief ascription (12) fails to finely specify the content of Walter's belief in the way that the notion of minimal thinking fails, then my belief ascription (12) will *fail to discriminate* Walter's beliefs when he believes either of the following contents:

- (14) This spaceship flies to Hesperus
- (15) It isn't the case that this spaceship flies to Hesperus.

But the way that Walter will behave on the basis of believing (14) and the way will behave on the basis of believing (15) are very different (in one he will probably board the spaceship, in the other he probably won't), so if my ascription fails to discriminate Walter's believing (14) and (15), then I should not be able to predict Walter's behaviour very well at all. But I *can* predict Walter's behaviour quite well in such situations, so an account of propositional attitude ascriptions which can contribute to an account of my everyday psychological abilities must rule that my propositional attitude ascriptions meet the Truth-Condition Principle.

On the reading of Burge's account of *cogito*-like judgments that we have been developing so far, they violate the Truth-Condition Principle; the considerations of this section show that any good theory of propositional attitude ascriptions should imply that they generally comply with Truth-Condition Principle. Perhaps Burge can be untroubled by this tension, saying that the way we think about the contents of *other's* thoughts and beliefs is different from the way we think about the contents of *our own* thoughts: whereas most propositional attitude ascriptions meet the Truth-Condition Principle, *cogito*-like judgments differ in that they all violate the Truth-Condition Principle. In the next section, though, I press further the considerations of this section against this line of response.

## XI The importance of the Truth-Condition Principle to critical reasoning

A second purpose to which we put propositional attitude ascriptions, especially belief ascriptions, is in what Burge has called *critical reasoning* (Burge, 1996, 98-9). Being a critical reasoner is having the capacity to make knowledgeable judgments about one's own beliefs and the logical and evidential relations between them, and to revise those beliefs and guide one's reasoning in the light of these knowledgeable self-ascriptions. Burge has argued that the role which self-ascriptions play in critical reasoning is a source of the epistemic warrant which belief self-ascriptions enjoy (a form of non-reasons-based warrant he calls *entitlement*), and he offers a transcendental argument from the premise that we are critical reasoners to the conclusion that widespread brute error in our judgments about our own thought contents is impossible (Burge, 1996, 105-11). I will not evaluate this transcendental argument here; instead I want to point out that endorsing (MIN) is incompatible with the central role which Burge gives *cogito*-like judgments in critical reasoning.

Consider the following pair of self-ascriptive judgments, with contents (16) and (17):

(16) I am thinking that this spaceship flies to Hesperus

(17) I believe that this spaceship flies to Hesperus;

(16) is a *cogito*-like judgment; (17) is a belief self-ascription. Suppose that (16) ascribes only minimal thinking, which truly applies to thoughts of any attitude-type and with any content containing the conceptual complex this spaceship flies to Hesperus as a propositional component. Then (16) is made true by my believing (14), and also (16) is made true by my believing (15):

(14) This spaceship flies to Hesperus

(15) It isn't the case that this spaceship flies to Hesperus;

hence (16) fails to discriminate my believing (14) and (15). Let's now suppose that *cogito*-like judgments *and other propositional attitude self-ascriptions* ascribe content in the same way (by using the same concepts to specify content *at the same grain*), so that (16) and (17) *both* violate the Truth-Condition Principle. If (17) violates the Truth-Condition Principle in the manner of (16), then it applies truly to beliefs with *any* content containing this spaceship flies to Hesperus as a propositional compo-

nent. So then (17) also fails to discriminate my believing (14) and (15). If (17) fails to discriminate these beliefs, though, then it will be useless in guiding my critical reasoning, since the ways I ought to form and revise beliefs when I believe (14) and when I believe (15) are very different.

On Burge's account as we've developed it here, *cogito*-like judgments are, infallible because they say so little (ascribing only minimal thinking) that it is hard for them to be false; but if this is so, then they cannot guide reasoning the way being a critical reasoner requires. If *belief* self-ascriptions specify content in the same way as *cogito*-like judgments (and so themselves say so little about the content of one's belief that they fail to discriminate a belief with one content and a belief in its negation), then they cannot guide critical reasoning. Successful critical reasoning requires our belief self-ascriptions to be *both* accurate and detailed; self-ascriptions (such as *cogito*-like judgments) which violate the Truth-Condition Principle achieve the former at the expense of the latter, and so cannot effectively guide critical reasoning. It would be a disaster for our critical reasoning if our belief self-ascriptions failed to meet the Truth-Condition Principle. If Burge is going to claim that some propositional-attitude ascriptions satisfy the Truth-Condition Principle while others (including *cogito*-like judgments) violate it, then he'd better classify belief self-ascriptions and all the judgments involved in critical reasoning as being unlike *cogito*-like judgments (i.e., as satisfying the Truth-Condition Principle).

Taking this line would involve interpreting Burge as saying that *cogito*-like judgments are *unique* in violating the Truth-Condition Principle, and that belief self-ascriptions (in contrast) specify content to a fine grain. On this view, though, giving an account of *cogito*-like judgments contributes nothing to showing how we can be successful critical reasoners. In fact taking this line relegates *cogito*-like judgments to the status of mere curiosity. As well as being an odd position to try and attribute to Burge (who seems to regard the capacity to make self-verifying *cogito*-like judgments as central to being a critical reasoner), it would be a shame to rest with this view of *cogito*-like judgments, as it would mean the failure of an ambition we had for an account of *cogito*-like judgments. What we hoped for in an account of *cogito*-like judgments was an account both that shows whether they are self-verifying (and if they are, why) and that connects the self-knowledge we have through making *cogito*-like judgments with the capacity we have to be accurate in our judgments about the contents of our own beliefs when we engage in critical reasoning. Taking the present line would buy the former at the expense of giving up on the latter. (This would be a sad end for Burge's project: he hopes for an account of our wider self-knowledge, with respect to which *cogito*-like judgments count as *basic self-knowledge* (Burge, 1988, 66)).

## XII The alternative for Burge: deny that *cogito*-like judgments are self-verifying by instantiation

Denying the truth-condition principle is unacceptable. What options are left us, in the face of the argument from truth conditions? There are two: we can either accept the conclusion of the argument and deny Burge's Thesis; or we can drive a wedge between *cogito*-like judgments and the *cogito*, by denying that *cogito*-like judgments are self-verifying for the same reason that the *cogito* is self-verifying. This option denies premise V of the argument from truth conditions:

V (6) is self-verifying iff the judgment of (6) makes (6) true.

(6) is the *cogito*-like judgment:

(6) I am thinking that water is a liquid;

How else could (6) self-verifying except by it being the case that the judgment of (6) makes (6) true? Here is one way how.

If it were the case that making the judgment of (6) required one to enter into some other propositional attitude as a step towards judging (6), and if that other propositional attitude were a truth-maker for (6), then a necessary step towards judging (6) would suffice for (6)'s being true. In this way one would always judge truly when one judges (6), not because the end product of the process of judging (the judgment of (6) itself) makes (6) true, but because a (necessary) earlier step in that process makes (6) true. The obvious candidate for the earlier step is (4); the suggestion being that on the way to judging (6), one must think (4):

(4) water is a liquid.

If we can build a picture of how a subject makes a *cogito*-like judgment, on which the act of a *cogito*-like judgment necessarily involves thinking the very content one is self-ascribing, then we will have a way of resisting the argument from truth-conditions without taking the disastrous step of denying the truth-condition principle.

There are some passages in the first of Burge's papers on *cogito*-like judgments that suggests that he has such a picture in mind. Once again he is uncharacteristically unclear; one of the clearer statements is the following:

One knows one's thought to be what it is simply by thinking it while exercising one second-order, self-ascriptive powers...[This is] simply a matter of thinking the [first-order] thought in the relevant reflexive way. (Burge, 1988, 72)

This passage suggest that thinking a first order thought is a part of the process of making a *cogito*-like judgment. Note that it needs to be the case that thinking the first order thought is a *necessary* part of making the *cogito*-like judgment, not a merely incidental one. Otherwise all that will be secured is the claim that *cogito*-like judgments are *typically true*, not that they are self-verifying. Burge seems to be suggesting this picture in the following passage:

In basic self-knowledge, one simultaneously thinks through a first-order thought (that water is a liquid) and thinks about it as one's own...And by its reflexive, self-referential character, the second-order judgment is logically locked (self-referentially) on to the first-order content which it both contains and takes as its subject-matter. (Burge, 1988, 75)

The thought here is that the content of a second-order judgment has the content it does in virtue of its being 'locked onto' the first-order thought; so had one not thought this first-order thought, one could not have judged this *cogito*-like judgment, with *its* specific content. If one cashes out the metaphor of being 'locked onto' rightly, perhaps one can claim that had one been thinking a *different* first-order thought, then one would have made a different *cogito*-like judgment. Doing so would allow one to claim that *cogito*-like judgments are *reliable* (and perhaps therefore they constitute knowledge); doing so would also allow Burge to run his defence of self-knowledge from content-externalism. There is enough evidence here, perhaps, for us to be able to conclude that Burge's picture of *cogito*-like judgments is indeed the one now being sketched;<sup>12</sup> let's therefore use the principle of charity to conclude that, despite what he seems to say in the later paper, the claim that *cogito*-like judgments ascribe only minimal properties was a slip — it has no central part in Burge's account of *cogito*-like judgments.

The right way to understand Burge's notion of a *cogito*-like judgment, let's conclude, is as a judgment that one cannot make without thereby also thinking the thought that one is self-ascribing. We have not reached the end of our discussion with this conclusion, though, since Burge tells us almost nothing about either the *act* of making a *cogito*-like judgment nor the *content* of *cogito*-like judgments. We *need* an account of both of these, though, because we want to know *how* the content of a *cogito*-like judgment is 'locked onto' a first-order content, and we want to know how the process of making a *cogito*-like judgment proceeds from the

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12 The evidence is not unambiguous, though. Talk in the second passage of the *cogito*-like judgment's content containing the first-order content suggests the redeployment model, sketched earlier on.

thinking of a first-order thought to the judging of a content that ascribes that thought. Burge does not provide us with any account of either: we have the metaphor of thinking a thought in a 'reflexive way' (Burge, 1988, 72) and the metaphor of 'thinking through' (Burge, 1988, 75) a first-order thought in order to think about it. But these metaphors are not cashed out by Burge.

### XIII The Paratactic Account

At the end of the last section I expressed the hope for an *account* of the process and content of *cogito*-like judgments — one that fleshes out the metaphor of 'thinking through' a first-order thought to a *cogito*-like judgment that thereby gets 'locked onto' the content of that thought. At the start of this paper I also expressed a hope — for an account of self-knowledge that would build explanatory connections between the two strands of the knowledge we have of our own minds I mentioned at there: our often knowing with ease what we are thinking and our often knowing with ease what it is we believe. I want to conclude by sketching a detailed view of how content is ascribed in *cogito*-like judgments and other propositional attitude ascriptions — a view on which content is ascribed similarly in both kinds of judgment, and on which Burge's Thesis is true.

I call this view the *Paratactic Account*, because of its similarity to Davidson's paratactic theory of reported speech (Davidson, 1968). On Davidson's theory, pieces of reported speech such as (18):

(18) "Galileo said that the Earth moves."

really consists of two parts, as shown in (18P):

(18P) "Galileo said that. The Earth moves."

When one reports speech by uttering (18), one performs two speech acts. One asserts the first half of (18P) and merely mouths (utters without assertoric force) the second half. In mouthing 'The Earth moves,' one produces a token of that sentence in order to target a demonstrative onto it. One then uses that demonstrative to describe what Galileo said when one asserts 'Galileo said that.'

On my Paratactic Account of propositional attitude ascription, *cogito*-like judgments are likewise composite acts, which use a demonstrative concept to specify the content of one's thought (specifying them to a *fine* grain — at least as fine as sameness of truth-con-

ditions).<sup>13</sup> According to the account, the structure of our familiar *cogito*-like judgment (6) is given by (6P):

(6P) I am thinking that. Water is a liquid.

There are two contents in (6P); they have different truth-conditions, and one takes different attitudes towards them when one makes the *cogito*-like judgment. The second content — Water is a liquid — is merely entertained; it has the truth-conditions of being true iff water is a liquid. The first content — I am thinking that — is judged; it has the truth-conditions of being true iff I am thinking a certain thought. This judgment uses the second-order concept that, which is a demonstrative that specifies the content of the ascribed thought by being aimed at the tokened thought Water is a liquid. This is not the place for me to spell out all the details of the Paratactic Account, and the exact nature of the second-order demonstrative that. Suffice it to say that this demonstrative meets the Truth-Condition Principle — it specifies content finely, truly describing only thoughts that share truth-conditions with the demonstrated token Water is a liquid.

The composite act of judging the first part of (6P) and entertaining the second part is self-verifying, even though the individual act of judging the first part I am thinking that is not itself alone self-verifying. That the act of judging the first part I am thinking that is not self-verifying is established by the argument from truth-conditions. The truth-conditions of the judgment of I am thinking that are that it is true iff I am thinking a thought with a certain content — where a necessary condition on a thought's having this content is its being true iff water is a liquid. But the judgment I am thinking that is not true iff water is a liquid, so by judging *this*, I am not thinking a thought with the ascribed content. So the argument from truth-conditions prevents this judging (alone) to be a self-verifying act.

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13 Frápolli and Romero (2003) discuss Burge's view of self-knowledge using demonstratives. Their discussion fails to move beyond exploiting the notion of a demonstrative as a mere metaphor, though. The work to which they put the metaphor of demonstratives is to make thinking about one's own thought analogous to being able to refer to some particular about which one has no discursive knowledge or characterising description. As Burge himself points out in his reply to their paper (2003, 272), this misrepresents Burge's view of *cogito*-like judgments. The current appeal to the notion of a demonstrative in the Paratactic Account uses *type*-demonstratives, showing how we demonstratively form a *predicate* that *does* characterise the content of one's first-order thought. The Paratactic Account shows how one can form such a predicate in a direct way, without any prior discursive or indirect characterisation of the first-order thought.

But the argument from truth-conditions does not prevent the larger act of both judging the first part of (6P) *and* entertaining the second part from being self-verifying. On the Paratactic Account, the act of making a *cogito*-like judgment, such as that with the content (6P), is a composite act, with two parts: a judgment with content I am thinking that, and an entertaining with content water is a liquid. In making the *cogito*-like self-ascription (6P), the second-order concept that is formed demonstratively, by tokening and demonstrating the first-order thought water is a liquid. Hence tokening this first-order thought is a *necessary condition* on using this second-order concept (and hence on making the *cogito*-like judgment). But tokening the thought (in any mode — entertaining, judging, believing,...) is *sufficient* for the truth of the judged component of (6P) — for the truth of I am thinking that. Hence a necessary condition on the act of judging I am thinking that is a sufficient condition on its truth.

The Paratactic Account can serve as an account of the concepts used to specify content in propositional attitude ascriptions generally. I can make a judgment about Jack's beliefs such as

(5P) Jack believes that. Water is a liquid,

by tokening and demonstrating the thought

(4) water is a liquid.

I can self-ascribe this belief by judging

(19P) I believe that. Water is a liquid.

Notice that the Paratactic Account does not have the (unwelcome) consequence of making (19P) self-verifying; although *thinking* that water is a liquid is necessary for judging (19P), *believing* that water is a liquid is not necessary. While avoiding this result, the Paratactic Account can contribute to explanations of several key features of self-knowledge of our beliefs: how self-ascriptions such as (19P) invariably get the *content* of the self-ascribed belief right; how belief self-ascriptions are reliable, sensitive and count as knowledge;<sup>14</sup> how our self-knowledge of the contents of our own beliefs can be compatible with anti-individualism

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14 To flesh this out, one would need a story about how beliefs come to generate belief self-ascriptions; the Paratactic Account is a natural companion to causal accounts of this process, such as Nichols and Stich's (2003) account.

about the content of belief. This is not the place to pursue the details of these potential applications of the Paratactic Account to self-knowledge of belief; suffice it to say that the Paratactic Account has the potential to do good work here, and hence forge the explanatory connections between our knowledge of our own thoughts and the rest of our self-knowledge that I expressed a hope for at the start of this paper.

This sketch I have given here of the Paratactic Account suffices to illustrate how content is thought about in propositional attitude ascriptions; as I've said, a full elaboration and defence of the Paratactic Account must wait for another occasion. In this paper I have shown how Burge's Thesis ought *not* to be defended (by violating the Truth-Condition Principle) and how it can be defended (using the Paratactic Account). In the Paratactic Account we have a novel, detailed and viable account of how we come to be always right about what we are thinking.

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