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THE ADVANTAGES OF NEOMOOREAN ANTISKEPTICAL STRATEGY

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to argue in support of the neo-Moorean attempt(s) to solve a skeptical paradox. It defends the thesis that neo-Mooreans retain advantages and avoid disadvantages of rival anti-skeptical strategies – namely epistemic contextualism. The puzzle that a radical skeptic poses is exemplified by Nozick's famous *Brain in a Vat* thought experiment, which enables construing valid arguments consisting of jointly inconsistent but independently plausible premises. The first and the second part of the paper are devoted to Nozick's conditional analysis of knowledge and De Rose's epistemic contextualism, both based on the sensitivity principle. Referring to De Rose's contextualist theory, we demonstrate that the failure of Nozick's conditional analysis of knowledge to provide a satisfactory answer to a skeptical paradox does not concern the sensitivity principle but rather closure denial and embracing the so-called "abominable conjunction". In the third part, we point out the weaknesses of the presumably most successful, contextualist response to the paradox. We explain that even though DeRose's anti-skeptical strategy is built upon Nozick's theory, he successfully surmounts its difficulties. Yet it seems that as a contextualist, he necessarily makes some concessions to a radical skeptic. Eventually, the article introduces Black's neo-Moorean anti-skeptical theory based on the sensitivity principle as a strategy that makes neither concessions, nor counterintuitive proposals.

KEYWORDS

knowledge, skepticism,
sensitivity principle,
externalism

The foundation of this paper will be a challenge that a skeptic poses to our knowledge of the external world in the form presented by Robert Nozick. In *Philosophical Explanations*, Nozick asks the following question: "Could you not be floating in a tank while super-psychologists stimulate your brain electrochemically to produce exactly the same experiences as you now have?" (Nozick 1981: 167) The commonsensical and scientific point of view is that, in normal circumstances, we come to some factual belief by the influence that physical objects presumably exert on our senses. However, if we were to find ourselves in a situation that Nozick describes, that is, if I were a brain in a vat, there would be nothing in my experience that could reveal to me that I am in such a situation. My experience in such a scenario would be the same as the experience I possess in normal circumstances. By pointing out that we cannot know that we are

not BIV ($\neg H$), the skeptic is questioning our knowledge of the empirical facts that we usually consider to know, for example, the fact that I have hands (p).

Skeptical hypotheses, as the one presented, enable construing valid arguments consisting of plausible premises, but the conclusion seems to contradict our knowledge of commonsensical, everyday propositions. Hence the premises of the skeptical argument seem plausible, yet the negation of the conclusion seems plausible too.

1. I don't know that I am not BIV.
 2. If I don't know that I am not BIV, then I don't know that I have hands.
- So,
3. I don't know that I have hands. (DeRose 1995: 183)

The argument we have just presented is valid, and yet paradoxical, for the following reason: if we opt for the skeptical answer to this argument, that is, if we accept its conclusion, we will feel a conflict with our commonsensical beliefs, such as the one I now have, that is, that I am sitting here and typing this text on my computer now. To eliminate the discomfort caused by the skeptical hypothesis, one may decide to deny the first premise of the argument by claiming that one knows that that person has hands, that this is something each of us would claim to know, given that each of us is in the best cognitive position concerning one's own body, or given the experience that we have.

Such an answer to the skeptical paradox might be called Moorean, after G. E. Moore. In the famous article from 1939 titled "Proof of an External World", Moore argues that he can prove that there is an external world (and thus deny the skeptical hypothesis that questions the knowledge of the external world), referring to the premises in which he claims to have hands and which, as he acknowledges, can not prove (Moore 2013b). However, Moore does not see any problem in the impossibility of providing proof of these premises, believing that their truth is utterly certain to us; these are beliefs that belong to the common-sense view of the world and whose negation is incoherent and unjustified (Moore 2013a: 109–119).

In the end, this position seems unconvincing. The downside of such an approach consists of, first and foremost, Moore's acceptance of *certainty* as a necessary condition for knowledge. Specifically, of adopting an internalist perspective from which he fails to provide a satisfactory philosophical explanation of knowledge of commonsensical propositions, which would provide defense against skeptical argument.

We remark that none of the heretofore suggested answers to the presented argument dispute the second premise of the argument (that states the epistemic closure principle). Accordingly, if we accept the second premise as undisputable, this means that between opponents and advocates of the epistemic closure, we choose the advocates. Roughly speaking, this principle states as follows: if S knows a proposition (p) and also knows that this proposition (p) implies the second proposition (q), then S knows the second proposition (q) as well. Forasmuch as the plausibility and the explanatory power of the principle

itself, we decide to lend our support to the advocates of the mentioned principle. Moreover, if we show that the application of the alternative methods might help us to bypass the views that motivate some of the philosophers to repudiate it, the principle will, as we hope, remain intact.

However, among philosophers who sorrowfully gazed at the abandoned Moorean position, an approach with particular “Moorean features” has arisen in recent years. We should keep in mind that this approach, being an externalist one, does not represent an attempt to save the Moorean view in the above-expressed form, but rather in a neo-Moorean manner. As the primary cause of this sorrow, Neomooreans cite the claim that contrary to the Moorean approach, current anti-skeptical theories are unnecessarily complicated and burdened with some internal problems. Bearing this in mind, as the dominant anti-skeptical approach in contemporary literature, we will present epistemic contextualism.

In this paper, contextualism will interest as a linguistic thesis, namely as conversational contextualism. The basic assumption of conversational contextualism is the context-sensitivity of knowledge ascriptions. The assumption is that the truth-value of the propositions we use to ascribe knowledge (sentences of the form “S knows that p ”) depends on the standard for knowledge operative in the context of utterance. That is, a sentence uttered in an ordinary context (in which the standard for knowledge is low) expresses a true proposition, yet, in a skeptical context (in which we seriously consider the skeptical hypothesis), the epistemic standard is so high that the claim expressed by the very same sentence is false. However, as the proposition expressed by that sentence in different contexts is not the same proposition, then there will be no conflict between the true and false attribution of knowledge.

To gain a clearer insight into why, at some point, contextualism occupied a dominant position among anti-skeptical theories, in the first part of the paper, we analyze Nozick’s response to the skeptical argument. In light of the gained results, we examine the contextualist solution offered by Keith DeRose. Eventually, we discuss the possible problems that contextualism confronts. Comparing it with Tim Black’s neo-Moorean solution, we will examine whether it can still aim for the superior status among the anti-skeptical theories, or whether it is time to give way to new, more successful answers to the skeptical problem.

Nozick’s Analysis of Knowledge

Comparing to Mooreans, Nozick aims to provide a theory of knowledge that will reconcile our belief that we know everyday propositions with the one that skeptical possibilities are logical possibilities.

He claims that S knows that p iff:

1. p is true
2. S believes that p
3. If p weren’t true, S wouldn’t believe that p
4. If p were true, S would believe that p (Nozick 1981: 172, 176).

The first and the second conditions are no novelty. That is, we assume the reader's familiarity with the traditional theory of knowledge as justified true belief (JTB theory). As well as with the failure JTB theory of knowledge suffered confronting Edmund Gettier's counterexamples introduced in his famous article "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge" in 1963 intending to show that not all the cases of justified true belief must represent knowledge. In other words, the justification, as it had been understood by then, does not eliminate the possibility for belief to be true as a matter of luck. The introduction of the Gettier Problem required redefining the concept of knowledge.¹ In one of his earlier works, intending to exclude Gettier cases in which belief is luckily true, Alvin Goldman suggests the following requirement as the third condition for knowledge: causal connection between the fact that p and one's belief that p (Goldman 1967: 358). However, as he realized that this "causal condition" faces some difficulties, he suggests that reliable processes or mechanisms (and not facts) must be responsible for some belief as a requirement for knowledge (Goldman 1979). However, nor this reliabilist solution seems more successful than the previous one, at least for one reason: it does not tell us anything about those situations in which it is not the case that p (Black 2008: 10).

For these and other similar reasons, many epistemic externalists, among them Nozick, suggest that the external relation between belief and truth should be modal. Required relation Nozick expresses with subjunctive conditions (3) and (4), and claims that "A person knows that p when he not only does truly believe it, but also would truly believe it and wouldn't falsely believe it. He not only actually has a true belief, he subjunctively has one" (Nozick 1981: 178)². As Nozick points out, the third condition, which we shall refer to as *sensitivity condition*³ from this point forward, unlike the abovementioned attempts to secure a relation between belief and truth, helps us deal with Gettier-type counterexamples, that is, tells us that belief is sensitive to p 's falsity, (4) determines sensitivity to p 's truth. For the knowledge that p it is necessary, therefore, the belief that p *tracks the truth* that p , that is, that it varies depending on the truth-value of p (ibid: 176). That is, that actual true belief is insufficient for knowledge and that the true belief in some range of counterfactual situations is also required. We will focus on the third condition, the so-called sensitivity condition, because of its relevance to the problem of skepticism.

1 The search for additional condition(s) for knowledge instigated the debate between epistemic externalists and epistemic internalists. According to internalists, epistemic justification depends on what is internal to the epistemic subject, while according to externalists, knowledge or epistemic justification depends on the external context. We will focus on the externalist approach without joining the debate.

2 The modal connection between the belief and the truth in question is more potent than the causal one and less potent than logical necessity.

3 Although Nozick believes that belief is truth-sensitive only if it meets all the stated conditions, contemporary epistemologists under the "condition of sensitivity" generally consider the third condition. We will follow their example.

Truth conditions of subjunctive conditional might be elucidated using the possible worlds semantics. Possible worlds establish a set starting from the actual world. Ordering is to be understood in terms of the “similarity” function. Possible worlds closest to the actual world are those most similar to the actual world, and consequently, the furthest worlds are those possible worlds most different from the actual world.

Let us see if my belief that I have hands satisfies the sensitivity condition using possible worlds semantics. In the actual world, I believe I have hands. Provided that circumstances are normal, then this belief is not only true but is also sensitive, in the sense that in the closest possible world in which it is not true I have hands, I will no longer believe I have hands. Nearby worlds will be those worlds where normal circumstances apply, so it will be those worlds in which I have hands, but also those in which I have no hands because I lost them in an accident, for example. My belief that p tracks the truth: in nearby worlds where I have hands, I believe I have hands, while in the nearby world in which I lost my hands in an accident, I will not believe that I have hands.

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However, according to his theory, Nozick argues that even though we are not able to rule out skeptical hypothesis, a skeptic cannot conclude that we don't know anything. Why? Because, given his theory of knowledge, the closure on which the second premise of skeptical argument rests fails. The sensitivity condition is modal, so it is not closed under known entailment. Nozick contends that the fact that transmission through implications stands for truthfulness does not necessarily stand for sensitivity as well. The sensitivity condition can be valid for a statement we believe in without applying to another one that we know is implied by the first one. Knowledge in the former case tells us very little about whether or not in the latter case we may claim knowledge.

It could be understandable if we remark that the sensitivity principle requires consideration of very different possible worlds depending on which proposition is at issue. In our case, therefore, I know p , and I know that $p \rightarrow \neg H$, but I do not know $\neg H$. I know that I have hands because, in the nearby worlds where I have hands, I believe that I have hands. Nearby worlds where I have no hands are the worlds where I had an accident, not the world where I am disembodied BIV. The possible world where I am BIV is relevant only for the assessment of the independent belief that $\neg H$: I do not know that I am not BIV because, in the nearby world where I am BIV, I still believe I am not BIV.

Hence, Nozick claims that I know that I have hands, even if I do not know that I am not a bodiless BIV.

To summarize, Nozick successfully demonstrates the plausibility of the first premise, as well as the knowledge of commonsensical propositions, both thanks to the sensitivity-based externalist theory of knowledge. Nevertheless, he denies epistemic closure. DeRose asserts that denial results in „abominable conjunction”: the bizarre claim that I know I have hands and that I don’t know I’m not BIV. That indicates the plausibility of the closure principle furthermore (DeRose 1995: 28). For the reason that the closure principle denial is presumably an extravagant approach to answering the skeptic, we will proceed to the contextualist solution of the paradox.

De Rose’s Epistemic Contextualism

Even though DeRose recognizes Nozickean conditional analysis of knowledge as compelling and of great importance for solving skeptical paradox - primarily, as previously mentioned, because it successfully explains the conviction of the first premise, DeRose opposes Nozick’s implausible stance towards the second premise.

Notwithstanding, DeRose maintains that it is possible to use some of the advantages of Nozick’s conditional analysis of knowledge while avoiding abominable conjunction. His idea is to somehow include the sensitivity principle into the contextual solution of a skeptical paradox and hopefully preserve the second premise (the epistemic closure principle). However, the sensitivity account DeRose offers is, as he puts it, *indirect* in the sense that he does not build a sensitivity condition into the very concept of knowledge.⁴ Moreover, he is not interested in offering an analysis of propositional knowledge. He is willing to agree with Nozick that “...we have a very strong general, though not exceptionless, inclination to think that we don’t know that p when we think that our belief that p is a belief we would hold even if p were false” (DeRose 1995: 18). That is, we tend to think that S does not know p when we think S’s belief is *insensitive*. But contrary to Nozick, he conceives the sensitivity principle as a kind of mechanism for raising the standards for knowledge.

To clarify this, we will point out that Nozick’s understanding of knowledge is *invariantistic*, that is, that the word ‘know’ does not change its meaning through different contexts. However, as a contextualist, DeRose claims that due to changes in conversational factors such as intentions, desires, or interests, the meaning of the word ‘know’ and the semantic content of the sentences used to attribute knowledge vary from context to context.

Another notion of immense importance for understanding DeRose’s approach to the skeptical paradox is the *strength of epistemic position*. Unlike

4 He considers Nozick’s understanding of the sensitivity to be direct and his own indirect. In the following passages, it will become more explicit why the explanation DeRose offers is “indirect” DeRose 2004: 4.

Nozick, DeRose defines knowledge as a *strong enough true belief* (DeRose 2004: 34). To be in a strong epistemic position concerning the proposition p in some context, my belief that p must track the truth of the p not only in the actual world but also in close enough possible worlds. That is, it is not sufficient for the belief p to be true. It must also not be accidentally true. The farther away from the actual world possible worlds in which belief tracks the truth are, the *stronger* one's epistemic position concerning p is.

How strong epistemic position one must be in with regard to proposition varies with the context. In some contexts, one must be in a stronger epistemic position than in others to ascribe knowledge to the subject of knowing. In other words, a true belief can be strong enough to be counted as knowledge in one context, while in a relevantly different context, that belief will not be strong enough to be considered as knowledge. However, the second premise of a skeptical argument DeRose allows is true regardless of the epistemic standards. That is due to his idea that in the same situation, the knowing subject is in „at least as strong an epistemic position concerning q as she's in concerning p ” (DeRose 1995: 31).

Let's see what's happening with one's beliefs in an ordinary, out-on-the-street context where the low epistemic standards are in place. We may explain these concepts in terms of possible worlds. One is in a strong epistemic position towards belief that one has hands if that belief tracks the truth through nearby possible worlds in which p holds, all the way to the closest $\neg p$ world. BIV world is not epistemically relevant because it's too remote. One's belief is, therefore, sensitive and also strong enough. That is, one knows that one has hands. Since the ordinary context determines epistemic standards, the commonsensical proposition 'I have hands' governs how far the sphere of relevant worlds extends in this context. The interests and goals of the everyday conversational situations do not require that our belief that p tracks the truth in the BIV world as well, because that world is outside the contextually defined sphere of epistemically relevant worlds. One also knows that $\neg H$ because one is in a no better position to know that one has hands than to know that one isn't BIV: for in the closest $\neg p$ world, things would not be so drastically different compared to the actual world, in a sense that one would be a brain in a vat in it. The belief that $\neg H$ is insensitive, but sensitivity is not a requirement for knowledge.

Difficulties emerge in contexts in which the skeptic presents us with a well-enough conceived hypothesis, such as the BIV hypothesis. It is enough to mention the skeptical hypothesis for it to become a mechanism, that is, a conversational rule for raising the standards for knowledge. DeRose this rule names "The Rule of Sensitivity" (ibid: 36). Bearing in mind the possible worlds semantics, DeRose formulates The Rule of Sensitivity as follows: „When it's asserted that S knows (or does not know) that p , then, if necessary, enlarge the sphere of epistemically relevant worlds so that it at least includes the closest worlds in which p is false" (ibid: 37). An encounter with a skeptical hypothesis puts us into a context that comprises multiple epistemic standards. My

belief that I am not BIV now must track the truth through a broader range of possible worlds (than it was the case in the ordinary context) in order to be knowledge. In other words, to know that I am not BIV in a skeptical context, the belief that I am not BIV must be sensitive, that is, to track the truth in the nearest world where I am BIV.

Therefore, my epistemic position with respect to the belief that I am not BIV must be proportionally stronger than in the ordinary context. In a skeptical or philosophical context, we encounter a skeptical hypothesis. Accordingly, the proposition $\neg H$ sets the requirements for both p and $\neg H$. Claims such as ‘I do not know that I am not BIV’ have the greater power to raise epistemic standards than the proposition ‘I have hands’. However, since I am unable to strengthen my epistemic position with respect to the belief that I am not BIV to the extent required by the high standards of the skeptical context, I must conclude that I do not know that I am not BIV in a philosophical context. And because I am „in at least equally strong epistemic position with respect to q , as I am with respect to p ”, the conclusion is that I do not even know that I have hands.

Contextualism offered us an explanation of the plausibility of the first premise of the skeptical argument. Contrary to Nozick’s, DeRose’s account manages to explain the knowledge of everyday claims in an ordinary context. DeRose realizes this by not including the principle of sensitivity in the concept of knowledge but rather keeping it for the skeptical context. Additionally, he manages to preserve closure in each context since the sphere of relevant worlds for assessing both beliefs is the same. What determines the set of possible worlds is the context. We must recognize that such an approach provides a successful attempt to resolve the initial conflict. The conflict, it seems, never existed, but we did not immediately notice the difference between more and less demanding contexts in accordance with whose standards the concept of knowledge will vary, and with it our decision whether to accept a Moorean or a skeptical attitude. The issue of conflict is resolved in a certain way by the contextualist view, but it appears that, despite DeRose describes himself as a “contextualist Moorean” (DeRose 2004), he resolves the conflict by conceding the skeptic.

Therefore, will we be satisfied with the contextualist response to a skeptical problem? If we want to be consistent with our requirements that we have set before Nozick, for example, when we have concluded that we do not find a solution satisfying because it is counterintuitive to claim that you know that you have hands once you accept you do not know that you are not BIV, it seems that we have to take a similar stance towards DeRose even though he puts things quite differently. According to DeRose, the closure principle is valid. However, contrary to what DeRose claims, we must notice that, if I am in the ordinary context and know that I have hands, I can not thus prove that I am not BIV. My knowledge becomes threatened for the reason that at the very moment we consider skeptical possibility, the ordinary context becomes the philosophical context in which increased epistemic standards are in effect.

However, recognizing that the contextualists face many problems dealing with the skeptical paradox, philosophers have been trying to develop an

alternative position in recent years, a so-called neo-Moorean approach. Neo-mooreans aim to propose a solution to the problem that would not only set their theory as a serious rival to contextualism but would also surpass it. Therefore, as we expect, the rest of our paper will be valuable, not only as an attempt to provide us with some new insights into the skeptical paradox but also significant insights into the problems of contextualism.

Black's Neo-Moorean Strategy

Analyzing contextualist views, in addition to the aforementioned problem that contextualism faces, philosophers also find questionable the revisionist aspect of epistemic contextualism. The problem is that contextualism revises our supposedly natural, 'invariantist' understanding of the concept of knowledge.

Realizing that the Moorean element present in the contextualist answer to skeptical problem does not rest on features characteristic of the contextualist position itself and that we do not have to be contextualists in order to provide a plausible explanation of the negation of the first premise of a skeptical argument, some of the philosophers have decided to dedicate themselves to what will be called neo-Moorean position (Sosa 1999, Pritchard 2005, Black 2002). In this paper, we will present the approach of Tim Black because, similar to DeRose, he uses some aspects of Nozick's conditional analysis of knowledge. That is, if we can use Nozick's explanation to provide a neo-Moorean response to skepticism, then this neo-Moorean response should have a theoretical basis that DeRose would not consider problematic (or at least not in the sense in which Nozick's explanation is problematical) (Black 2002: 151).

We have determined that contextualism faces major objections and engaged in analysis of the neo-Moorean approach as the one that supposedly represents its serious rival. The following goal is to measure the success of the neo-Moorean promise of a solution that consists of the claim that it will have all the advantages and not a single disadvantage of epistemic contextualism. Therefore, to determine that it has all the powers of contextualism, we expect from the neo-Moorean response not only to explain the plausibility of each premise of the skeptical argument. In order to determine its preponderance, first of all, we anticipate an adequate explanation of the claim that I can know that I am not BIV.

Given the objections addressed to the contextualist approach, we can assume that the new solution will argue that the standards for knowledge are invariantist and relatively low. But is it not the same claim of the basic Moorean strategy? Yes. However, the notion of certainty is essential for the naive Moorean response to skepticism and therefore suggests an internalist position. On the other hand, Black starts from an externalist analysis of knowledge. By answering the questions that he needs to provide plausible answers for in order to gain an advantage over DeRose, Black refers to Nozick's relativized to a method conditions for knowledge, considering them neglected and very valuable

for providing an adequate response to skepticism (ibid: 153). Therefore, in the revised form, Nozick's conditions for knowledge read:

1. p is true
2. S believes via method or way of coming to believe M, that p .
3. If p weren't true and S were to use M to arrive at a belief whether (or not) p , then S wouldn't believe, via M, that p .
4. If p were true and S were to use M to arrive at a belief whether (or not) p , then S would believe, via M, that p (Nozick 1981: 179).

Once again, we will focus on the sensitivity condition. Nozick relativizes the conditions for knowledge with regard to the belief-forming method. In order to ensure that we know some of everyday propositions, in other words, that they are sensitive, he limits the sphere of epistemically relevant worlds to those worlds in which S believes that p by using the same belief-forming methods as in the actual world. We do not have to go into details of Nozick's numerous examples. For us, it will be valuable to emphasize only that in the relativized condition, Nozick did not recognize anything that would change our stance towards denial of the BIV hypothesis. According to Nozick, none of the methods by which I form the beliefs about the external world do not enable belief that I am not BIV to track the truth in the BIV world. That is that my experience would be the same both in the BIV scenario and in normal circumstances. Nozick claims that two methods same *from within* count as the same method. Thus, it is clear that the concept of method is understood internalistically.

However, this conception of the method seems pretty restrictive. Black gives an example that should support this intuition. Suppose that Ray has been blind from birth. One day, however, he has a phenomenal experience as of a purplish light, and based on this experience, he mistakenly believes that he is gaining his sight. Of course, Ray's purplish experience is the final upshot of some method—call it Ray's belief-forming method—and we may suppose that his experience, which is the only experience of its kind that he has had, is the same 'from the inside' as a visual experience. Now, according to Nozick's analysis, Ray's belief-forming method—the method that has as its final upshot Ray's purplish experience—counts as visual perception. We see that it is an error. Usually, we would not say so (Black 2002: 156).

Nevertheless, this will not be the end of our investigation. It is the fact that the fallacy is present, yet it shows that we have room for intervention in order to avoid a negative conclusion on the revised conditions for knowledge and their eventual importance for anti-skepticism. To make things more clear, let us remind ourselves of the crucial characteristic of Nozick's conditional analysis of knowledge. Requiring from the factual belief to fulfill the condition of sensitivity, Nozick requires an appropriate external relation between the belief and the world that is not reflexive, that is, 'internalistically' available to the subject. In other words, Nozick is an epistemic externalist.

If, having this fact in mind, we return to the upper internalist interpretation of the similarity of the two methods, we will notice that the fallacy is due to an

inconsistently carried externalist project. A thoroughgoing externalist requires some external facts in determining methods, and for example, pursuing that goal refers to results of natural sciences about eye physiology and processes that lead to visual experience. If so, then we might talk about the same experiences, but different methods, that is, mine, Ray's, and BIV's belief-forming method. However, only my method satisfies the external condition for, say, visual perception, and we can conclude that these are different methods.

It remains for us to find out how much room, by specifying Nozick's revised conditions for knowledge, we got to provide a neo-Moorean response to the BIV skepticism, and what we will find out after assessing Black's success to answer all the challenges it poses to his account. How is keeping one's method fixed relevant for a resolution of a skeptical problem? Let's turn to possible worlds semantics. We may assume that the belief that I have hands will satisfy the relativized sensitivity condition. Namely in the actual world, as well as in other nearby possible worlds where I have hands, for example, I believe that I have hands through perception, while in nearby-enough worlds where I form my beliefs with, for example, perception, and where I have no hands, I will not even believe that I have hands. Since my belief tracks the truth through possible worlds, we can conclude that the conditions for knowledge are satisfied.

Still, more interesting is my belief that I am not BIV. Black claims that by correct understanding of the concept of the method, that is, by showing that BIV and I do not form beliefs employing the same method, we limit the sphere of the worlds that is epistemically relevant for the assessment of belief that I am not BIV. This view, in fact, somewhat correlates to DeRose's ordinary context in which I know that I am not BIV, although my belief that I am not BIV is not sensitive. However, Black has insatiable appetites. In other words, in the actual and other close worlds where I am not BIV, I form the belief that I am not BIV with normal perceptive abilities. Yet, those normal abilities cannot form the belief that I am not BIV in those distant worlds where I am BIV because I will not have the same perceptual abilities there. Therefore, none of the BIV worlds is relevant to whether my belief that I am not BIV will be knowledge. That is, my belief will represent knowledge inasmuch as it is sensitive and tracks the truth to the most distant world (ibid: 159).

In line with Nozick's revised analysis of knowledge, Black suggests the following: „Epistemically potent skeptical hypotheses are those that explain how we might come to false beliefs by using the belief-forming methods that we actually use” (ibid). Thus, by negating the BIV hypothesis, Black did deny its epistemic power, but that does not mean that his theory cannot explain its role in the paradox. The BIV hypothesis is persuasive because it shows that if I were BIV and came to belief with the belief-forming method characteristic of BIV, it seems that I would mistakenly believe that I am not BIV. So, although this does not mean that I do not know that I am not BIV, it explains why it is sometimes plausible to assume that I do not know that I am not BIV.

Black's approach seems very compelling, especially since it manages to improve the situation by pointing out Nozick's inconsistencies. That is, Black

preserves the sensitivity condition as a valuable component of the externalist analysis of knowledge, for which the contextualist DeRose will not be interested, probably believing that will encourage us to give up the closure principle. However, if DeRose could introduce the truth of another premise, regardless of whether the standards for knowledge are high or low, then there is certainly no obstacle for Black to follow it and accept the epistemic closure principle within a specific Nozickean answer. As Black seemed to answer all the questions he asked, I propose to summarize outlines and then his final judgment.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to argue in support of the Neo-Moorean attempt(s) to solve a skeptical paradox by claiming that neo-Mooreans retain advantages and avoid disadvantages of rival anti-skeptical strategies. We analyzed externalist theories based on the sensitivity principle. The first and the second part of the paper, we devoted to Nozick's conditional analysis of knowledge and DeRose's epistemic contextualism. Referring to DeRose's contextualist theory, we demonstrated that the failure of Nozick's conditional analysis of knowledge to provide a satisfactory answer to a skeptical paradox does not concern the sensitivity principle but rather closure denial and embracing the so-called "abominable conjunction". That is, we pointed out that Nozick's closure denial is not a decisive objection to sensitivity (assuming that we find the closure principle intuitive). The third part is devoted to exposing the weaknesses of the presumably most successful, contextualist response to the paradox. We showed that even though DeRose partly founds his anti-skeptical-strategy on Nozick's theory and successfully surmounts its difficulties, yet, as a contextualist, he makes certain concessions to a radical skeptic. Finally, Black's Neo-Moorean anti-skeptical approach based on the sensitivity principle as a strategy that makes no concessions, nor counterintuitive proposals, was introduced.

DeRose's application of some elements of a conditional analysis of knowledge that in Nozick's hands led to unacceptable consequences, that is, abominable conjunction and the rejection of the epistemic closure principle, enabled Black to revive Nozick's revised conditions for knowledge. By focusing on the belief-forming methods, Black's sensitive account aims to explain the role skeptical hypothesis plays in the skeptical paradox yet to deny its epistemic force. It manages to account for knowledge of commonsensical, everyday propositions and retains closure. Therefore it seems that in addition to the fact that Tim Black's neo-Moorean solution maintains all the advantages of a contextualistic solution, it has some non-negligible advantages.

Notwithstanding, it is significant to point out some problems which a 'sensitive' neo-Moorean account can encounter. Namely, although *sensitivity* appears attractive because it seems to be conceptually related to knowledge, it is still unable to resist some objections. Consider the following example: „On my way to the elevator I release a trash bag down the chute from my high rise

condo. Presumably, I know my bag will soon be in the basement. But what if, having been released, it still (incredibly) were not to arrive there? That presumably would be because it had been snagged somehow in the chute on the way down (an incredibly rare occurrence), or some such happenstance. But none such could affect my predictive belief as I release it, so I would still predict that the bag would soon arrive in the basement. My belief seems not to be sensitive, therefore, but constitutes knowledge anyhow, and can correctly be said to do so” (Sosa 1999: 145). Sosa concludes that belief is insensitive in this case but that we would not be inclined to claim that it is not an example of knowledge. What comes to light with this example is that, although it seems that sensitivity can be very successful in dealing with a skeptical hypothesis, it seems unsatisfactory in the case of everyday knowledge. However, are we not confronted with a skeptic because we are primarily concerned with preserving knowledge of everyday propositions? Nevertheless, as such objections come from neo-Mooreans who propose some other conditions instead of the sensitivity condition, such as the *safety condition*⁵, our general opinion on the dialectical advantage that the neo-Moorean approach acquires in relation to the considered rival anti-skeptic strategy would not be called into question.

Eventually, skeptic might insist and ask: but, how can we know the denial of skeptical hypothesis even if we are unable to discriminate between such cases and counterpart non-deceived cases? He can say to neo-Mooreans that knowledge that I am not BIV depends on knowledge of other facts about the world. That is, from the fact that we do not independently know that we are not BIV follows that we do not know the other things about the world. Thereby contending that we can not just presuppose that the world is the way we take it to be. However, it seems that even in the light of these objections, we have no reason to give up on the neo-Moorean solution. The advocates of neo-Moorean externalism do not primarily aim to deny skeptic objections but rather to invalidate them, as we pointed out when we considered Black’s account. They achieve their goal by suggesting that we can know many facts about the world externalistically (by fulfilling the conditions of sensitivity or safety), and knowledge that I am not BIV is not a necessary condition for knowledge of other empirical facts (Lazović 2012: 121–122; Lazović 2011: 98–100). Therefore, from all the considered externalist theories, led by our motivation to defend our stance towards everyday knowledge from the skeptics, we conclude the neo-Moorean externalist solution to be the most successful.

5 “If an agent knows a proposition, then that agent’s true belief in that proposition must be *safe* in the sense that it couldn’t have easily been false (alternatively: were the agent to continue believing that proposition in similar circumstances, then the belief would almost always still be true)” (Sosa 1999: 142).

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Prednosti neomurovske antiskeptičke strategije

Apstrakt

Cilj ovog rada je da pruži podršku neomurovskom rešenju skeptičkog paradoksa. Branimo tezu da ovakva epistemološka pozicija zadržava prednosti i izbegava nedostatke rivalskih antiskeptičkih pozicija, pre svega epistemičkog kontekstualizma. Radi ilustracije problema koji skeptik postavlja pred nas, pozivamo se na Nozikov poznati primer „mozga u posudi“ koji omogućava formulisanje valjanih argumenata koji se sastoje od međusobno nekonzistentnih, ali nezavisno plauzibilnih premisa. Prvi i drugi deo rada biće posvećeni Nozиковoj, i Dirouzovoj teoriji znanja baziranim na principu osetljivosti. Pozivajući se na Dirouzov epistemički kontekstualizam, pokazaćemo da neuspeh Nozikove kondicionalne analize znanja u pružanju zadovoljavajućeg odgovora na skeptički paradoks nije posledica njene zasnovanosti na principu osetljivosti, već odbacivanja principa deduktivne zatvorenosti i usvajanja takozvane „nepodnošljive konjunkcije“. Treći deo biće posvećen ukazivanju na slabosti po pretpostavci najuspešnijeg, kontekstualističkog odgovora na paradoks. Pokazaćemo da iako Dirouz prevazilazi prepreke Nozikove teorije na kojoj je jednim delom sama njegova teorija izgrađena, kontekstualista pravi svojevrzne ustupke radikalnom skeptiku. Na kraju uvodimo Blekovo neomurovsko stanovište bazirano na principu osetljivosti, kao ono koje ne pravi ustupke, niti kontraintuitivne predloge.

Ključne reči: znanje, skepticizam, princip osetljivosti, eksternalizam