What It's Like To Have a Cognitive Home

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Many people—both philosophers and non-philosophers—believe that the mind is an epistemic refuge of sorts. The idea is that when it comes to certain core mental states, one's being in such a state automatically puts one in a position to *know* that one is in that state. Whenever I am in pain, for instance, it seems that I can come to know that I am in pain just by attending to my experiences.

This idea has come under attack in recent years. One particularly influential attack comes from Timothy Williamson (2000), who argues that there is no central core of states or conditions—mental or otherwise—to which we are guaranteed epistemic access. In Williamson's words, we are *cognitively homeless*.

In this paper I will argue that Williamson's argument for the conclusion that we are cognitively homeless fails. Then I will show that there *is* a class of phenomenal states that constitutes a substantial cognitive refuge. When all is said and done, I will have both defended and shed light on our cognitive home.

1. Williamson's Anti-Luminosity Argument

Williamson characterizes cognitive homelessness in terms of *luminosity*, where 'luminosity' is defined as follows:

> Luminosity: A condition C is luminous if and only if, for every case α, if in α C obtains, then in α one is in a position to know that C obtains.[1]

Many conditions are obviously non-luminous. Being taller than most people, having over 150,000 hairs on one's head, and being exactly 2,275 miles from the Grand Canyon are all conditions that are obviously non-luminous. Such conditions often obtain without one being in a position to know that they obtain. Other conditions like desiring revenge or seeing the Grand Canyon—the obtaining of which one is usually in a position to know—are also non-luminous. For self-delusion, misinformation, hallucination, or other barriers may prevent one from knowing that such conditions obtain.

Nonetheless, it seems prima facie plausible to think that some conditions *are* luminous. These conditions may include being in pain, feeling cold, and experiencing redness. Whenever I am in pain, for instance, it seems that I can come to know that I am in pain just by attending to my experiences. Of course, this does not mean that, for every case in which I am in pain, I actually *know* that I am in pain. If, for example, I am distracted, I may fail to notice my pain and therefore not know that I am in pain. However, if feeling pain is luminous, then whenever I am in pain I am

thereby automatically *in a position to know* that I am in pain. Williamson (1996) describes what it is to be in a position to know something as follows:

> To be in a position to know that P, it is neither necessary to know that P nor sufficient to be physically and psychologically capable of knowing that P. No obstacle must block one's path to knowing that P. If one is in a position to know that P, and has done what one is in a position to do to decide whether P, then one does know that P (p. 555).

According to Williamson, there are no non-trivial conditions the mere obtaining of which guarantees that one is in a position to know that they obtain; that is, there are no non-trivial conditions that are luminous.[2]

To establish this conclusion, Williamson asks us to imagine the following scenario. Some subject S feels cold while sitting outside at dawn. Over the course of several hours, as the ambient temperature rises, S gradually feels less and less cold so that, by noon, S feels warm. Thus, at dawn S definitely feels cold, but by noon S definitely does not feel cold. Furthermore, at every moment in the interval from dawn until noon S is carefully attending to her experiences and attempting to determine whether she feels cold. As a result, we can assume that if S is in a position to know that she feels cold at any point from dawn until noon, then S does know that she feels cold at that point. Naturally, at dawn S is very confident that she feels cold, but as the morning wanes so does her confidence that she feels cold, until, at some point, S becomes confident that she does *not* feel cold.

Now, let $t_0, t_1, \ldots, t_n$ be a series of times that are one millisecond apart and span from dawn until noon. And let α_i be the case that S is in at t_i, where $(0 \leq i \leq n)$. Given the scenario described above, the following two premises are true:

(1) In α_0 S feels cold.

(2) In α_n S does not feel cold.

According to Williamson, the following is also true of the scenario just described:

(3) If in α_i S is in a position to know that she feels cold, then in α_{i+1} S feels cold.

The above premise is controversial. However, Williamson justifies (3) as a reliability (or safety) constraint on knowledge. Generally speaking, in a case α one's belief b with degree of confidence c meets the reliability constraint on knowledge that Williamson has in mind if and only if b is true in every case that is sufficiently similar to α and in which one's degree of confidence is at most slightly lower than c.[3] According to Williamson, one's belief must meet this reliability constraint in order to constitute knowledge. And Williamson argues that (3) can serve as a special application of this constraint in the context of the present scenario. For suppose that in α_i S is in a position to know that she feels cold. S is doing everything she can to decide whether she feels cold, and so S knows that she feels cold in α_i. Thus, in α_i S's belief that she feels cold is reliably based. This means that S's belief that she feels cold is true in every case that is sufficiently similar to α_i and

in which her degree of confidence is at most slightly lower than it is in α_i. According to the description of the original scenario, α_i is almost exactly similar to α_{i+1}, and S's confidence that she feels cold in α_{i+1} is only (very) slightly lower than it is in α_i. So it must be true that in α_{i+1} S feels cold. Williamson (2000) therefore concludes that if in α_i S is in a position to know that she feels cold, then in α_{i+1} S feels cold (p. 97). That is how he justifies (3) as a special application of a reliability constraint on knowledge.

Williamson then asks us to assume for *reductio* that feeling cold is luminous. Thus:

(L)   If in α_i S feels cold, then in α_i S is in a position to know that she feels cold.

From (1) and (L) it follows that:

(4) In α_0 S is in a position to know that she feels cold.

Which, together with (3) entails:

(5) In α_1 S feels cold.

And then from (5), (L), and (3) it follows that:

(6) In α_2 S feels cold.

If we continue to repeat the procedure whereby (5) and (6) were derived, we will eventually get the following:

(7) In α_n S feels cold.

(7) contradicts (2). Thus, given the facts about the above case—i.e., (1) and (2)—along with Williamson's defended premise (3), (L) entails a contradiction. Williamson therefore offers the following proximate conclusion to his anti-luminosity argument:

(PC)   (L) is false.

But (PC) is too weak for Williamson's ultimate purposes. Williamson does not merely wish to show that (L) is false. For to say that (L) is false is only to deny that one particular condition—i.e., feeling cold—is luminous, and that conclusion by itself is of limited interest. What Williamson really wants to show is that we have *no* cognitive home; that is, there are *no* non-trivial luminous conditions. If true, (PC) constitutes only a modest diminution of one's cognitive home, and so (PC) will not suffice for Williamson's purposes.

However, Williamson argues that the reasoning he uses to derive (PC) can easily be extended to *every* non-trivial condition. Williamson (2000) writes:

> The [anti-luminosity] argument assumed nothing specific about the condition of feeling cold … Since pain sometimes gradually subsides, for example, an argument against the luminosity of the condition that one is in pain can be modeled on the argument against luminosity of the condition that one feels cold, without any structural revisions … The argument also

applies to the condition that things appear to one in some way, for example, that it looks to one as though there is a purple patch ahead. Cases in which things appear to one in some way can gradually give way to cases in which they do not appear to one in that way … In any case we may conjecture that, for any condition C, if one can move gradually to cases in which C obtains from cases in which C does not obtain, while considering C throughout, then C is not luminous (p. 107, 109).

Williamson (2000) takes it for granted that phenomenal conditions like feeling cold, being in pain, and experiencing purple are the best candidates for luminosity. He then points out that all such conditions admit of the same gradual changes that led to the conclusion that feeling cold is a non-luminous condition. Williamson thereby concludes that, for any non-trivial condition C, C is *relevantly similar* to feeling cold in the sense that, if C replaces 'feels cold' in each of the above premises, then a parallel argument can be crafted to show that C is non-luminous. Thus, Williamson commits himself to:

(8) Every non-trivial condition C is relevantly similar to feeling cold.

From (8) and the definition of 'luminosity' Williamson's main conclusion follows:

(MC)   There are no non-trivial luminous conditions.

That's Williamson's argument for the claim that we have no cognitive home. Several philosophers have responded to this argument by denying premise (3).[4] But I am willing to grant that (3) is true. In fact, I am willing to grant that Williamson's argument for (PC) is sound. In other words, I am willing to grant that feeling cold is not a luminous condition. What's more, I am willing to grant that many similarly specified conditions (e.g., being in pain, experiencing redness, etc.) are also non-luminous.

Nonetheless, I am *un*willing to grant the truth of (MC). For I believe that (8) is false, and thus, I believe that Williamson's argument for (MC) is unsound. So I will proceed as follows. In the next section, I will argue that Williamson's argument is unsound. Then, in the section after that, I will argue that, not only are *some* non-trivial conditions luminous, but in fact there is a *substantial set* of non-trivial conditions that are luminous.

2. Eluding the Anti-Luminosity Argument

Williamson's argument specifically concerns *phenomenal conditions* like feeling cold and being in pain. Williamson takes such conditions to be the best candidates for luminosity, and thus, the best targets for his argument.

But notice that phenomenal conditions can be specified in many different ways —that is, with many different kinds of *phenomenal concepts*.[5] Right now I feel *warm*. I also feel *toasty*. Alternatively, I feel *as if the ambient temperature is above 78-degrees Fahrenheit*. Or, I feel *this way*. The fact that phenomenal conditions can be specified

with many different kinds of phenomenal concepts is crucial in this context. For how a given phenomenal condition is specified bears on whether one is in a position to know that it obtains. I may be in a position to know that I feel toasty, for example, but not in a position to know that I feel as if the ambient temperature is above 78-degrees Fahrenheit. Or I may be in a position to know that I feel warm, but not that I feel toasty.

My contention is that, given his intention to target conditions that are the best candidates for luminosity, Williamson simply misses the mark. For the phenomenal conditions that he targets—conditions specified with concepts like *cold* and *pain*—are not the best candidates for luminosity. The upshot is that Williamson wrongly infers that there are no non-trivial luminous conditions from the fact that conditions like feeling cold are non-luminous.

To start, consider the distinction between *relational* and *direct* phenomenal concepts.[6] Relational phenomenal concepts are expressed by public-language terms like 'red', 'cold', and 'pain'. A phenomenal concept like *red* is relational because it has its reference fixed by its relation to certain paradigmatically red objects (Cf., Chalmers 2003). One learns to apply the term 'red' to objects like apples, fire engines, roses, etc., and thereby forms the relational phenomenal concept *red*, which then refers to the color property that one typically experiences when one sees apples, fire engines, roses, etc.[7] Relational phenomenal concepts are both standing and descriptive. They are *standing* in that they can (and typically do) persist over time, and thus, can be deployed at various times. They are *descriptive* because they pick out their referents via descriptive modes of presentation. That is, the concept *red* (for example) refers to a certain phenomenal property in virtue of one's experience meeting a description of the form 'is such-and-such a color with such-and-such a character'. So while relational phenomenal concepts can be deployed in a variety of different ways, their deployment typically involves applying a description to the content or object of one's experiences.

Direct phenomenal concepts differ from relational phenomenal concepts in how their reference is fixed, and how they are formed, constituted, and typically deployed. Direct phenomenal concepts pick out phenomenal properties by means of demonstrative reference. More precisely, they rigidly designate phenomenal properties that one is occurrently experiencing by means of a demonstrative act. One might form a direct phenomenal concept by attending to one's experience and thinking (or saying), 'my experience is *thus*' or 'I am experiencing *such-and-such*'. Here 'thus' and 'such-and-such' are not shorthand for descriptions (e.g., 'redness', 'a cold breeze', 'a painful sensation', etc.); rather, they are demonstrations that refer directly to phenomenal content.[8] The idea is that, by carefully attending to one's experience, one can grasp the phenomenal content of one's experience *directly*— that is, without the mediation of a descriptive mode of presentation. This is what David Chalmers (2003) calls the 'taking up' of phenomenal content into one's concept (p. 235), and what Brie Gertler (2001) describes as the 'embedding' of phenomenal content in one's concept. Hence, the content of a direct phenomenal concept is (at least partially) *constituted by* phenomenal properties. So, whereas relational phenomenal concepts are standing and descriptive, direct phenomenal concepts are

non-descriptive and persist only so long as the phenomenal properties that consti-
tute their contents are instantiated in one's experience.[9]

The formation of direct phenomenal concepts requires a *substantive grasp* of the
phenomenal properties that one is demonstrating via introspective attention. This
point must be stressed. When one thinks, 'my experience is *thus*', and thereby
forms a direct phenomenal concept, the 'thus' does not indicate a blind act of
demonstration on a par with 'that thing over there' or 'those people in the other
room', which may succeed in referring without the thinker's grasping what she
is referring to. A direct phenomenal concept is formed by carefully attending to
the content of one's occurrent experience, of which one is *directly* aware, and,
again, 'taking up' that very content into one's concept. Thus, direct phenomenal
concepts always involve a substantive grasp of the properties to which they refer.

Like relational phenomenal concepts, direct phenomenal concepts can be
deployed in a number of different ways. For example, one may predicate a partic-
ular direct phenomenal concept *R* of external objects, thereby forming beliefs like
this tomato is R or *some fire engines are R*. Alternatively, one may predicate a rela-
tional phenomenal concept of *R* and thereby form beliefs like *R is red* or *R is cold*.
Or, one may predicate *R* of one's experiences, and thus form beliefs like *this
experience is R*.

The foregoing description of the differences between relational and direct phe-
nomenal concepts is admittedly brief and incomplete.[10] However, we can already
see that this distinction bears on Williamson's anti-luminosity argument. For, al-
though Williamson (2000) appears to acknowledge the existence of both relational
and direct phenomenal concepts (p. 103–104), he only appeals to relational phenom-
enal concepts in his argument. That is, his argument only concerns whether condi-
tions specified with concepts like *cold*, *red*, and *pain* are luminous. I have already
granted that conditions specified in this way succumb to Williamson's argument.
One's ability to accurately apply the descriptive component of relational phenome-
nal concepts to one's occurrent phenomenal states is less than perfectly reliable.
Thus, conditions specified with relational phenomenal concepts are not luminous.

However, conditions that are specified with direct phenomenal concepts fare
better against Williamson's argument. To see how, suppose that in α_i S attends to
her occurrent experience of temperature and forms the belief *I feel F*, where *F* is a
direct phenomenal concept of S's temperature experience in α_i. The content of *F*
is actually constituted by S's experience of temperature in α_i, so S's belief is true.
And because S can repeat this procedure and continue to form true beliefs, we
can (at least for now) grant that S's judgment is reliably based. Therefore, in α_i S
knows that she feels *F*. From this it follows that:

(9) In α_i S is in a position to know that she feels *F*.

Now, recall the following premise from Williamson's argument:

(3)   If in α_i S is in a position to know that she feels cold, then in α_{i+1} S feels cold.

Suppose that 'feels cold' as it appears in (3) is replaced by 'feels *F*', so that we get:

(3′)   If in α_i S is in a position to know that she feels *F*, then in α_{i+1} S feels *F*.

From (9) and (3′) it follows that:

(10) In α_{i+1} S feels *F*.

But (10) will not be true in general. Because the content of *F* is constituted by *specific* phenomenal properties, as soon as S's temperature experience changes, S's experience will no longer be *F*. So if in α_i S feels *F*, and S's temperature experience changes from α_i to α_{i+1}, then in α_{i+1} S will *not* feel *F*. And, given Williamson's description of the original scenario, we know that there will be some (and indeed many) such intervals over which S's temperature experience changes. So there will be cases in which S feels *F*, and yet, one millisecond later, S does *not* feel *F*. So it is perfectly plausible to suppose that S's temperature experience *does* change from α_i to α_{i+1}. So in α_{i+1} S does *not* feel *F*. (10) is false.

And because (10) follows from (9) and (3′), either (9) or (3′) must be false. Denying (9) requires denying that in α_i S is in a position to know that she feels *F*. But this is implausible, given the description of the case. In α_i S forms the belief that *I feel F*. This belief is true. And this belief is also reliably based. For, in any case in which S does *not* feel *F*, she will not (falsely) believe that she feels *F*. In fact, S *cannot* falsely believe that she feels *F*. To see why this is the case, first notice that S cannot believe that she feels *F* unless she possesses the direct phenomenal concept *F*. Just as I cannot believe that lizards are reptiles without possessing the concept *lizard*, so too S cannot believe that she feels *F* without possessing the concept *F*. Now recall that, because the contents of direct phenomenal concepts are constituted by phenomenal properties, which come and go as one's experiences change, direct phenomenal concepts do not persist through changes in one's experiences. That is, such concepts are *non-standing*. S can only possess *F* when she is actually experiencing the phenomenal properties that constitute the content of *F*. Thus, S cannot possess the concept *F*, and therefore cannot *believe* that she feels *F*, if she is not occurrently experiencing the phenomenal properties that constitute the content of *F*. In other words, S is only *capable* of believing that she feels *F* when she *does* feel *F*. If S believes that she feels *F*, her belief *must* be true. Hence, S cannot falsely believe that she feels *F*.[11]

Thus, in α_i S's belief that she feels *F* is both true and reliably based. So in α_i S knows that she feels *F*. Therefore, (9) is true. This means that (3′) must be rejected. Of course, (3′) isn't a premise in Williamson's anti-luminosity argument. So the denial of (3′) does not immediately cast doubt on Williamson's argument. However, the falsity of (3′) entails the falsity of premise (8); thus, the falsity of (3′) entails the unsoundness of Williamson's argument. For (8) implies that one can replace 'feels cold' in each of the premises of the anti-luminosity argument with any non-trivial condition C and a parallel anti-luminosity argument will be sound. I have replaced 'feels cold' with 'feels *F*', and the resulting argument is *not* sound. Thus, (8) is false. Williamson's anti-luminosity argument is therefore unsound.

In short, Williamson's anti-luminosity argument is unsound because it doesn't apply to certain conditions specified with direct phenomenal concepts. In other words, certain conditions *elude* Williamson's argument.[12]

So far I have shown that a defender of luminosity can overcome Williamson's anti-luminosity argument by appealing to conditions specified with direct phenomenal concepts. Thus, I have shown that the anti-luminosity argument fails to establish that these conditions are non-luminous. What I have *not* yet shown is that these conditions are, in fact, luminous. I will do this next. But first, notice that I don't need to do this in order to defend our cognitive home. For the introspection-based judgment that we have a cognitive home—that some phenomenal conditions are luminous—is already in place. This is the judgment that Williamson seeks to overturn. So the burden is on Williamson and other critics of luminosity to show that no such conditions exist. Thus, already at this point, those who judge that some conditions are luminous may rest easy. For their judgment has not been overturned.

3. Our Cognitive Home

Even so, it is worth spelling out how certain conditions specified with direct phenomenal concepts satisfy the intuition that Williamson rejects. To begin with, note that direct phenomenal concepts can be deployed to form what Chalmers (2003) calls 'direct phenomenal beliefs'. Chalmers (2003) writes:

> Perhaps the most crucial sort of deployment of a direct phenomenal concept occurs when a subject predicates the concept of the very experience responsible for constituting its content. Mary has a phenomenally red experience, attends to it, and forms the direct phenomenal concept *R*, and forms the belief *this experience is R*, demonstrating the phenomenally red experience in question. We can call this special sort of belief a *direct phenomenal belief* (p. 236).

When one forms a direct phenomenal belief, one predicates a direct phenomenal concept of the experience that partly constitutes the concept. And, of course, a concept that is constituted by an experience will always apply to that experience. So direct phenomenal beliefs are always true. And because beliefs formed in this way are always true, the method by which they are formed is epistemically reliable. Thus, so long as one has normal conceptual abilities, one's direct phenomenal beliefs will always amount to or yield knowledge.

One might be tempted to deny this. A scenario like the following might motivate one's denial. In α_i S feels F and in α_{i+1} S does not feel F. But, from t_i to t_{i+1}, S does not notice a difference in her experience. As a result, in α_i S confidently believes that her experience is F, and in α_{i+1} S *remains confident* that her experience is F, even though in α_{i+1} she no longer feels F. If a scenario like this is possible, then S's belief that her experience is F in α_i may not be reliably based, and thus, it may not count as knowledge.

But a scenario like this is *not* possible. For S cannot believe that her experience is F if she does not possess the direct phenomenal concept F, and S cannot possess F if she is not occurrently experiencing the phenomenal property that constitutes the content of F. So if S's experiences change from t_i to t_{i+1} so that in α_{i+1} S no longer feels F, then in α_{i+1} S will not be capable of (falsely) believing that her experience is F.

Perhaps the worry isn't that S could falsely believe that her experience is F. Perhaps it's that when her experience is F in α_i, S could easily believe something *similar*, but false. For example, perhaps in α_i S could get her experience slightly wrong and believe that her experience is G, where G is a direct phenomenal concept, but one that refers to a slightly different phenomenal property than F.

Again, this is not possible. In order to believe that her experience is G, S must possess the concept G, and she can only do that if she is occurrently experiencing the particular phenomenal property that constitutes the content of G. So, given that in α_i S is experiencing F, not G, S will not be capable of (falsely) believing that she is experiencing G. The same goes for any other similar but different belief predicating a direct phenomenal concept of her experience. So in α_i S is incapable of falsely believing that her experience is F, and also, she is incapable of believing any relevantly similar but false belief.

Of course, in α_i S may falsely believe that she feels *cold*. Or in α_{i+1} S may falsely believe that her experience is the same as it was in α_i, or that her experiences did not change from t_i to t_{i+1}. But these beliefs are importantly different from S's belief that her experience is F, for they do not predicate a direct phenomenal concept of S's experience. Rather, they are beliefs that depend for their truth on S's experience in α_{i+1} meeting the description, 'is cold' or 'is the same as S's experience was in α_i'. Certainly these (and other similar) beliefs can be false. But, again, they are importantly different from S's belief that her experience is F. S can only believe that her experience is F if that belief is true. And, if S's experience is F, she cannot believe any relevantly similar but false belief (e.g., my experience is G). Thus, S's belief that her experience is F is reliably based.

And the same goes for any other direct phenomenal belief. Such beliefs are always true and reliably based. Thus, direct phenomenal beliefs always amount to knowledge. Now, to see how this result bears on luminosity, consider condition C: S experiences F. Suppose that in α_i C obtains and S forms the direct phenomenal belief *this experience is F*. This belief is true and reliably based. So in α_i S knows that her experience is F. In other words, S knows that C obtains. And the only preconditions for S coming to know that C obtains are: (i) S is a person with normal conceptual abilities, (ii) S carefully attends to her experiences, and (iii) C obtains. Assuming that (i) is true, so long as S carefully attends to her experiences and C obtains, S will be able to know that C obtains. In other words, if C obtains, S is automatically in a position to know that C obtains. C is luminous.

And because there is nothing peculiar or special about C, we can infer that many other similarly specified conditions are luminous. Thus, while conditions specified with *cold*, *pain*, *red*, *tickle*, *itch*, *sour*, *loud*, and *stench* may not be luminous, there is a parallel set of conditions specified with direct phenomenal concepts that are luminous. So there *is* a substantial set of conditions that are luminous. We *do* have a cognitive home.

4. But Is It Good Enough?

Some may worry that the cognitive home I've described isn't good enough—that it's not suitable as an epistemic refuge. The worry is that the knowledge I have

described is somehow *trivial* or *insubstantial*, and thus, not a serious exception to Williamson's argument. Indeed, Williamson (1996); Williamson (2000) grants that some trivial conditions are luminous. Consider condition D: S feels cold and S does not feel cold. D will never obtain. So the conditional 'if D obtains, then S is in a position to know that D obtains' is true in every case. So D is luminous. Some conditions that *always* obtain—that is, obtain in every case in which one is a subject in a position to know anything—may also be luminous, according to Williamson (2000, p. 107). For example, the condition E: I exist. So long as I possess the requisite conceptual resources, in every case in which I exist, I will be in a position to know that I exist. For I have to exist in order to even consider whether I exist. Thus, Williamson grants that conditions that either never obtain or always obtain may be luminous. However, Williamson claims that these conditions are *trivial*, and so, are not fit for a cognitive home. One may worry that conditions specified with direct phenomenal concepts are similarly trivial. Take the condition H: I am experiencing *this*. One might worry that H is trivial. For 'this' as it appears in H may be taken to refer to whatever I am currently experiencing. If so, then H is just the condition that I am experiencing whatever I am currently experiencing. This condition always obtains. So perhaps it is trivial.

This worry is misguided. When I attend to my experience and I think (or say) 'I am experiencing *this*' and thereby form a direct phenomenal concept, the term 'this' does not blindly refer to whatever I happen to be experiencing. Rather, 'this' is a demonstrative that directly refers to certain phenomenal properties of my occurrent experience. The resultant direct phenomenal concept rigidly designates those phenomenal properties. Hence, when understood correctly, conditions like H will not always obtain. They will only obtain when I am experiencing the phenomenal properties that are picked out by my original act of demonstration. Thus, it is *not* the case that conditions specified with direct phenomenal concepts are trivial in virtue of always obtaining.

A related worry concerns the fact that some knowledge gained via the deployment of demonstratives is *epistemically thin* in that it doesn't involve a substantive grasp of its object. For example, if you kidnap me, cram a sack over my head, and whisk me away to some remote location, I may believe, and indeed know, that *I am here*, where 'here' blindly refers to wherever I happen to be. But I have no substantive grasp of where I am—I couldn't tell you whether I'm in Paris, Tokyo, or the North Pole.

But, again, direct phenomenal beliefs are *not* like this (see §2). They require a substantive grasp of what they are about. To form such a belief, one must carefully attend to a specific phenomenal property instantiated in one's experience and take up that property into the content of one's concept (as described in §2). One who forms such a belief does not blindly refer to some property of which one is unaware; rather, one grasps and refers to a carefully specified property of which one is directly aware. So one who forms such a belief knows something quite specific about one's experience; and, unlike me when I know *I am here*, one can rule out a wide range of scenarios inconsistent with one's knowledge of one's experience (Cf., Chalmers 2003: 246). For example, when S carefully attends to her

temperature experience on a crisp October morning and comes to know that she feels *F*, her knowledge of her experience is inconsistent with various scenarios, such as her feeling hot, toasty, as if it's 120 degrees, etc. So, unlike me with my thin grasp of my location that doesn't allow me to rule out my being in Paris, Tokyo, or just about anywhere else, S's substantive grasp of her temperature experience allows her to rule out various scenarios inconsistent with her experience (more on this later).

But is that enough? Might it be that conditions specified with direct phenomenal concepts are trivial in some other way, or are somehow *trivial enough* to be unsuitable for one's cognitive home? The only conditions that Williamson (1996, 2000) clearly identifies as trivial are conditions that always or never obtain. Conditions specified with direct phenomenal concepts only *sometimes* obtain, so they are not trivial in the way that Williamson identifies. So then how else might such conditions be trivial?

Take feeling *F*. It can't be that this condition is trivial just because one's belief that one feels *F* will always be true. For suppose that there is a perfect epistemic agent who only has true beliefs. Surely it doesn't follow that all of her beliefs are about trivialities. So the fact that one's belief that one feels *F* is always true does not automatically make feeling *F* trivial.

Maybe the problem is not just that one's belief that one feels *F* is always true. Maybe the problem is that falsely believing that one feels *F* is *impossible*.[13] In any possible world in which one believes that one feels *F*, one possesses the concept *F*, and thus, one experiences the phenomenal properties that constitute the content of *F*. So there is no possible world in which one falsely believes that one feels *F*. Perhaps this makes feeling *F* trivial.

But this can't be right. Suppose that an omniscient God exists. There is no possible world in which God falsely believes anything. But that doesn't mean that all of God's knowledge concerns trivialities. One's having no false beliefs with respect to a certain domain does not automatically make that domain trivial.

Perhaps the worry is just that knowing that one feels *F* is not an epistemic *achievement*. But this worry is also unfounded, for the reasons mentioned above. In order for one to discover that one feels *F*, one must *carefully attend* to one's experience and, in doing so, take up the content of one's experience into one's concept. People don't always do this. Indeed, a person could go her whole life without obtaining knowledge via the deployment of direct phenomenal concepts. So it is not as if direct knowledge of one's experiences is automatic or guaranteed. Such knowledge is an epistemic achievement.

One might still worry that knowledge gained via the deployment of direct phenomenal concepts fails to be a cognitive home because it is insubstantial or irremediably thin in the sense that this sort of knowledge cannot serve as the *foundation* for knowledge that philosophers like Descartes wished to establish.

There are a few things to say here. First, that we have a cognitive home—i.e., that there are non-trivial luminous conditions—does not entail foundationalism. Specifically, it does not entail that some of our beliefs are basic/non-inferred, or that these beliefs play a foundational role in justifying our other beliefs, or even

that any of our beliefs are perfectly reliable or certain. These are distinct issues.[14] So one need not accept, much less defend, foundationalism in order to accept that we have a cognitive home.

But, with that said, I believe that foundationalists can, in fact, get much of what they want out of my defense of our cognitive home. To see this, consider my belief that *my experience is F*. This belief is basic/non-inferred. That is, it is justified, but not by inference from other beliefs.[15] It is also especially certain or reliable. Indeed, as I've shown, it's as reliable as possible! Finally, this belief can provide strong justification for other beliefs.

Here's just one way that might go. I form the belief that *my experience is F* by carefully attending to my temperature experience—which, let's say, is definitely cold. So I know that my experience is *F*. Now, I also possess the concept, *cold*. And, in virtue of possessing that concept, I can, with a fair (albeit imperfect) degree of reliability, apply it to a range of particular cases.[16] This includes *F*, the content of which is constituted by my definitely cold experience. So I apply it to *F*, and thereby know that *F* is cold. I already know that my experience is *F*. So now I can *deductively infer* that my experience is cold. Thus, my knowledge that my experience is *F*, plus a simple deployment of the concept *cold*, yields a (strongly) justified belief that my experience is cold (Cf., Chalmers 2003: §4.2, 4.3).

The point of this example is not just that I can know that my experience is cold in this roundabout way. It's also, and perhaps more importantly, that the justification for this belief is *especially secure*, since it rests on my (maximally reliably formed) belief that my experience is *F*. Consider a contrast case: John says to me, 'You're freezing,' pointing to goosebumps on my arm. Without consulting my experiences, I take John's word for it and believe that I feel freezing. And I know that if I feel freezing, I feel cold. So I infer that I feel cold. This may count as knowledge. But, when formed in this way, my belief that I feel cold is not as secure as it is when formed on the basis of a direct phenomenal belief. So what's *special* about the role of direct phenomenal beliefs in justifying other beliefs is not so much that they can justify other beliefs—John's testimony can do that—it's that they can do so with an especially high degree of reliability or certainty. In other words, they constitute an especially *firm* epistemic foundation.

Maybe this sounds a bit contrived. After all, to know that I feel cold, I don't *need* to wend my way through John's testimony or the belief that my experience is *F*; I can just consult my experience and believe that I feel cold. However, as we've seen throughout this paper, the belief that I feel cold does not always amount to knowledge. And it concerns a condition—i.e., feeling cold—that is not luminous. So insofar as foundationalists want a foundation that is firm—i.e., especially certain or reliable—and insofar as they want a foundation that can serve a cognitive home in Williamson's sense, the belief that I feel cold will not do. A more secure foundation is needed. And that's where direct phenomenal beliefs come in.

All of this fits nicely with classic foundationalism. But there's a lot more to discuss here. For example, it remains to be seen whether the justification for *all* of our knowledge could ultimately rest on the type of knowledge of our experiences just described.[17] And there's also the perennial threat of external-world skepticism. But

these questions and concerns go well beyond the scope of this paper. Our question is whether the *mind* is an epistemic refuge—a shelter that holds up regardless of what's going on out there in the external world. So I'll just say this: Although my defense of our cognitive home does not require a defense of foundationalism, it does provide at least some of the resources needed for such a defense.

But the primary comfort here is still that we have a cognitive home. A substantial set of non-trivial conditions are luminous. If this home is robust enough to quarter broader interests in epistemology, then great. But we mustn't let what we want obscure what we have. And what we have is a substantial epistemic refuge.[18]

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NOTES

[1]   According to Williamson (2000), conditions are individuated by the cases in which they obtain. A condition C is identical to a condition D if and only if C and D obtain in exactly the same cases (p. 52). Cases are functions of particular subjects, times, and environments. A case α is identical to a case β if and only if α and β consist of the same subject, time, and environment (ibid.). So a condition C is luminous if and only if, for any subject s, time t, and environment u, if C obtains at t and in u, s is in a position to know that C obtains.

[2]   Williamson (1996) grants that *trivial* conditions are luminous, but only vacuously so (p. 557). For Williamson, such conditions include ones that always obtain (e.g., tautologous conditions) and ones that never obtain (e.g., inconsistent conditions) (ibid.). I will discuss this issue further in section 3.

[3]   The essence of this formulation of Williamson's reliability constraint comes from Selim Berker (2008).

[4]   Such philosophers include Anthony Brueckner (2005), Brueckner and Fiocco (2002) Murali Ramachandran (2009), Neta and Rohrbaugh (2004), Earl Conee (2005), Brian Weatherson (2004), Selim Berker (2008), and Baron Reed (2006).

[5]   I will follow Chalmers (2003) in treating concepts as mental entities. Chalmers (2003) writes, '[Concepts] are constituents of beliefs (and other propositional attitudes) in a manner loosely analogous to the way in which words are constituents of sentences' (p. 223, fn. 2). I will talk of beliefs as *containing* concepts and conditions being *specified* with concepts. A belief b contains a concept F if the content of b is at least partly constituted by F; a condition C is specified with a concept F if C is characterized partly in terms of F.

[6]   My account of this distinction is taken from Gertler (2001) and Chalmers (2003). Nida-Rümelin (1996), Nida-Rümelin 1998), Tye (1995), and Chisholm (1957) also develop similar accounts. I do not assume that relational and direct phenomenal concepts are the only kinds of phenomenal concepts. I only assume that there is a real distinction between them, and that persons can form and deploy each.

[7]   Note that 'red' has a dual role in that it is used to describe both objects that are typically red and experiences that are typically brought about by red objects (see Chalmers 2003). In this paper I adopt the latter use.

[8]   Such acts are what Brie Gertler (2001) calls 'demonstrative attention' (p. 318). Gertler (2001) claims that demonstrative attention is 'achieved by *attending to* a phenomenal content token in a way sufficient to demonstrate phenomenal content, independent of any description of the content' (p. 317).

[9]   Chalmers (2003) writes: 'The lifetime of a direct phenomenal concept is limited to the lifetime of the experience (or the instantiated quality) that constitutes it' (p. 240). Chalmers then anticipates an objection: 'Some might worry that this lack of persistence suggests that it is not a concept at all, since concepthood requires persistence. This seems misguided, however: it is surely possible for a concept to be formed moments before a subject dies. The concepts in question are still predicable of any number of entities, during their limited lifetimes, and these predications can be true or false … This sort of predictability, with assessibility for truth or falsehood, seems sufficient for concepthood' (ibid.).

[10]   It is also in need of further defense. However, in this paper I will not engage in a sustained defense of this distinction, in part because it has been defended elsewhere (see Chalmers 2003, Gertler 2001, Nida-Rümelin 1996 and Nida-Rümelin 1998, and Chisholm 1957), and also because the burden is on Williamson to show potential friends of luminosity why this distinction cannot (or should not) be used in response to his argument.

[11]   Of course, one can be mistaken about whether one actually has a direct phenomenal belief. If one is confused for whatever reason, one might think that one has a direct phenomenal belief when in fact one does not.

[12]   Other philosophers have responded to Williamson's argument in a different way—by denying (3). Selim Berker (2008), Neta and Rohrbaugh (2004), and Brian Weatherson (2004) reject (3) because they reject Williamson's general reliability constraint on knowledge. I, on the other hand, accept this constraint. Other philosophers, such as Earl Conee (2005), Brueckner and Fiocco (2002), and Baron Reed (2006), do not reject Williamson's general reliability constraint, but they nonetheless deny that (3) is a legitimate application of that constraint. But I do not deny that (3) applies to the scenario that Williamson describes. I am willing to grant that (3) is true. Thus, the key argumentative move made by those who deny (3) is the rejection (in some form or other) of Williamson's reliability constraint on knowledge. In contrast, my strategy is to show that the reasoning in Williamson's anti-luminosity argument does not apply to certain conditions. So my key (and novel) argumentative move is the identification of a set of conditions that dodges the thrust of Williamson's argument. And my strategy for disarming Williamson's anti-luminosity argument is not merely novel; it also has an advantage over the available alternatives. For my strategy allows me to disarm Williamson's argument without rejecting a reliability constraint on knowledge. So my strategy allows one who is inclined to accept some such constraint to nonetheless reject Williamson's argument. And because my strategy *eludes* Williamson's main line of reasoning in this way, one who adopts my strategy can reject Williamson's argument without battling over certain of its controversial premises. Thus, my strategy is not merely novel; it is also a *particularly good* strategy for defending our cognitive home (This is especially apparent given recent attempts to revise Williamson's reliability constraint in order to respond to those who reject (3) (see, e.g., Srinivasan 2013)).

[13]   Note that the impossibility of falsely believing that one feels *F* does not imply that one's belief that one feels *F* is a necessary truth. For example, S's belief that she feels *F* is only true in possible worlds in which S experiences the phenomenal properties that constitute the content of *F* (Cf., Chalmers 2003: 246).

[14]   This point about foundationalism must be kept separate from a different point, which was discussed above, about how we must have a *substantive grasp* of the phenomenal conditions in question in order to avoid the charge of triviality. What I am saying is strictly

optional (or a separate issue, given my purposes) is *foundationalism*, not the claim that we have a substantive grasp of phenomenal conditions. That we have such a grasp (as I've argued we do) does not require foundationalism. It may be that having such a grasp requires abilities that foundationalists (among others) agree we have, such as the ability to recognize, rule out, or infer certain further facts about our experiences (e.g., 'I am cold', 'this is red') from our direct knowledge of our experiences (more on this below). But, again, none of this requires a commitment to the dictates of foundationalism, as described above. Non-foundationalists can (and often do) agree that we have a substantive, non-trivial grasp of our experiences.

[15] I form this belief by attending to my experience, taking up the content of that experience into the content of the direct phenomenal concept, *F*, and then applying that concept to my experience. This belief is not inferred, and so it is not justified by way of inference. Depending on your persuasion, it is justified either by the reliability of the process with which it was formed, or by facts concerning my *direct awareness* of my experience (Cf., Chalmers 2003: 250–251, 267).

One might respond that the justification for this belief must derive, at least in part, from an inference from my background knowledge of *what an experience is*, since it involves my predicating a concept of my experience. But any such background knowledge is inessential to my justification for the belief that my experience is *F*. For 'my experience' can easily be replaced with 'this', where 'this' is a demonstration—again, based on introspective attention—of my total phenomenal experience (Cf., Chalmers 2003: §2.1). The resultant belief is: *This* is *F*. This is a direct phenomenal belief. And it does not require background knowledge about what an experience is.

[16] How can I do this? Well, in virtue of whatever capacities and training are implicated in my learning what coldness is when I form the concept, *cold*. This may involve memory, classification abilities, linguistic competence, etc. (see, e.g., Carey (2009) and Prinz (2002) for further details). But, just to be clear, it's not as if the reason I can recognize that *F* is cold is because I remember feeling precisely *F* in the past and remember that it was cold. Aside from the fact that this is not possible with direct phenomenal concepts like *F*, which are *non-standing*, this is not how the application of concepts in cases like this works *in general*. If I see someone with exactly 83 hairs on his head (and let's say I know he has 83 hairs), and correctly apply the concept *bald* to him, it's not because I once saw someone with exactly 83 hairs who I remember being bald. Rather, possessing the concept *bald* equips me with the ability to apply that concept to a range of particular cases, whether or not I've encountered them before. Likewise, possessing the concept *cold* equips me with the ability to apply that concept to particular cases like *F*, the content of which is constituted by my definitely cold experience. Or even setting aside that *F* is a particular case of coldness in virtue of having a content constituted by my cold experience, still, given that I know what *F* refers to—i.e., a specific phenomenal property that I am carefully and directly attending to—basic conceptual competence is all that's required for me to be able to characterize the property to which *F* refers as a case of coldness, such that I can infer that my experience is cold from my knowledge that my experience is *F*. This inference is not based on the general knowledge that all *F*s are cold (though I may infer this); rather, it is based on the particular knowledge that *F* (*this* phenomenal property) is cold. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me on this point.

[17] Notice that the question here is not whether all of our knowledge is formed by first forming direct phenomenal beliefs. That's clearly not the case. Rather, the question is whether the *justification* for all of our knowledge somehow comes from our knowledge constituted by direct phenomenal beliefs.

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