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Skepticism of Knowledge
-Conflict between Wittgenstein and Descartes-*

This thesis has two primary aims. The first involves providing a critique of the method of doubt that Descartes presents in *Meditationes* from a perspective based in the philosophy of Wittgenstein (especially *On Certainty* (OC)). I propose that it is only after Cartesian doubt is subjected to criticism that we can dissolve, rather than solve, the skeptical paradox caused by the doubt (§I~VI). The second goal of this thesis is to identify the fatal defect in Wittgenstein's argument that emerges from the opposite perspective, that is, one based in Descartes' argument. I will critique Wittgenstein from the perspective of the corrected Cartesian argument and elucidate the consequent genuine insight (§VII).

In short, I will attempt to criticize Descartes via Wittgenstein and criticize Wittgenstein via Descartes with regard to the theory of knowledge. I propose that a revised theory of knowledge should rest on the insights suggested by both philosophers. In this thesis, I will attempt to take a step, however small, in this direction.

I. ***Criticism of Cartesian doubt via the philosophy of Wittgenstein***

According to epistemological skepticism, I might be dreaming now or exist as a brain in a vat (BIV). A skeptical conclusion about knowledge of the external world can also arise from the premise C1, that is, I do not know "I am not dreaming (not a BIV) now." Pessimistic critics (e.g., P. F. Strawson, B. Stroud) consider the refutation of C1 to be impossible, whereas others have attempted to directly refute C1 (e.g., G. E. Moore, H. Putnam, C. Wright) and some (e.g., F. Dretske, R. Nozick) have attempted to refute the closure principle of knowledge used in the demonstration while allowing for the validity of C1. Another scholar, M. Williams, maintains that the skeptical demonstration is true only if we presuppose the epistemological premise that we choose to accept or reject at will. Most critics tend to adopt a strategy that allows them to effectively avoid the skeptical consequence while accepting the validity of C1.

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However, it is difficult to say whether these attempts have succeeded; in my opinion, they have been unsuccessful[1] because their concession to Descartes' argument is insufficient. Such failure might also derive from the incompleteness of Descartes' own method of doubt. The first aim of this thesis, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, is to show that the skeptical paradox about knowledge can be dissolved only if Cartesian skepticism is extended far beyond the reach of his attempt. This argument is based on important arguments in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*.

II. *Skeptical paradox about* a posteriori *knowledge*

In his *Meditationes*, Descartes arrived at the concept of certain knowledge (i.e., "I think") through three stages of methodological doubt: [1] doubt about knowledge gained through perception, [2] the dream argument, and [3] the assumption of Damon. Before examining the failure of Descartes' demonstration, we will formulate the skeptical paradoxes corresponding to stages [2] and [3].

First, I will formulate the epistemological paradox corresponding to stage [2]; that is, epistemological skepticism about the external world in general. This can be referred to as skepticism about *a posteriori* knowledge (SDr)[2]. Given the notation that S = "I sit in front of the desk," Dr = "I am dreaming now," K = "I know ~", then

(1) $\neg K(\neg Dr)$ (conclusion of dream argument; C1)
(2) $K(S \rightarrow \neg Dr)$ (reasoning based on the concepts)
(3) $(x)(y)\,[\{K(x) \wedge K(x \rightarrow y)\} \rightarrow K(y)]$ (the principle of closure)
(4) $K(S)$ (assumption)
(5) $K(\neg Dr)$ ((2), (3), (4))
(6) $\neg K(\neg Dr) \wedge K(\neg Dr)$ ((1),(5))

Thus, a contradiction emerges. At this stage, K(S) must be denied because K(S) is the only assumption in this proof. So,

(7) $\neg K(S)$

At this stage of methodological doubt (stage [2]), *a priori* knowledge cannot be the target of doubt. Therefore, denial of K(S), which is not based on logical inference, seems to be natural.

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[1] In this thesis, I will not directly note flaws in the arguments of the critics to which I refer, with the exception of Wright. However, I expect that such flaws will become self-evident when the essence of this thesis is understood and the detailed criticism of Wright's argument (cf. footnote 7) is explained.
[2] In this thesis, I abbreviate the inference described below, which draws a skeptical conclusion about *a posteriori* knowledge, as SDr.

In the service of enhancing understanding of the argument that follows, I must underscore a remarkable feature of this paradoxical reasoning (SDr). SDr is such that the conclusion is incompatible with common sense. In contrast to the demonstration that follows, this demonstration does not contain any logical defects.

III. *The Skeptical paradox about* a priori *knowledge*[3]

Next, I will formulate the paradox corresponding to stage [3], epistemological skepticism about knowledge that might be indefeasible even after the dream argument, such as knowledge concerning mathematics, logic, and epistemic schema, and that can therefore be called skepticism about *a priori* knowledge (SDa)[4]. Given the notation that M = "2 + 3 = 5," and Da (x) = "I am deceived by Damon about x (x = a belief in *a priori* content)," the same reasoning used in relation to SDr, produces ¬K (M).

[SDa: Inference of skepticism about *a priori* knowledge]
(1)′ ¬K(¬Da(M)) (conclusion from the assumption of Damon)
(2)′ K(M→¬Da(M)) (reasoning based on the concepts)
(3) (x)(y) [{K(x)∧K(x→y)}→K(y)] (the principle of closure)
(4)′ K(M) (assumption)
(5)′ K(¬Da(M)) ((2)′, (3), (4)′)
(6)′ ¬K(¬Da(M))∧K (¬Da(M)) ((1)′, (5)′)
(7)′ ¬K(M)

However, because this inference, unlike SDr, derives the denial of a kind of *a priori* knowledge (= M), all of the same kind of knowledge (e.g., (1)′, (2)′, (3)) will also be denied based on the same type of inference described above[5]. To avoid this situation, the conjunction of the three premises ((1)′, (2)′, (3)) must be denied[6] because if this conjunction is accepted, the inference must lead to the unfortunate consequence noted. Thus, the conjunction of the three premises is denied in the case of SDa. In contrast to SDr, SDa is problematic with regard not only to its conclusion(¬K(M)) but also to the inference itself, which contains a logical deficiency[7].

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[3] I obtained many ideas about the following paradox which is distinguished sharply from SDr, from C. Wright (1991), pp.101–113.

[4] Consistent with SDr, I abbreviate the inference described below, which draws a skeptical conclusion about *a priori* knowledge, as SDa.

[5] If we substitute "M" in SDa with "¬K(¬Da(M))" ((1)′), "M→¬Da(M)" (the scope of the cognitive operator K in (2)′), "(x)(y) [{K(x)∧K(x→y)}→K(y)]"((3)), we can reach the denial or the equivalence of the denial of them (" ¬ K(¬ K(¬ Da(M)))", " ¬ K(M→ ¬ Da(M))", " ¬ K[(x)(y) [{K(x)∧K(x→y)}→K(y)]]")

[6] Therefore, ¬(¬K(¬Da(M)) ∧ K(M→¬Da(M)) ∧ (x)(y)[{K(x)∧K(x→y)}→K(y)]).

[7] From this, Wright derives the denial of ¬K(¬Da(M)). However, the reason that he provides is not

very convincing (cf. Wright (1991), p.107).

Because it is very helpful for understanding the following argument and very significant as an attempt to criticize skepticism itself, I will outline the argument developed by Wright (1991) in some detail and underscore the difficulty with this argument. After demonstrating that the conjunction of three premises ((1)′ and (2)′, (3)) must be denied, Wright advances his argument as follows:

α . Of the three premises, only (1)′(¬K (¬Da(M))) can be denied.

The truth of *a priori* knowledge, which was the target of doubt under Damon's assumption, will be demonstrated by this claim because one of the premises of the reasoning (SDa) behind the skeptical conclusion about *a priori* knowledge is denied in α. Beyond that, he claims:

β . From denial of (1)′, denial of premise (1) (¬K (¬Dr)) of SDr can be drawn and, at the least, the unwarrantable status of (1) can be drawn.

For the same reason as α, skeptical doubt about *a posteriori* knowledge, the target of doubt in the dream argument, can be eliminated by β.

However, in my opinion, the argument by which Wright draws α and β is vulnerable. First, I will examine the argument that concludes in α. Wright attempts to draw α solely by concentrating on the validity of both (2)′ (K (M→¬Da(M))) and (3) (the principle of closure) under the assumption of the externalism about knowledge (though the assumption itself seems quite sound). However, he never shows the direct basis on which (1)′ (¬K (¬Da(M))) is denied. That is, he never shows the positive basis on which K (¬Da(M)) is affirmed, which is denial of (1)′. He manages only to justify the denial of (1)′ in a negative or eliminative way.

However, the most serious difficulty arises in the argument in which he draws β. Let us assume that the argument that concludes α is indeed valid. Intuitively, (1)′ would seem to be the most natural and easiest of the three premises to deny. When we examine the argument by which Wright draws β , we should note that the logical deficiency induced by SDa can be avoided only if we can deny (1)′ and SDr does not include a logical deficiency from the beginning.

However, if SDr cannot be denied, then skepticism about *a posteriori* knowledge will persist. Wright attempts to explore transcending the skepticism by deriving the denial of (1) on the basis of the denial of (1)′(= α).

Although his argument is quite complicated, it can be summarized as follows. The denial of (1)′ (K (¬Da(M))) and the affirmation of (1)(¬K (¬Dr)) are logically incompatible because it seems quite strange that I could not know whether I am now dreaming despite knowing I am not being deceived by Damon about the *a priori* content. At this point, Wright makes a concession and advances his argument further. Even though we cannot demonstrate the logical incompatibility of the denial of (1)′ and the affirmation of (1), we must accept that it is impossible to justify the denial of their logical incompatibility. He shows that, based on this fact, the unwarrantability (not the denial) of (1) can be derived. Because SDr includes at least one unwarrantable premise, the reasoning cannot be considered valid.

My diagnosis about this ingenious argument of Wright's is as follows. We can demonstrate β on the basis of α only if we can positively demonstrate the denial of (1)′ (K (¬Da(M))). Without satisfying this condition (which Wright's argument does not), the demonstration of α and β are completely independent of each other. To escape the skepticism about *a posteriori* knowledge, we must produce an argument quite different from α, but Wright never produces an argument of this sort.

What kind of argument can be considered as valid for positively affirming the denial of (1)′ (K (¬Da(M)))? Under what conditions can we ground *a priori* knowledge (e.g., knowledge of arithmetic) without any room for doubt? Such conditions would be realized if and only if there were a solid foundation (*Bedeutungskörper*) for prescribing the perfect rule about how to use arithmetic signs (e.g., "＋") such that no room for doubt about correct comprehension of the meaning would remain. Under these circumstances, we would have valid grounds to deny only (1)′ among the three premises in SDa

IV. *Cartesian doubt based on Wittgenstein*

I will use Wittgenstein's argument to carry the method of doubt to its logical conclusion to dissolve these skeptical paradoxes. Indeed, Cartesian doubt is insufficient in the following way. If Damon's assumption makes it possible to suspect *a priori* knowledge such as "2 + 3 = 5," it is also possible to be deceived by Damon about the reasoning and the meaning of the very words used in the process that lead to indefeasible knowledge: "I think."[8] Therefore, even "I think" cannot be indefeasible knowledge that escapes doubt.

Then, does indefeasible knowledge that escapes all logically possible doubt not exist? The reply to this question is this: Indefeasible knowledge that escapes all logically possible doubt cannot exist because whatever is entitled to be called "knowledge" must be expressible in language and, in principle, no use of words can be exempted from Damon's deception. Thus, it seems that the discussion about knowledge reaches a dead end at this point. However, it is not until we have pursued Cartesian doubt to this point that we can productively consider knowledge. Wittgenstein's familiar remark provides a significant clue for further investigation:

> "If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty" (OC §115).

What lesson should we abstract from this passage? It cannot be "Indefeasible knowledge that escapes all logically possible doubt *does* exist." The argument described above has already

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(; $\therefore \alpha$). Moreover, it would become possible to grasp the concept of dreaming in an infallible way. Therefore, it would be impossible to misjudge whether the world we are experiencing is real (; $\therefore \beta$).

However the ground from which Wright draws the denial of (1)′(K (¬Da(M))) is not of such a positive kind. (In the context of rule-following considerations, Wittgenstein thoroughly criticizes the existence of the substance of meaning. That is, he shows the impossibility of grounding the denial of (1)′ in the positive way described above. Moreover, it is clear in his thesis and other works that Wright accepts the conclusions of rule-following considerations). The basis on which Wright justifies the denial of (1)′ is negative and is required in order to escape the logical deficiency induced by SDa. We can escape the deficiency only if we deny (1)′. Therefore, we cannot use the requirement to evade the logical difficulty of SDa as the basis to deny premise (1) of SDr.

When we deny one premise in SDa, (1)′, because we are required to evade the logical difficulty induced by SDa, the difficulty of SDa completely disappears. Therefore, without the argument that grounds the denial of (1)′ except or beyond it, it is impossible to deny (1) of SDa. However, admitting the validity of rule-following considerations, as Wright does, renders it impossible to show the other grounds for denying (1) of SDa. Thus, at most, Wright can only satisfy himself with escaping from the skepticism about *a priori* knowledge induced by SDa.

More drastic and fatal criticism of his argument (it seems quite probable) is criticism claiming that all that can be derived on the basis of his argument is the denial of the conjunction of the three premises ((1)′, (2)′, and (3)) because he has never shown positive grounds for denying only (1)′ of three premises. There seems to be no other argument that positively grounds the denial of (1)′ but assumes the existence of the substance of meaning and of its infallible comprehension, the possibility of which Wittgenstein decisively criticizes.

[8] This type of criticism of Descartes is found in, for example, Iida (1987), p.77.

shown that there is no basis for such a claim. The lesson that we can derive from this remark would be conditional: "Any linguistic action (e.g., doubting) emerges in some way or another only if knowledge (or cognition) exists." However, the criteria for knowledge cannot be Cartesian because these epistemological criteria do not allow for the existence of knowledge. In short, non-Cartesian criteria must be introduced—or, more precisely, have been introduced into our language game—if knowledge actually comes to exist or if the existence of knowledge cannot be denied.

I will confirm the meaning of this lesson and how we can derive it from the previous argument. I have concluded that indefeasible knowledge that escapes all logically possible doubt cannot exist (= P_0) by extending the method of doubt to its conclusion. Hence, one question arises: what is this conclusion (= P_0)? Is it knowledge or not? We can assume that Damon's deception applies to the deductive rule by which we derive the proposition (= P_0) and the rule (= meaning) by which we use the word in the inference. Therefore, I can conclude that

I do not know that P_0. (= P_1)

Of course, we can conclude that P_1

I do not know that P_1. (= P_2)

There is no end to this regressive process.

← ……. do not know that I don't know that I don't know that I don't know that P_0.

This argument shows that we can never achieve a substantial assertion because it might be subjected to doubt insofar as we adopt Cartesian criteria for knowledge. Thus, we cannot suspend a decision about whether we accept cognitions as knowledge. If we grant such acceptance, we must also acknowledge that non-Cartesian epistemological criteria have been introduced or have been tacitly adopted previously[9]. Even if individuals harbor Cartesian criteria and choose to keep this silent, they are tacitly introducing non-Cartesian criteria despite their Cartesian cognitions if they enjoy any cognitions during their silence.

Indeed, because cognition emerges irrespective of our preferences, we must ac-

[9] This fact does not mean that Cartesian criteria for knowledge cannot play any role in normal linguistic exchange. From this fact, it follows only that the criteria cannot be placed, either implicitly or explicitly, at the most exterior side (at the left side) as a cognitive operator. I will provide further detailed explanation for example, in footnote 13.

knowledge the existence of criteria for knowledge that are different from those of Descartes. This represents the most significant suggestion that can be abstracted from Wittgenstein's foregoing passage.

V. *Recurring everyday knowledge*

What are the new and essentially non-Cartesian epistemological criteria that have already been introduced into our language game? Wittgenstein's suggestion is also significant here[10]. The new criteria derive from his argument as follows:[11]

(1) One can show grounds or evidence for believing a certain belief.
(2) There is no counterevidence for such grounds or evidence.
(3) There is no evidence that supports rejection of the belief or acceptance of an incompatible belief.

For example, I believe that I have two hands. My hands can be shown to those who doubt this belief. Of course, it is always logically possible for us to hypothesize that these hands might be elaborate imitations that have been substituted without my awareness. It is also possible for us to suppose that the hands that I perceive are merely a hallucination projected by my BIV. However, empirical evidence in support of beliefs that are incompatible with the belief that "I have two hands" has not been presented thus far. Therefore, it can be said that I *know* that I have two hands.

VI. *Dissolving the skeptical paradox*

I will briefly confirm how the aforementioned considerations can dissolve the skeptical paradox by identifying a clear distinction between two usages of the word, knowing. The use of knowing to mean "knowing certainly in a sense of having escaped any logical doubt" (the use of knowing that satisfies Cartesian criteria) can be referred to as metaphysical usage (Km). On the other hand, the everyday usage of knowing, as elaborated in Section V, can be termed ordinary usage (Ko)[12]. Thus,

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[10] Cf. OC § 4, 93, 117–120.

[11] These new criteria are only provisional and need greater refinement and sophistication. However, if my previous argument is valid, I can say that the new criteria must satisfy at least following conditions

1. That, unlike Cartesian criteria, it is logically possible for these criteria to be satisfied.
2. That it is empirically possible for us to judge whether the criteria are satisfied.
3. That the criteria are in accord with most, if not all, cases of the ordinary usage of "know."

the previous skeptical paradox (SDa) can be rewritten as:

[DSa: Dissolving Skepticism about *a priori* knowledge]
(1)* ¬Km(¬Da(M)) (conclusion from the assumption of Damon)
(2)* Ko(M→¬Da(M)) (reasoning based on the concepts)
(3)* (x)(y)[{Ko(x)∧Ko(x→y)}→Ko(y)]
(4)* Ko(M) (grounded calculation)
(5)* Ko(¬Da(M)) ((2)*, (3)*, (4)*)
[(6)* ¬Km(¬Da(M))∧ Ko(¬Da(M))]

Ko(¬Da(M)) is concluded from (2)*, (3)*, and (4)*, and this is not contradictory to ¬Km(¬Da(M)). Therefore, the conclusion of ¬Ko(M) is not drawn[13]. When introducing this distinction, the paradoxical conclusions of SDa (¬((1)′∧(2)′∧(3)) are also not drawn.

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[12] Wittgenstein said, "I would like to reserve the expression 'I know' for the cases in which it is used in normal linguistic exchange" (OC § 260). I would rather like to say, "I could not help but reserve the expression 'I know' in normal linguistic exchange."

[13] Indeed, ¬Km (Da(M)) is also knowledge in the sense that can be expressed in the form of Ko (¬Km(¬Da(M)). But even if this notation is used, no inconsistencies are produced. As a precautionary measure, I will show the inference by means of the revised notation.

[DSa2: Dissolving Skepticism about *a priori* knowledge]
(1) Ko(¬Km(¬Da(M))) (conclusion from the assumption of Damon)
(2) Ko(M→¬Da(M)) (reasoning based on the concepts)
(3) Ko[(x)(y)[{Ko(x)∧Ko(x→y)}→Ko(y)]]
(4) Ko(M) (grounded calculation)
(5) Ko(Ko(¬Da(M)) ((2), (3), (4))
(6) Ko(¬Da(M)) (＊elimination of Ko)
[(7) Ko(¬Km(¬Da(M))) ∧ Ko(¬Da(M))]

＊The operation at (6) depends on the rule related to the elimination of Ko. Here, I omit the detailed argumentation but, intuitively, the rule is not problematic.

In order to show the efficacy of the cognitive operators Ko and Km and to explicate the relationship between the operators, I will provide the other example that induces skeptical doubt about *a priori* knowledge ("M").

(1) Ko(¬Km(¬Da(M))) (conclusion from the assumption of Damon)
(2) Ko(Km(M)→Km(¬Da(M))) (reasoning based on the concepts)
(3) Ko[(x)(y)[{Km(x)∧Km(x→y)}→Km(y)]]
(4) Ko(Km(M)) (assumption)
(5) Ko(Km(¬Da(M))) ((2), (3), (4))
(6) Ko(¬Km(¬Da(M))) ∧ Ko(Km(¬Da(M))) ((1), (5))
(7) Ko[(¬Km(¬Da(M)) ∧ (Km(¬Da(M))]
(8) Ko(¬Km(M))

The operator Km has a quite salient feature in that it cannot be used in the form of Ko(Km(P)) or ¬Ko(Km(P)) because if the usage of this formula is admitted, it follows that knowledge satisfying the Cartesian criteria can exist. (Every well-formed proposition, whether singular or compound, can be substituted for P.) Needless to say, the former formula satisfies the criteria. In addition, if it is possible to use the latter formula (¬Ko(Km(P)), its empirical denial is necessarily possible.

That is, the three propositions can be accepted simultaneously, indicating that both meanings of knowledge can coexist in everyday language.

VII. *Criticism of the Language-game via Descartes*

In the previous section, I attempted to criticize the method of doubt proposed by Descartes, based on a perspective grounded in Wittgenstein's insight, to dissolve the skeptical paradox produced by Cartesian doubt. The essence of Wittgenstein's criticism is 1) if the method of doubt is extended exhaustively, it leads to the conclusion that indefeasible knowledge that escapes from all logically possible doubt cannot exist; therefore, 2) if we accept the existence of any cognition that includes the very idea that 1) attempts to state, we cannot help but admit that essentially non-Cartesian criteria for knowledge (= criteria for Ko) have always applied or have already been introduced.

Because Descartes believed knowledge satisfying the criteria for Km—I think—exists, he is forced to confront difficulties when he applies the criteria for Km to knowledge that is not privileged with regard to the process of skeptical doubt. As a result, he brings about skepticism of knowledge despite his intention[14]. However, Wittgenstein suggests that when skeptical doubt is extended to its logical conclusion, the criteria for Km are impossible to apply and, paradoxically, we can dissolve the skepticism. It is not that the insight induced by skeptical doubt simply evaporates. Indeed, the criteria for Km cannot play any role at the ultimate level of our linguistic practice. However, these remain within the scope of the criteria for Ko. Thus, the insight of skeptical doubt inevitably maintains its efficacy as a philosophical argument[15].

Has Wittgenstein achieved a solid victory over Descartes? Does absolutely certain knowledge that escapes any logically possible doubt indeed not exist? I will attempt to use an ostensibly naïve perspective to offer counterarguments against Wittgenstein as I retrace the process of methodological doubt.

I am now tapping the keyboard of my PC while listening to the 13th track, *Three Dances for 2,* of John Cage's *Works for Piano & Prepared Piano, Vol.2*. Is this not absolutely indefeasible knowledge? It cannot be because I might be dreaming and actually be sleeping

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[14] I will clarify the difference and relationship between Descartes and Wright. With regard to *a priori* knowledge, Wright attempts to draw the impossibility of assuming Damon's deception (K (¬Da(M))) from the logical defect induced by SDa. That is, he thinks we can apply the criteria Km to *a priori* knowledge, almost all of which Descartes excludes from the applicability of Km. Therefore, when Wright attempts to apply Km to *a posteriori* knowledge he is faced with great difficulty.

[15] Please refer to the rather detailed argument contained in footnote 13 for more explanation about the relationship between Km and Ko.

while lying in bed. Alternatively, I might be a BIV and only hallucinating the images and sounds. Indeed, the images and sounds that I am perceiving cannot represent knowledge because they do not correspond with events in the real world. But isn't my belief in my hearing the sounds of *Three Dances for 2* absolutely certain knowledge? The answer must again be in the negative because Damon might be deceiving me into believing the above. When Damon terminates the deception, I might say, "I believed that I was hearing the sound of *Three Dances for 2,* but it was not the case. In fact then I believed I was seeing the image of *The Perilous Night 5*."

However, room for the following objection remains. Can I doubt the fact that, however it might be expressed— "I am hearing the sound of *Three Dances for 2*" or "I am seeing the image of *The Perilous Night 5*"—a quality or experience enabling me to employ that linguistic expression exists?

To explore Descartes' criticism, which contains traces of this train of thought, the conditions under which absolutely certain knowledge can come into existence, even under Damon's assumption, must be considered. First, in order for any knowledge to achieve absolute certainty, the influence of Damon's deception must be ruled out as impossible. Therefore, 1) the meaning of that knowledge must not be understood via use of any sign, whether such use be public or private. This is because Damon's deception might intrude in any case in which a sign, such as a sound (the utterance of word) or image (the character of word), might be used. In addition, 2) the knowledge must have some cognitive content. Without any cognitive content, it cannot be called knowledge. If any knowledge satisfies both conditions ((1), (2)), it follows that the knowledge is private; in other words it cannot be known to any person other than the holder, because it would be impossible to communicate that knowledge to others given that it satisfies condition (1) and thus cannot be based on the use of signs. The use of signs, whether the linguistic signs involved in utterances of words or characters, or the nonlinguistic signs involving facial expression and gestures, is indispensable to sharing knowledge. However, infallible knowledge requires that no sign be used in its emergence. Condition (3) thus holds that even though infallible knowledge is possible, it can come into existence only privately and cannot be shared with others.

In brief, the conditions under which infallible knowledge can come into existence are as follows: 1) The meaning of the knowledge must be understood without using any signs. (Unless this condition is satisfied it is impossible to escape Damon's deception.) (2) The knowledge must have a certain cognitive content. (Otherwise, it cannot be knowledge.) 3) The meaning of it is private. (The conclusion of (1))

Under the assumption that it is possible that knowledge satisfying the three conditions comes into existence, I will refer to the language that enables understanding of its meaning

as "private language D" (PLD)[16].

Is PLD impossible? (According to the definition of PLD, this question is equivalent to "Is indefeasible knowledge impossible?".) I cannot help but answer that PLD is possible because the instance of PLD is actually given to me. The private quality or experience that enables me to use a certain sign always accompanies all my uses of this sign. I cannot even imagine the possibility of Damon's deception's interfering with the quality or experience. Therefore, I must not be able to express the meaning of the private quality or experience by using signs. Because, otherwise, there remains room for Damon's intrusion. Furthermore, I cannot doubt that this quality or experience has content.

I am certain of the foregoing. However, has the argument demonstrated that PLD and infallible knowledge are possible? It did not for the following reasons.

My assertion described above that PLD *is* given to me has been expressed in a way everyone can understand it, that is to say by using the signs of characters. Others might interpret it in two quite different and opposed ways.

The first interpretation is that this instance of PLD exists to *this* me. The second interpretation is that this instance of PLD exists not to *this* me but to the very person who understands my assertion that an instance of PLD exists.

We can assume that each interpretation can be heard by those who agree with it and those who do not. Both cases are logically possible. More effective proof that PLD is possible would involve agreement with my claim irrespective of which interpretation is adopted because when individuals do not agree with my argument, I will face the additional task of refuting their objections in the service of confirming the use of my argument as a valid demonstration. However, even though we assume that a more favorable case for the validity of my claim might materialize (and the probability of a more favorable case seems very strong to me), I can never demonstrate the possibility of PLD.

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[16] A private language, the impossibility of which Wittgenstein attempts to demonstrate (PLW), appears to be defined by following features (cf. PI § 243).

1. The signs of the language refer to the immediate and private sensations that can be known to the user of the language.
2. Therefore, only the user can understand the meaning of the language.

PLW is distinguished from PLD by the fact that the use of signs is indispensable to the former. Therefore, even though PLW is possible (despite the objection of Wittgenstein), the knowledge whose meaning can be understood by PLW cannot be indefeasible because it is impossible for PLW to be immune to Damon's deception.

In that respect, PLW is essentially different from PLD. However, I think it is possible and probable to interpret the private language argument of Wittgenstein as follows: It is not the impossibility of PLW but that of PLD that he actually intends to criticize. In consideration of the space limitations of this paper, I will provide a more detailed argument on this subject elsewhere.

I will examine cases in which those who understand my argument agree irrespective of which of the two interpretations they adopt. First, one remarkable fact in my argument about PLD should be noted: my assertion that the instance of PLD is shown to me is not derived from logical deductive reasoning, but from mere empirical means. This claim, in a sense, can be considered as belonging to the same category as a claim that there are two PCs in my laboratory when the latter is based on perception. Indeed, I developed the three conditions required for the existence of PLD based on logical inference, but I cannot deduce the existence of PLD from the conditions it is supposed to satisfy[17].

We will examine the second interpretation within the context of this remarkable feature. Let us suppose that a certain person, M, agrees with my argument and claims that he does not doubt the existence of PLD for himself. However, all that I am able to say about his claim is that *M believes that* PLD exists for him. I can never assert that PLD exists to M. The existence of PLD to M is based not on logical reasoning but only on experience. Moreover, the PLD existing for M does not actually exist to me. The point here is *not* that I cannot verify whether PLD exists to M but rather that I cannot logically claim that PLD exists to M because if I could assert that PLD exists to M, I could not exist apart from M, and I would have to be M. Therefore, even though I can conclude that he *believes* in the existence of PLD based on his agreement with my argument (and the conclusion is undoubtedly valid), it is impossible for me to draw conclusions about the existence of PLD.

Next, I will examine the case under the first interpretation. Let us suppose that a certain person, M, agrees that PLD exists for me. However, all that he can claim is that I *believe* that PLD exists for me. He cannot draw the conclusion that PLD actually exists for me because such a claim could come only from me myself (i.e., if he could claim it he could not be someone apart from myself).

Based on the foregoing examination of the two cases, I can conclude that my empirical claim that PLD—that is, absolutely certain knowledge—exists can never be demonstrated even under the most favorable assumptive conditions.

Then, is PLD, that is to say infallible knowledge, impossible? In order to consider this question, let us suppose less favorable conditions for my assertions about the previous two interpretations. Others might interpret my argument in the second way and deny it. In this case, a certain other, for example M, denies the existence of PLD for himself. In fact, this type of assertion by another is true *to me* because insofar as M is other to me, it is impossible for his PLD to exist. In such cases, the impossibility of PLD can never be concluded because the possibility of my PLD has never been denied, at least in this case. On the other hand, the

[17] It can be said that Descartes believes it is possible to draw absolutely certain knowledge, that is, the existence of PLD, from logical reasoning.

case in which someone else, M, interprets my argument in the first sense and denies it seems to give rise to difficulty. In that case, M will deny the existence of PLD for me because I am only other to him. However, even in this case the impossibility of PLD cannot be demonstrated because the existence of PLD (the only private language that I can understand) continues to be shown to me. Although I can never show it anyone else, I cannot help but affirm its existence just now when I am writing this letter in this sentence in this section in this thesis.

As per the interpretation in this thesis, Wittgenstein believes that it is possible to demonstrate the impossibility of PLD and therefore the impossibility of absolutely certain knowledge. If the argument thus far is valid, I must point out that Wittgenstein is mistaken in this belief because the counterexample against his claim—PLD—is actually given to *this* me. According to my perspective, when Descartes believes he gains indefeasible knowledge that is beyond Damon's assumption, his belief is fundamentally grounded not in logical reasoning, which others can understand, but rather in the existence of PLD.

Conversely, Descartes was mistaken in his belief that the possibility of PLD, therefore the existence of indefeasible knowledge, can be demonstrated in a way that everyone can understand and affirm without any logical difficulty. He believes that he can demonstrate the existence of indefeasible knowledge—I think—based on logical reasoning. However, using the perspective drawn from Wittgenstein's insight, I have shown a fatal flaw in Descartes' argument. The claim for the existence of indefeasible knowledge cannot be grounded in logical reasoning but must emerge as an empirical assertion that can be borne out only by the existence of *this* me. Even though others agree with my assertion in two quite different and distinguishable senses, I cannot demonstrate the possibility of PLD and the existence of absolutely certain knowledge due to the aforementioned reason.

I would like to reemphasize that the possibility and existence of PLD is continually shown to me. However, even though others understand and agree with this claim, interpreting it to mean that from *their* point of view or *my* point of view PLD does or can exist, I can never demonstrate that PLD, absolutely certain knowledge, is actually possible despite Descartes' intention[18].

[18] If the existence of PLD, that is, of infallible knowledge, could be proven, then the possibility of the affirmative use of Km would be secured, even though the knowledge could be only private. Consequently, the grounds for introducing criteria Ko, as completely distinct from Km, and dissolving the skeptical paradox would be fundamentally criticized, which this thesis has shown in § VI. However, this section shows that it is impossible to prove the existence of PLD. Because the possibility of using Km affirmatively cannot be proved, the argument in § VI never lost its validity.

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