

## Introduction: Objective Rules of Thought

This book covers a number of topics that span across the philosophy of psychology, the philosophy of mind, epistemology, and the methodology of philosophy. Although the details of the book ought to reveal to a large extent how we think these topics are related, it may help to orient the reader for us to begin in this introduction by formulating more succinctly what we take to be the overarching argument.

Our principal motivating reason for treating these topics together is to provide an explicative defense of *philosophical anti-exceptionalism*. Roughly speaking, this is the view that good philosophical inquiry is continuous with good inquiry construed more broadly. We will say a bit more about what this continuity consists in shortly, but the idea is that good philosophical inquiry draws on the same cognitive resources as, for instance, good quotidian inquiry, and that inquiry that is ‘philosophical’ does not comprise a *sui generis* kind.

An *explicative* defense of philosophical anti-exceptionalism is constructive; it requires *showing how* good philosophical inquiry is continuous with good inquiry construed broadly. Our showing how will proceed in two steps. The first step will be developing a theory of what good inquiry of the most relevant sort is. The second step will be using this theory in order to demonstrate how philosophical inquiry can simply be an instance of this sort when it is carried out properly. (We will also suggest other ways in which good philosophical inquiry is continuous with good inquiry construed more broadly.)

The first step takes place in Part I. Our claim is that good inquiry of the most relevant sort is pure rational thinking, so the task of Part I will be to elaborate what pure rational thinking consists in. *Pure rational thinking* is rational thinking that is intimately tied to the capacity for thought. Thus, in elaborating on pure rational thinking, we will simultaneously be explaining at least some aspects of the essential nature of a particular kind of thought, namely propositional attitudes. Although our discussion in Part I is situated in the context of a broader explicative defense of philosophical anti-exceptionalism, we consider this discussion to be independently motivated by issues that arise from thinking about propositional attitudes themselves. (See §2 of this introduction for further discussion on this point.)

The second step takes place in Part II. There we will show that the epistemology of philosophical inquiry need draw only on the resources developed in Part I. As a secondary aim, we will attempt to vindicate *philosophical traditionalism*. We understand this as the claim that philosophical inquiry is, in certain canonical cases, a priori inquiry into the essential natures of objects, properties, and relations. Furthermore, according to philosophical traditionalism, this inquiry proceeds via such traditional philosophical methods as, for instance, the consideration of thought-experiments. Consequently, we will spend some time in Part II developing a theory of the a priori in order to show that it is a consequence of this theory that certain modal knowledge of interest to philosophers is a priori knowledge. The positive side of our explicative defense of philosophical anti-exceptionalism ends with Part II.

The supplementary negative side of our project begins in Part III. The principal aim of Part III is to undermine *experiential rationalism*. According to this thesis, intuitions play an especially central role in the epistemology of philosophy (or the a priori

considered more broadly). This view is embraced by philosophers who posit a *sui generis* faculty of ‘rational intuition,’ suggesting that this faculty plays a central role in the epistemology of philosophy.<sup>1</sup> This is also the view of a philosopher who thinks that all or most philosophical evidence consists in claims about intuitions,<sup>2</sup> or thinks that intuitions play a role in philosophical investigation analogous to the role perceptual experience plays in empirical investigation.<sup>3</sup> We contend that these intuition-emphasizing philosophers are engaging in obscurantism that mystifies philosophical inquiry.

From our perspective, it is important to distinguish experiential rationalism from our view in order to deflect any criticism from, for instance, ‘negative experimental philosophy.’<sup>4</sup> However, we suggest that the problems of experiential rationalism afflict a variety of alternative views as well. This point further substantiates the positive picture of Parts I and II. Our theory of cognition turns out to be preferable because it better accommodates the *intersubjective validity* and *objectivity* of rational inquiry than do the theories of many of our rivals.

In the remainder of this introduction, we convey our understanding of the principal themes of this book: philosophical anti-exceptionalism, pure rational thinking, philosophical traditionalism, experiential rationalism, and the intersubjective validity and objectivity of rational inquiry.

### §1. Philosophical anti-exceptionalism

As we have said, our motivating concern is an explicative defense of philosophical anti-exceptionalism, the view that good philosophical inquiry is continuous with good inquiry construed more broadly. We are motivated to give an *explicative* defense in particular because our interest is in understanding *how* it is that philosophical anti-exceptionalism is true. We are, in fact, rather inclined to take it for granted *that* it is true. When it comes to purely dialectic purposes, philosophical anti-exceptionalism needs no defense; it is *prima facie* plausible.

We suppose that there might be some felt tension between philosophical anti-exceptionalism and philosophical traditionalism—particularly for those who, in the wake of Quine, continue to reserve hesitation about essential natures (less likely) or the a priori (more likely). However, brief reflection suggests that it is philosophical traditionalism rather than philosophical anti-exceptionalism that is more likely to come under pressure, should this tension turn out to be real. Although we will not attempt to develop an argument in any detail, philosophical anti-exceptionalism could be motivated on anti-skeptical grounds. It is difficult to understand how we could

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<sup>1</sup> George Bealer is a strong candidate for an experiential rationalist. See, e.g., Bealer (1992), Bealer (1999), and Bealer (2002).

<sup>2</sup> Williamson (2007), Chapter 7 forcefully argues against this view, although he does not attribute it specifically to any individuals. We discuss this view further in §12.3.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Chudnoff (2011), Pust (2000), Nagel (2007).

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 14.

have the ability to do philosophy unless it is the by-product of cognitive capacities of a more ordinary sort.

Rather than developing in further detail a non-constructive argument along these lines, we propose to continue to simply take for granted that philosophical anti-exceptionalism is at least approximately true. Instead, we will focus our attention on elucidating what of substance philosophical anti-exceptionalism could consist in. We think that there are four respects in which good philosophical inquiry is continuous with good inquiry construed more broadly.

First, and most importantly, we think that certain canonical cases of good philosophical inquiry and good quotidian inquiry, respectively, are instances of *pure rational thinking*. To pick two relatively uncontroversial examples:

1. In 1947, Burt Shotton, the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, knew that, previously, there had been no black players in Major League Baseball. However, when Jackie Robinson, whom Shotton knew to be black, joined the Dodgers that year, Shotton recognized that this new fact—that Jackie Robinson was a black Major League player—was inconsistent with the proposition that there were no black players, so he revised his former belief, forming a new one—and gaining knowledge—that there was (at that time) at least one black Major League baseball player.
2. In 1976, the American philosopher David Lewis considered conditional sentences of the form ‘If A, then B’. The conventional wisdom at the time had been that these sentences express conditional propositions, equivalent to sets of possible worlds, and also that the probability of any such conditional’s obtaining was in general equal to the conditional probability of B, given A. However, Lewis reasoned, the probability of B given A depends only on the distribution of the B-facts in the A-worlds; but the probability of a conditional proposition cannot depend in general only on these facts, since the conditional is true in some but not all of the not-A worlds. Therefore, Lewis reasoned, orthodoxy would have to go. If there are conditional propositions, their probabilities are not, in general, equal to the probability of the consequent, conditional on the antecedent. Lewis’s thinking led him to a significant philosophical result.<sup>5</sup>

The first of these examples is a case of good quotidian inquiry of a trivial sort; the second is a case of good philosophical inquiry of considerable interest. Both of these examples are instances of good deductive reasoning—they are, arguably, instances of pure rational thinking. We think that quite a bit of good philosophical inquiry is pure rational thinking—including even inquiry that is prompted by far-fetched thought-experiments. We will attempt to substantiate this claim in Chapter 9. Before attempting to apply our theory of pure rational thinking, we develop it in some detail in Part I.

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<sup>5</sup> Lewis (1976).

Second, we think that philosophical inquiry draws on the same cognitive resources that subjects marshal in ordinary cases of so-called ‘abductive’ inquiry. Even when instancing pure rational thinking, philosophical inquiry sometimes has the flavor of abduction, whereby global theoretical considerations throughout one’s ‘web of belief’ are brought to bear on answering a philosophical question. Our theory of pure rational thinking will be developed in Chapters 1 and 3 to accommodate this observation.<sup>6</sup> The compatibility of this structure with a theory of pure rational thinking depends on holding firm the distinction between propositional justification (and related properties and relations) on the one hand and doxastic justification (and related properties and relations) on the other. As we will suggest in §9.3, it is the story about doxastic justification (and related properties and relations) that shows philosophical inquiry to have the flavor of abductive inquiry even when it is an instance of pure rational thinking.

Third, we claim that there is no principled distinction between philosophical inquiry and inquiry considered more broadly. We substantiate this claim with a very simple example in §9.3 in which inquiry that is ‘philosophical’ is clearly a precursor to further serious inquiry about macroeconomics. This issue also receives some treatment in §7.6, which is a recapitulation of some of the discussion of Ichikawa & Jarvis (2009).

Fourth, we contend that legitimate worries about philosophical inquiry—particularly those emphasized within the negative experimental philosophy program—must really be worries of a broader variety that, in principle, affect all areas of inquiry. In particular, they must be of a type that arises from understanding ourselves as having a constitution that makes us vulnerable to rational failures. Because humans only implement good cognition fallibly, some vigilance is warranted when it comes to the circumstances under which we carry out inquiry. Obviously, this issue is not specific to philosophical inquiry. Indeed, we will begin to address it very early on in developing our theory of pure rational thinking—in §1.13. Of course, we do not deny that care might be particularly warranted in the case of philosophy, given the challenging nature of philosophical questions. Even if doing philosophy consists of inquiry of an entirely ordinary sort, we certainly recognize that philosophy sometimes uses these ordinary cognitive resources to take us to extraordinary conclusions. (Of course, a similar remark might be made about logic or mathematics.) Indubitably, some people do philosophy badly. Nevertheless, even if some further humility and caution might be advisable in drawing philosophical conclusions, the foregoing considerations do not provide us with any reason to revise traditional methodology in philosophy. We discuss these issues in Chapter 14.<sup>7</sup>

## **§2. Pure rational thinking**

Arguably, the heart of our project is our theory of pure rational thinking. This theory is given as part of our Fregean theory of propositional attitudes, developed in Part I.

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<sup>6</sup> We will try to show how philosophical inquiry can have a structure that is roughly analogous to that of quotidian abductive inquiry by way of example in §9.3. However, the resources for drawing this analogy are largely developed in Chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> See also Ichikawa (2011a).

The central thesis of our proposal is that thinking—in particular, the sort that involves propositional attitudes—has constitutive rules. A subject must genuinely (but not infallibly) be governed by these rules, in order to count as having propositional attitudes. At least some of these rules of rationality coincide with conclusive rational relations—entailment relations of a particular normatively-loaded variety—between propositions. Consequently, these conclusive rational relations play a role in individuating propositional attitudes. In this respect, they are the normative ‘rules of thought.’ When cognition proceeds with sensitivity to these conclusive rational relations, the subject engages in pure rational thinking.

As we said in the first section of this introduction, we consider this Fregean theory of propositional attitudes to be motivated independently of any concern about philosophical anti-exceptionalism. We discuss two sources of motivation in Part I. First, we discuss a particular version of Frege’s puzzle in §2.8. Second, we argue at length in Chapter 5 that our theory is also motivated by thinking about the rational import of logic, which presumably even skeptics about philosophy would be interested in defending.

A further source of motivation stems from the overarching argument of Parts I and II. We contend that it is a mark in favor of our Fregean theory of propositional attitudes that it helps to provide a plausible explanation for how philosophical anti-exceptionalism could be true. We do not think that competitors will do nearly so well. As we have said, we do not think that philosophical anti-exceptionalism needs a defense; it is an acceptable dialectical starting point. Nevertheless, it does need an explanation. Thus, the plausible explanation that we give for it shows our theory to have merit.

More generally, our theory of propositional attitudes is motivated by the observation that any of the rules of rationality may fall well short of empirical adequacy when it comes to the operation of the intentional psychology of a possible subject. This point—driven home in the last decade by Timothy Williamson, but also prominent in Ruth Millikan’s work, and greatly motivated by reflection on the heuristics and biases literature in cognitive psychology—casts a shadow on theories of propositional attitudes that attempt individuation by way of dispositional (or other causal) properties.<sup>8</sup> We are pessimistic about the prospect of formulating, in purely dispositional or causal terms, the conditions that a token cognitive state must meet in order to be correctly typed as a particular propositional attitude.<sup>9</sup> There is simply too much flexibility in the ways in which possible minded subjects (whether human or not) might exemplify competence in managing their psychologies, consistent with the capacity for propositional attitudes.<sup>10</sup> The gist of this idea traces back to the

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<sup>8</sup> See Williamson (2003), Williamson (2006), and Williamson (2007), Chapter 3. See also Millikan (1993), Chapter 14 and Zangwill (2005). Kahneman et al. (1982) is the *locus classicus* of the heuristics and biases literature.

<sup>9</sup> Jerry Fodor is not spared from this critique as he also depends on conceptual role semantics for concepts in logic and mathematics. See Fodor (1990).

<sup>10</sup> Note that it would make the problem worse, not better, to deny that subjects need exhibit even minimal rationality to have propositional attitudes. Thus, freeing the theory of mental content from

discussion of the ‘anomalism of the mental’ in Davidson (1970),<sup>11</sup> we think it continues to be compelling. There may be *ceteris paribus* laws in intentional psychology of a distinctively human sort—but we doubt they could be metaphysically necessary in a way characteristic of the essential natures of propositional attitudes. Many of these laws arise from contingencies in distinctively human implementations of intentional psychology; even if some laws apply generally to psychological states of some particular types, there is no reason to assume that they will apply to *all* psychological states of those types, much less *all possible* psychological states of those types.

We find it far more plausible to suggest that it is in the essential nature of propositional attitudes that they function properly when subjects engage in thinking that is rational. Rationality is a subspecies of proper functioning; this proper function plays a role in individuating thought involving propositional attitudes. Only when thinking is truth-conducive in this distinctively rational way do propositional attitudes systematically (rather than haphazardly) benefit a subject. Even if these last suggestions are contentious, we find them to be a fruitful starting point for serious investigation into intentional psychology. We think that they have roots in common sense.

We have crafted our Fregean theory with some attention to detail, particularly the aspects of it that will prove relevant in Part II. Many elements, however, remain undeveloped. We acknowledge throughout this book that our Fregean theory of propositional attitudes is incomplete. Let us briefly comment upon three areas of incompleteness.

First, our story about mental content could not be complete without a more fully developed story about of mental content for perceptual experiences. We do not consider this lack to be a deficiency. There are a number of ways that the theory of representation might be developed for perceptual experience so as to complement our theory of propositional attitudes. Rushing to endorse some particular way would obfuscate the central tenets of our theory of propositional attitudes. With respect to the latter, we embrace a distinctive version of conceptual role semantics; it deserves consideration in the absence of a theory of representation as it applies to perceptual experience.

Second, and perhaps most saliently, our Fregean theory of propositional attitudes could not be complete without a developed account of the constitutive conditions of the sort of robust rule-following that thinkers engage in when they follow the ‘rules of thought.’ Already, we have made it clear that we are committed to the idea that intentional psychology has a teleological rather than purely dispositional structure. Thus, in (successful) instances of pure rational thinking, transitions in thought do not merely adhere to rational norms: they are governed by them. We do have some things

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constraint that subjects must exhibit some minimal rationality, as per Rey (2007), does not help naturalism.

<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps not surprising that one of the chapters of Williamson (2007) is devoted to developing a knowledge-based version of Davidsonian interpretationism.

to say about why we think that this contention is plausible.<sup>12</sup> However, it is perhaps better to leave it somewhat open precisely how to ground the requisite teleology; it makes it clear that our theory is not dependent on any particular theory about how to do so.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, our Fregean theory of propositional attitudes is incomplete because we do not explicitly develop a theory of attitudes. As the reader might expect in light of the foregoing remarks, we tacitly embrace a theory according to which attitude-types are individuated according to the contribution that they make to the teleological role of mental representations. For instance, mental representations are typed as beliefs only if their teleological role involves a world-to-mind direction of fit. We think it reasonable to leave the development of these ideas for another time.<sup>14</sup>

We flag these three areas of incompleteness in order to signal that we are aware of our theoretical burdens and take them seriously. However, we also want to make it clear that we consider these sources of incompleteness primarily as opportunities for further positive exploration and development. Despite being incomplete, our theory of propositional attitudes is sufficiently developed so as to be clearly distinguished from other prominent views in the literature as a novel contender with definitive virtues. In our view, the prospects for further development are sufficiently promising so as to warrant some leeway at this stage of investigation.

### §3. Philosophical traditionalism

The defense of philosophical traditionalism takes center stage in our earlier joint work.<sup>15</sup> It will continue to be prominent in Part II where we have incorporated the central ideas from that earlier work into this project.

Philosophical traditionalism has two tenets.

The first tenet is that philosophical inquiry is, at least in many central cases, inquiry into the essential nature of objects, properties, and relations. For instance, philosophers who study the mind are, at least sometimes, interested in whether there are any connections between it and the body, or whether any of these connections are necessary rather than merely contingent. The aim of inquiry in this case—as in many others—is to become clearer on, not just the nature of something, but the *essential* nature of something. In this particular case, the aim is to become clearer on the essential nature of the mind. The traditional presumption, at least among philosophers, is that we can achieve these sorts of aims by doing philosophy well. We defend the first tenet of philosophical traditionalism—including the claim that philosophy can be done well—in Chapters 9, 10, and 14.

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<sup>12</sup> See especially §1.12, §2.12, and §3.15.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Fodor (2000), p. 85 and Jarvis (2012).

<sup>14</sup> See Jarvis (2012) for some further discussion.

<sup>15</sup> Ichikawa & Jarvis (2009) and Ichikawa & Jarvis (2011).

This first tenet is denied by philosophers who conceive of their discipline as engaging primarily or fundamentally with concepts or linguistic practices. Alvin Goldman (2007), for instance, argues that much of the relevant philosophical inquiry aims at features of concepts, not of extramental entities, properties, and relations in the world. Epistemologists engaging with the Gettier thought experiment, for instance, are according to Goldman attempting to answer a question about the concept *know*, not one about knowledge itself. Of course, we are willing to concede that epistemologists may, as a matter of fact, also be interested in the concept *know*, but our contention is that epistemologists engaging with the Gettier thought-experiment are typically more directly interested in the nature of knowledge itself. See §9.6 and §10.6.

The second—and perhaps more controversial—tenet of philosophical traditionalism is that much philosophical investigation is a priori. It is denied by a number of contemporary philosophers, many of whom we will consider more specifically in Chapter 7. For now, we mention only one recent dissent, that given in Timothy Williamson's *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (2007). Although Williamson carefully and forcefully defends the first tenet of traditionalism, he is skeptical about apriority, and he denies that philosophy proceeds, in any interesting sense, by purely rational inquiry.

Williamson admits, of course, that there is such a thing as 'armchair knowledge'—knowledge that one needn't go and do any special sort of empirical investigation ('leave the armchair') to acquire. Armchair knowledge, however, does not always qualify as a priori knowledge. A priori knowledge is knowledge that does not have a justificatory basis that is experiential. Williamson is concerned that there are few clear examples of knowledge that *definitively* have no experiential justificatory basis. Clearly all knowledge—including armchair knowledge—results from the deployment of cognitive capacities that must be acquired somehow or other. Frequently, these cognitive capacities are acquired by way of experience. Williamson appears to argue that there is no principled way to distinguish when this experience is playing a merely enabling role, rather than a merely warranting one, in the acquisition of these capacities. Consequently, there is no way to make a principled categorization of the armchair knowledge that these cognitive capacities deliver. In other words, Williamson concludes that there is no principled distinction between armchair knowledge that is a priori and armchair knowledge that is not.

We are willing to concede that, in certain restricted cases, Williamson may be right in thinking that there is no determinate matter of fact about whether inquiry is a priori or a posteriori. In such cases, there may be no principled distinction between thinking that is purely rational and thinking that while rational is not purely so.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, as a fully generalized claim, we reject Williamson's contention.

We address the skepticism of Williamson and others by supplementing our earlier joint work by developing a theory of the a priori in Chapter 6. We will use this theory of the a priori to show in Chapters 9–10 that philosophical investigation is a priori in canonical cases.

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<sup>16</sup> See §§3.11–3.12 and §4.6.



Moreover, we raise considerations throughout the book that undermine the plausibility of varieties of extreme empiricism that insists that all propositional justification is explained by experience.<sup>17</sup> However, the most important criticisms of such empiricist theories can be extrapolated from our discussion of experiential rationalism in Part III. We argue that these theories are unable to accommodate the intersubjective validity and objectivity of rational inquiry. We will discuss this point further in §5.

We acknowledged earlier that there may be some felt tension between philosophical traditionalism and philosophical anti-exceptionalism. We contend that this felt tension is illusory; it has no rational basis. There is nothing particularly unusual about even quotidian inquiry that proceeds a priori. Moreover, our grasp on essential natures is nothing more than an extension of our ability to categorize.

#### §4. Experiential rationalism

Part of explaining the workings of good philosophical inquiry in paradigm cases requires distinguishing and evaluating contrasting explanations of these workings that are less successful. One contrasting—and at least apparently exceptionalist—explanatory approach involves positing a special, distinct ability for philosophical inquiry that proceeds by yielding intuitions.<sup>18</sup> This contrasting approach is one example of experiential rationalism. Fundamentally, experientialist rationalism is the view that good a priori inquiry proceeds by exercising some faculties of intuition that, in crucial respects, are similar to faculties of perception that make good a posteriori inquiry possible. While the idea of ‘faculties of intuition’ might sound plausible at first, left unexplained such faculties constitute an unacceptable mystery. We will argue in Part III that any workable model of these faculties of intuition is bound to show that they *differ* in the crucial respects from faculties of perception. The result is that intuitions cannot play an important epistemological role in the way that perceptual experiences do. Experiential rationalism is false.

It is important to clarify what is meant by an ‘important epistemological role’ in this context. When we suggest that intuitions do not play an important epistemological role, we are not suggesting that epistemic statuses such as doxastic justification and knowledge exhibit no dependence on intuitions. Dependencies on this sort are not sufficient for playing an epistemological role in the relevant sense. Certainly, the status of knowledge exhibits dependence on belief, but belief does not play an epistemological role in the relevant sense. It is overwhelmingly plausible that belief *per se* does not make belief rational.

Any intentional agent must have some way of forming beliefs. Depending on what they are, intuitions may well play a role in implementing this process of belief-formation. Consequently, there is no clear reason to deny that intuitions exist; intuitions may turn out to be of interest to the psychology of cognition. Nevertheless, our contention is that intuitions are of very little theoretical interest to epistemology.

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, §2.6 and Chapter 5, but also §3.3.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Bonjour (1998).

In particular, intuitions do not make it rational to believe particular philosophical propositions to be true, even if they might facilitate the formation of rational belief of these propositions. In contrast, perceptual experiences plausibly do make it rational to believe particular propositions. We believe that the difference between the two cases ultimately stems from differences in the way cognitive contact must be achieved in logical and philosophical inquiry versus paradigmatic cases of empirical inquiry. Cognitive contact is facilitated at least partly via causality in the latter case, but for widely appreciated reasons, it cannot be achieved straightforwardly via causation in the former.<sup>19</sup>

### **§5. The intersubjective validity and objectivity of rational inquiry**

The bulk of Part III consists in an attack on experiential rationalism. The emphasis on experiential rationalism may mask wider implications of that attack. We discuss these implications here.

The principal objections that we lodge against experiential rationalism are insensitive to whether the view is actually a form of rationalism; they apply whether or not the faculties yielding intuitions are a priori or a posteriori faculties. What matters for our objections is that experiential rationalism is committed to denying the intersubjective validity and objectivity of rational inquiry.

The thesis that rationality is intersubjectively valid is the thesis that the demands of rationality ought to apply equally to all subjects, regardless of their particular psychological contingencies. The thesis that rationality is objective is the stronger thesis that the demands of rationality do not depend in any essential part on psychological contingencies. Both theses allow that it may be reasonable for different subjects to believe different things in virtue of having different experiences. Neither thesis entails (but both are compatible with) the claim that rationality occasionally makes demands that are ‘unique’ in the sense of White (2005); they merely suggest that the demands of rationality can transcend the abilities of particular subject in a variety of cases. The motivating idea behind these theses is that what it is reasonable to believe—what a subject has propositional justification for—strongly supervenes only on what sort of information is in the cognitive system of the subject due to the subject’s perceptual, introspective, and other experiential or empirical conduits. Thus, even if we can make sense of what it is reasonable to believe given certain ways that a subject is bounded, there always will be a still further question about what it is reasonable to believe *simpliciter*. In this way, propositional justification (*simpliciter*) does not depend on the subject’s capacity to process this information.

We find these theses imminently plausible. For purposes of the dialectic, we do not think that they require positive argument; a sufficient defense need only rebut countervailing considerations. Nevertheless, in §12.6, we do cite positive considerations in favor of them. It is plausible that the theses are required to make sense of how subjects can systematically achieve practical success to a better or worse degree by heeding the demands of rationality better or worse.

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<sup>19</sup> See Benacerraf (1973), Field (1989), and Schechter (2010).

In any case, as we point out in Chapters 12–13, the alternative view—that by being less cognitively able, a subject can *ipso facto* better meet the demands of rationality—is not plausible. At best, the less cognitively able subject might have a better excuse; it might be plausible to suggest that she better exhibits rationality relative to her (more stringent) bounds. But there is a clear sense in which the less cognitively able are simply doing worse—even if they are making the most out of their limited cognitive capacities. (This conclusion is compatible with thinking that it is interesting—and perhaps from the perspective of cognitive psychology, more fruitful—to study how rationality can best be exhibited with certain limited cognitive capacities.)

Intersubjective validity and objectivity undermine the motivation for, not only experiential rationalism, but also for empiricism. The picture underlying intersubjective validity and objectivity shows that in order to form doxastically justified beliefs there must be, in addition to a posteriori conduits that bring information into a cognitive system, purely a priori faculties to competently process this information. (See §13.6.) Consequently, denying this form of rationalism is tantamount to denying the intersubjective validity and objectivity of rational inquiry. An extreme empiricist—and for that matter, even someone of Williamson’s more thoughtful, less radical persuasion—*ipso facto* psychologizes rational inquiry in philosophy and elsewhere by making the reasonableness of such inquiry dependent on psychological contingencies of the inquiring subjects. Insofar as empiricism is motivated by a scientific desire not to be ‘wishy-washy’ about what constitutes rational inquiry, it fails. Our version of rationalism is actually the ‘hardnosed’ position.

Although the intersubjective validity and objectivity theses are not explicitly treated until Chapter 12, the underlying motivating picture plays an important role in the development of our Fregean theory of propositional attitudes. (See §§1.9–1.10, §§2.1–2.2, and the discussion of coherence in §2.4.) If one thinks that the information brought into the cognitive system by a batch of experiences largely settles how it is objectively reasonable to proceed in thought, then one is pretty well committed to thinking that relative to any batch of experiences, propositions will, as a matter of necessity, stand in some or other particular relations of rational support to one another. However, a very good and de-mystifying explanation for why *that* is so is that propositions are at least partly individuated from one another according to at least some of the most significant of these relations of rational support—so it is simply part of the essential nature of propositions that they stand in these significant relations of rational support with one another. Our Fregean theory of propositional attitudes gives precisely this explanation when it claims that propositions are partly individuated by their rational relations that are conclusive. We consider its explanatory power *viz.* intersubjective validity and objectivity to be one of its principal virtues.

## Conclusion

This introduction serves as an orientation for our project, but we feel that it serves as a conclusion as well; the reader may wish to return to it after seeing some or all of the details. Because it is compact, the reader may find that our introductory discussion of these broad themes makes more sense after digesting more of the substance of our project.

So much for the (very) big picture. It is time to fill in some details. We begin, in Chapter 1, with our Fregean theory of propositional attitudes.