

Metaphysics and Epistemology: Question 2

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Is “knowledge how” a species of “knowledge that”?

1. Introductory

The question is one that Gilbert Ryle first raised in ‘Knowing How and Knowing That’, and again in *The Concept of Mind*. We might say it is whether or not the knowledge that we attribute to a subject using the ‘*S* knows how ...’ construction is a kind of propositional knowledge: knowledge that *p* for some proposition that *p*. But this is perhaps misleading, and it is important at the outset to make two points of clarification.

First, the question is not a linguistic one. Although it is posed by appeal to our use of ‘knows how’, it is not about our use of ‘knows how’. Rather, it is an epistemological question about the kind of knowledge that we happen to use ‘knows how’ to attribute. We could have raised the question had we made these attributions in some other way, and we can raise it in languages (e.g. French) whose speakers in fact do.

Second, Ryle was interested in the knowledge that we attribute with a specific use of ‘knows how’. Within the class of sentences of the form ‘*S* knows how ...’, there is a distinction between those in which ‘knows how’ is followed by a verb in the indicative, such as (1), and those in which it is followed by a verb in the infinitive, such as (2):

- (1) Sarah knows how Bill swims
- (2) Sarah knows how to swim across the river

It is plausible that the knowledge ascribed by (1) is propositional knowledge - something like knowledge, of the way that Bill swims, that Bill swims in that way. There is a further distinction within the class of sentences like (2), although one that is harder to characterise, on one side of which we have (2) and on the other side of which we have (3):

- (2) Sarah knows how to swim across the river
- (3) Sarah knows how to swim

Again it is plausible that the knowledge ascribed by (2), at least on one reading, is propositional knowledge - something like knowledge, of the way that one should (or perhaps can) swim across the river, that one should (or can) swim across the river in that way. What is less plausible is that the knowledge ascribed by (3) is propositional knowledge. It is this knowledge that Ryle was interested in.

That there is this second distinction has often been noted in the literature, although terminology and attempts to characterise it have varied. Hintikka ([1975], 11) would say that (2) uses ‘knows how’ in the ‘knowing the way’ sense, whereas (3) uses it in the ‘skill’ sense. The difference, he suggests, is that *S* knows how to do *F* in the skill sense entails that *S* “has the skills and capacities to do *F*, i.e., that he can do *F*”, whereas knowing how to *F* in the knowing the way sense does not. But this characterisation is wrong - that Sarah knows how to swim does not entail that Sarah can swim, because Sarah may have lost her arms since she learned how to swim. Brown ([1970], 219-21) would say that (2) is an instance of the ‘standard’ use of ‘knows how’, whereas (3) is an instance of the ‘English’ use.¹ He suggests that the difference is that not

¹ Brown explains his terminology thus: the English use “has no counterpart in French, German, or Dutch, and that within English grammar it proves to be syntactically non-standard” (220).

knowing how to *F* in the English sense entails being unable to *F*, whereas in the standard use it does not. This characterisation is also wrong, unless by ‘being unable to *F*’ we understand Brown to mean being unable to *intentionally F*: that I don’t know how to pick next week’s lottery numbers does not entail that I am unable to do so (I might get lucky), but it does entail that I am unable to intentionally do so.² Rumfitt [2003] would say that (2) is an instance of the ‘*savoir comment faire*’ use of ‘knows how’, whereas (3) is an instance of the ‘*savoir faire*’ use. The difference, he suggests, is that knowing how to *F* in the *savoir comment faire* use is knowing the solution to a problem to be solved, whereas in the *savoir faire* use it is not. He also suggests that ‘knows how’ in instances of the *savoir comment faire* use is most naturally translated as ‘*savoir comment faire*’, whereas in instances of the *savoir faire* use it is most naturally translated as ‘*savoir faire*’ (hence his terminology). We need not be concerned here with exactly how to characterise this second distinction.

Ryle did not explicitly draw either of these distinctions, but that he was interested in the knowledge ascribed by (3) and its kind is clear from his examples: knowing how to make jokes, speak grammatically, play chess, fish, argue, play an instrument.³ Brown notes that “[a] review of [Ryle’s] examples would show that he has the English use of ‘know how’ almost exclusively in mind” (223). Because there seems to be no agreed-upon terminology, I will just call this the *relevant* use or sense of ‘knows how’.

2. Ryle on Knowledge-How

Ryle claimed that the prevailing view of his time was that knowledge-how is a species of knowledge-that. His comments suggest that those who thought so, did so as the result of something like the following chain of reasoning. First, even though one can *F* without knowing how to *F*, one cannot *intentionally F* without knowing how to *F*: I might happen to play a piano concerto by lucking upon the appropriate sequence of key movements, but I cannot play it intentionally, because I do not know how to play it. Second, to intentionally *F* is to *F* by following a ‘recipe’ for *F*-ing, a set of propositions about *F*-ing.⁴ Third, if to intentionally *F* is to follow a recipe for *F*-ing, and if one cannot intentionally *F* without knowing how to *F*, then that is because knowing how to *F* is knowing a recipe for *F*-ing: it is propositional knowledge (of a recipe for *F*-ing).

Ryle argued against this view, in something like the following way. According to it, in order to intentionally *F* one must know and follow a recipe for *F*-ing. But in order to intentionally follow the recipe for *F*-ing, one must know and follow a recipe for following the recipe for *F*-ing. But in order to intentionally follow the recipe for following the recipe for *F*-ing, one must know and follow a recipe for following the recipe for following the recipe for *F*-ing. And so on. If the view is right, then one could never intentionally do anything, because doing so would require knowing and following an infinity of distinct recipes. But we can and do intentionally do things. So the view is not right. (Whether or not this argument succeeds is a question to which we will return.)

Since Ryle’s attack on this view of knowledge-how, the prevailing view has been that knowledge-how is *not* a species of knowledge-that.⁵ Then what is it? According to Ryle, knowing how to *F* is having the ability to *F*, which in turn is a complex of dispositions. It has often been noted, however, and was touched on above, that knowing how to do something

² Brown seems to recognise this. In one of his examples he says that “John’s succeeding in running a projector, *not by luck but in a way which exhibits that he is able to do these things*, establishes that he knows how to do them” (my emphasis).

³ See Rumfitt ([2003], f. 4) for a more complete list.

⁴ The ‘recipe’ terminology is my own. I think it is a helpful way to understand the present line of thought.

⁵ See Stanley and Williamson [2001], p. 411.

neither implies nor is implied by having the ability to do that thing.⁶ *S* can have the ability to *F* without knowing how to *F*: first, if *F* is an action which cannot be performed intentionally, such as digesting; and second, because *S* may just happen to *F* by chance, as I may just happen to pick next week's lottery numbers. In the other direction, *S* can know how to *F* without having the ability to *F*: a concert pianist who has her hands cut off as she sits down to play still knows how to play even though she does not have the ability to play. In addition, Carr ([1981], 56) has argued that any dispositional account of knowledge-how is unlikely to succeed, saying that "... an agent can choose whether or not and (to a lesser degree) in what manner to exercise his practical knowledge or physical ability and these circumstances are definite obstacles to dispositional analyses of [...] knowing how."

There have been other positive accounts of knowledge-how, put forward by those who accept that it is not a species of knowledge-that. Most notably, Carr ([1981], 57-61) suggests that whereas knowledge-that is a relation between a subject and a proposition, knowledge-how is a relation between an agent and an action. He suggests that just as *A* knows that *p* only if (1) *A* believes that *p*, (2) it is true that *p*, and (3) *A* has reasonable grounds for holding that *p*, so too *A* knows how to *F* only if (1) *A* may entertain *F*-ing as a purpose, (2) *A* is acquainted with a set of practical procedures necessary for successfully *F*-ing, and (3) *A* exhibits recognisable success at *F*-ing.⁷

I will not discuss such proposals. My interest, rather, is in Stanley and Williamson's [2001] counter-attack on Ryle. They debunk Ryle's argument against the claim that knowledge-how is a species of knowledge-that, and argue that in fact it is. They put forward a positive account of knowledge-how as a species of knowledge-that, and claim that it should now be the "default" view, taking themselves to have shifted the burden of proof, back from those who claim that knowledge-how *is* a species of knowledge-that, to those who claim that it is *not*.

3. Stanley and Williamson on Knowledge-How

Ryle's argument is not as effective as many have taken it to be. First, all that it could show, if it were sound, is that knowledge-how is not knowledge-that of a body of propositions ('recipe') that one follows when one acts intentionally. It would still leave open the possibility that knowledge-how is knowledge-that of some other proposition or body of propositions. Second, it is not sound. As Stanley and Williamson point out, it relies on the unstated premise that in order to intentionally *F* by following a recipe for *F*-ing, one must *intentionally* follow the recipe for *F*-ing. For if one need not intentionally follow the recipe then one need not know how to follow the recipe, and the regress that Ryle seeks never gets started. But it is not true that one must intentionally follow the recipe. As Carl Ginet ([1975], 7) has pointed out: "I exercise (or manifest) my knowledge *that* one can get the door open by turning the knob and pushing it (as well as my knowledge *that* the door is there) by performing that operation quite automatically as I leave the room; and I may do this, of course, without formulating (in my mind or out loud) that proposition or any other relevant proposition." So Ryle's argument relies on a false premise and is therefore unsound. As far as I know, there are no better arguments on the market. So for all that anyone has said, knowledge-how might well be a species of knowledge-that, and that ought to be taken as a currently live option.

Stanley and Williamson claim that knowledge-how is, in fact, a species of knowledge-that. According to them, 'Hannah knows how to ride a bicycle' is true relative to a context *c* if and only if there is some contextually relevant way *w* such that Hannah stands in the knowledge-that relation to the Russellian proposition that *w* is a way for Hannah to ride a bicycle, where

⁶ See Brown ([1970], 222), Ginet ([1975], 8-9), and Carr ([1981], 53-7).

⁷ More recently, Katherine Hawley [2003], although not taking any particular stance on whether or not knowledge-how is a species of knowledge-that, has also explored a parallel between the two.

Hannah entertains this proposition under what they call a ‘practical’ mode of presentation.⁸ That it is true only if Hannah stands in the knowledge-that relation to such a proposition follows, they claim, from the standard linguistic account of the syntax and semantics of embedded questions. But it is not sufficient that Hannah stands in such relation, they point out, because Hannah might demonstrate that she stands in the knowledge-that relation to such a proposition by pointing to the way that John rides a bicycle and saying that *that* is a way for her to ride a bicycle, even without knowing how to ride a bicycle herself. What more is needed, they suggest, is that Hannah entertain this proposition under the appropriate mode of presentation, what they call a ‘practical’ mode of presentation. Stanley and Williamson say that they “take [their] view of ascriptions of knowledge-how to be the default position” (431), later explaining that “... it is the account entailed by current theories about the syntax and semantics of the relevant constructions. Rejecting it would involve revising many well-entrenched beliefs about them in linguistics. This move would be legitimate if the account could be shown to face serious difficulties. But we have been unable to uncover such difficulties” (440).

Stanley and Williamson are not the first to offer an account along these lines. Brown [1970] also appeals to the syntax and semantics of sentences of the relevant kind, arguing that “[a]ll knowing how is knowing that” (242). According to Brown, to know how to *V* in the relevant sense (his ‘English’ use) “... is to know of some course of action [...] that it is *a* way of *V*-ing, that is to say a way in which one *can V*, or in which it is possible to *V*. It is know of it [...] that *by doing that thing one can V*” (240). Ginet [1975], with somewhat more reservation, says, “I am inclined to think (although I am not perfectly confident) that [sentences of the form ‘*S* knows how to ...’] do nothing more than ascribe certain sorts of propositional knowledge to *S*” (6). He claims that what such a sentence expresses certainly implies that *S* knows the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence of the form ‘*S* knows that a way to *F* is ...’, or perhaps of the form ‘*S* knows that the way to *F* is ...’. But he argues against the claim it also attributes abilities to *S* beyond knowing the truth of any proposition, and thus argues for the claim that all it does is attribute propositional knowledge to *S*. But he also suggests that his arguments are inconclusive, saying that “[I]f, however, despite these considerations that suggest the contrary, there are some correct and strict applications of ‘*S* knows how to ...’ that ascribe abilities to *S* beyond any entailed by his knowing sufficient truths about how to ..., then there is a use of ‘know’ that will be neglected hereafter in this study” (9).⁹

The theory offered by Stanley and Williamson is an improvement on those offered by Brown and Ginet. First, because they forcefully support it by appeal to linguistic evidence. Second because they postulate practical modes of presentation, which apparently allow them to avoid problems over cases like that of Hannah, who knows that *that* is a way for her to ride a bicycle, and yet does not know how to ride a bicycle - a problem that seems fatal to the theories of

⁸ This is to take modes of presentation to have semantic rather than merely pragmatic significance, a matter on which Stanley and Williamson take no particular stance. If instead we take them to have pragmatic significance, that Hannah entertains the proposition under a practical mode of presentation is implied by an utterance of the sentence, rather than entering into the truth conditions it expresses.

⁹ Stanley and Williamson claim that Jaakko Hintikka [1975] offers “an important defense” of the thesis that knowledge-how is a species of knowledge-that (415, f. 7). But I’m not so sure that he does. In fact, I think Hintikka should be understood as defending the thesis that knowledge-how is *not* a species of knowledge-that. Hintikka claims that ‘*a* knows how to do *x*’ in the knowing the way sense ascribes propositional knowledge to *a*, but sometimes pragmatically implies that *a* has certain skills and capacities. That ‘*a* knows how to do *x*’ also has a skill sense that does not attribute propositional knowledge to *a*, has come about, he claims, by raising the pragmatic implications of the knowing the way sense to semantic significance, and is thus what he calls an ‘illicit’ use of ‘knows how’. Hintikka rejects this usage and claims that all knowledge-how is knowledge-that. One might think that he is thereby offering an affirmative answer to Ryle’s question, but I think that would be to mistake Ryle’s epistemological question for a different linguistic one. Whether or not it is a ‘legitimate’ use of ‘knows how’, Ryle’s question is whether or not ‘*a* knows how to do *x*’, when understood in Hintikka’s skill sense, attributes propositional knowledge to *a*. And to that question Hintikka gives the same answer as Ryle: no it does not, it attributes not propositional knowledge but certain abilities.

Brown and Ginet. Moreover, that knowledge-how is connected with a special mode of presentation is an appealing way for Stanley and Williamson to explain why having knowledge-how is connected with having special dispositions to behave (much like having first-personal knowledge is), and why anyone might think that knowledge-how is a complex of dispositions.

4. Problems for Stanley and Williamson: Rumfitt

Ian Rumfitt [2003], however, has questioned the strength of Stanley and Williamson's linguistic evidence. While the most natural translation of 'Pierre knows how to swim across the river' into French is 'Pierre sait comment traverser le fleuve', in which the interrogative 'how' is translated as 'comment', the most natural translation of 'She knows how to ride a bicycle' is 'Elle sait monter à vélo', in which no interrogative appears, just the bare infinitive. French sentences that attribute the relevant kind of knowledge-how do not involve embedded questions. In fact, Rumfitt suggests, if one were to run the same kind of argument in French as Stanley and Williamson run in English, one may well be led to the position that knowledge-how is a relation between a subject and an activity, rather than between a subject and a proposition, a position that is contrary to that of Stanley and Williamson's (and along the line of Carr's). Rumfitt adds that Stanley and Williamson might try claiming, as a possible defence, that 'comment' is an unpronounced interrogative particle in the deep structure of the problematic French sentences. It is true that although the most natural translation of 'he knows how to swim' is 'Il sait nager', 'Il sait comment nager' is also a well-formed French sentence. But, Rumfitt points out, this second sentence means something like 'he has solved the problem of getting to swim', or 'he knows in what particular manner to swim', and so cannot be considered an appropriate translation. Rumfitt adds that in Greek and Latin there is a similar lack of interrogative particle in attributions of the relevant kind of knowledge-how, and that "... there is no temptation to interpret these sentences as attributing knowledge of a proposition that can serve as answer to a question or a problem", and that "... attributions of knowledge-how in these languages appear to belong with constructions in which a bare infinitive is used to refer to an activity" (163).

Rumfitt points to another problem. It is important to Stanley and Williamson's account that 'knows' has the same sense in, for example, both 'Hannah knows how to ride a bicycle' and 'Hannah knows that penguins waddle' (437). Stanley and Williamson make two claims in support of this. First, that in the languages with which they are familiar, the uses of 'know' in these sentences are translated by the same word. Second, that 'Hannah knows that penguins waddle, and Bill, how to imitate them', and 'Bill knows how to ride a bicycle, and Hannah, that doing so is dangerous', are both perfectly well formed. But against the first, Rumfitt points out that in Russian, 'know' in 'I know that I must swim', and 'know' in 'I know how to swim' are translated as different words. And against the second, he claims that he is not alone in finding 'John knows both how to twitch his ears and that his mother is sickened by facial tricks' zeugmatic, but not 'John knows both that Trotsky was murdered and how he was killed', and that "[t]his difference is just what one would expect if 'knows he was killed' adverts to propositional knowledge while 'knows how to twitch his ears' does not. It seems that appeal to intuitions about whether or not certain sentences are zeugmatic is not as convincing as Stanley and Williamson would like it to be.

5. Problems for Stanley and Williamson: Practical modes of Presentation

The sentence

- (4) Hannah knows how to ride a bicycle

seems to have both a transparent and an opaque reading. On the transparent reading, it is true just in case there is some way for Hannah to ride a bicycle such that Hannah knows how to act in that way (whether or not she knows that it is a way for her to ride a bicycle). (Example: I ask Hannah whether or not she knows how to ride a bicycle, and she says no. I ask her whether or

not she knows how to act in *that* way, pointing to the way that John rides a bicycle, and she says yes. I conclude that she *does*, then, know how to ride a bicycle.) On the opaque reading, (4) is true just in case there is some way for Hannah to ride a bicycle such that Hannah knows how to act in that way, *and* Hannah knows that it is a way for her to ride a bicycle. It is good news for Stanley and Williamson that (4) has both readings, because that is what one would expect if (4) ascribes propositional knowledge to Hannah. Since they claim that (4) is true only if there is some way w for Hannah to ride a bicycle such that Hannah knows that w is a way for her to ride a bicycle, I take it that they are analysing the opaque reading of (4). From here on, I intend all uses of ‘knows how’ to be understood opaquely.

On the opaque reading, (4) is true just in case there is some way for Hannah to ride a bicycle such that Hannah knows *how* to act in that way, and Hannah knows *that* it is a way for her to ride a bicycle. Thus, it is natural to think that Hannah’s knowing how to ride a bicycle *does* involve some knowledge-that, and the kind of knowledge-that that Stanley and Williamson and those before them have suggested. But it is also natural to think that it involves knowledge-how as well: knowledge how to act in a particular way. It seems that Stanley and Williamson recognise this element in knowing how to ride a bicycle, but analyse it away as being an ability to entertain a way under a practical mode of presentation.¹⁰ But I think that Ryle would agree that his *real* interest was in the knowledge that Hannah has when she knows how to act in that way, not in the knowledge that she has when she knows that it is a way for her to ride a bicycle. One gets the feeling that Stanley and Williamson are either avoiding Ryle’s question, or even answering it in the negative by claiming that knowledge-how is an ability (to entertain a way under a practical mode of presentation).

This seems to be what worries John Koethe [2002]. He claims that “... what Stanley and Williamson’s account of what it is for someone to know how to F really comes to, with its talk of entertaining a proposition under a practical mode of presentation, is that someone knows how to F just in case he knows, of some way w , that w is a way for him to F , and he knows how to [act in that way] (and thereby F)” (326). (Koethe talks of ‘instantiating a way’ rather than ‘acting in a way’, but I think that the first is more natural, and that he would allow me to use that instead.) Koethe goes on to argue that if this right, then Stanley and Williamson face a vicious regress, unless they accept that some knowledge-how is not a species of knowledge-that.

But this is not right. Koethe is wrong to think that Stanley and Williamson’s claim is that S knows how to F just in case there is some way w such that S knows that w is a way for S to F , and S knows how to act in way w . From here on I intend every sentence of the form ‘ S knows that p ’ to be understood opaquely, and I will use ‘ S knows that_R p ’ instead when I intend it to be understood transparently (i.e. as expressing the proposition that S stands in the knowledge-that relation to the Russellian proposition that p).

Stanley and Williamson’s claim is not, to start with, a conjunctive claim. Their claim is that S knows how to F just in case S knows, under a practical mode of presentation, that_R w is a way for S to F . It is *not* the claim that S knows that_R w is a way for her to F , *and* S does (or can) entertain w under a practical mode of presentation. There is an important difference. It is possible that for some man x , Lois Lane knows that_R x is strong, *and* Lois can entertain x under a ‘Clark Kent’ mode of presentation, even though Lois does not know, under a ‘Clark Kent’ mode of presentation, that_R x is strong. So too, it is possible that Hannah knows that_R w is a way for her to ride a bicycle, and Hannah can entertain w under a practical mode of presentation, even though Hannah does not know, under a practical mode of presentation, that_R w is a way for her to ride a bicycle. So it is not the case that, according to Stanley and Williamson, S knows how to F just in case there is some way w such that S knows that_R w is a way for S to F , and S knows how to act in way w . So Koethe’s argument does not get off the ground.

¹⁰ I will talk, hopefully without confusion, about modes of presentation, not just of propositions, but also of propositional constituents (in particular, of ways and people).

But perhaps all that he really needs is the weaker claim that, according to Stanley and Williamson, S knows how to F *only if* there is some way w such that S knows that_R w is a way for S to F , and S knows how to act in way w . It certainly follows from their account that S knows how to F only if S knows that_R w is a way for S to F . And it certainly follows that S knows how to F only if S can entertain w under a practical mode of presentation. And it seems plausible to think that practical modes of presentation are such that S can entertain w under a practical mode of presentation only if S knows how to act in way w . If this is right, then perhaps we can reconstruct Koethe's argument into a new and equally problematic argument against Stanley and Williamson.

But this is not right. As natural as it is to think so, it does *not* follow from Stanley and Williamson's account that S can entertain a way under a practical mode of presentation only if S knows how to act in that way. In fact, I think that their account only makes sense if this is *not* the case.

Modes of presentation of people are such that the following can be true. Lois Lane knows that Superman is strong but does not know that Clark Kent is strong, even though Clark Kent is Superman. This is because she does not know that Clark Kent is Superman. Thinking about Clark Kent (by which I mean: entertaining him under a 'Clark Kent' mode of presentation) is not sufficient to give her this knowledge, because she can think about Clark Kent without knowing that Clark Kent is Superman.¹¹ Changing the example, I know that the man in the mirror's pants are on fire, but I do not know that my pants are on fire, even though I am the man in the mirror. This is because I do not know that I am the man in the mirror. Thinking about myself is not sufficient to give me this knowledge, because I can think about myself without knowing that I am the man in the mirror.

Presumably, Stanley and Williamson would like modes of presentation of ways to be such that similar things are true. Let w be the way that John rides a bicycle, ' w_d ' stand for w thought about under a demonstrative mode of presentation, and ' w_p ' stand for w thought about under a practical mode of presentation. Then Hannah knows that w_d is a way for her to ride a bicycle, but she does not know that w_p is a way for her to ride a bicycle, even though w_p is w_d . This is because she does not know that w_p is w_d . Thinking about w_p is not sufficient to give her this knowledge, because she can think about w_p without knowing that w_p is w_d .

Now, if Hannah does not know that w_p is w_d , it follows, according to Stanley and Williamson's account, that she does not know how to act in way w_d . For suppose that she does. Then for some way w' , she knows, under a practical mode of presentation, that_R w' is a way for her to act in way w_d . Assuming that there is only one way to act in way w , it follows that w' is w . Assuming that there is a unique practical mode of presentation of w (just as we might assume that there is a unique first-personal mode of presentation of a person), it follows that Hannah knows, under a ' w_p ' mode of presentation, that_R w is a way for her to act in way w_d . That is, Hannah knows that w_p is a way for her to act in way w_d . Assuming also that Hannah knows that there is only one way to act in way w_d , it follows that Hannah knows that w_p is w_d . But Hannah does not know that w_p is w_d . So Hannah does not know how to act in way w_d .

The upshot is this: what Stanley and Williamson presumably want to allow, if they want their practical modes of presentation to behave like other modes of presentation, is that Hannah can think about w_p without knowing how to act in way w_d . That is, Hannah can think about the way that John rides a bicycle under a practical mode of presentation, even though she does not know how to act in that way.

¹¹ I intend 'think about' to be understood opaquely throughout, so that thinking about Clark Kent is distinct from thinking about Superman.

I think this is what Stanley and Williamson *need* to say about practical modes of presentation, and also *all* that they need to say. Lois Lane knows that that man (pointing to Superman) is strong, but she does not know that Clark Kent is strong. This is not because she cannot think about that man under a ‘Clark Kent’ mode of presentation, but because she does not know that Clark Kent is that man. So too, Hannah knows that that way (pointing to the way that John rides a bicycle) is a way for her to ride a bicycle, but she does not know how to ride a bicycle. This is not because she cannot think about that way under a practical mode of presentation, but because she does not know how to act in that way. Stanley and Williamson can and should say that there is more to knowing how to act in a certain way than being able to think about that way under a practical mode of presentation. They have not avoided Ryle’s question, nor answered it in the negative.

Nevertheless, it is hard to shake the feeling that there must be *something* wrong with Stanley and Williamson’s appeal to practical modes of presentation. It is an immediately appealing idea that modes of presentation can help explain why Lois knows that Superman is strong but does not know that Clark Kent is strong, or why I know that the man in the mirror’s pants are on fire but do not know that my pants are on fire. But it is an immediately *unappealing* idea that modes of presentation can help explain why Hannah knows that the way that John rides a bicycle is a way for her to ride a bicycle, but does not know how to ride a bicycle herself. Of course, that does not mean that it is wrong. But it would be nice to have an account of why there is this difference.

6. Concluding Remarks

Given the question marks raised by Rumfitt over the strength of Stanley and Williamson’s linguistic evidence, and given the counterintuitiveness of their appeal to practical modes of presentation, I do not think that Stanley and Williamson have turned the table on Ryle. The jury should remain out on whether or not knowledge-how is a species of knowledge-that. As Rumfitt says at the end of his paper, the whole matter needs further investigation.

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