



July 13th, 1996.

Prof. Edgar Ascher,  
58, ch. sous-le-Cret,  
CH-1256 Troinex,  
Switzerland.

Dear Professor Ascher,

Many thanks for your letter of July 2nd. I am glad you like E&I.

Yes, I too saw that review by Rorty of Alan Ryan, and noticed the endlessly repeated "We Pragmatists ...". It is "pragmatists," by the way, not "pragmaticists": Peirce invented the latter word late in life, to distinguish his view from (as I would say) Vulgar Pragmatism.

And, like you, I noticed Davidson's recent concession of the relevance of the causal to justification in J.Phil. I think he should have referred to me; he saw Evidence and Inquiry before publication, in typescript, and I assume has had "Davidson's Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge," to which he is to reply, since late 1994 or early 1995. Did you notice, from my reply to BonJour (in the last package) that BJ has given up coherentism?

My answer to your question about "who justifies the justifier?" (largely contained in chapter 10) would go like this: (1) it is a mistake to think that the relevant sense of "justifies," for epistemology, is that in which it refers to something someone does. No, the relevant sense is "A is more/less justified in believing that p" - explained as depending on how good his evidence is, NOT "A can justify his belief that p ... ." A may be justified even though he can't articulate the justification for his belief. (2) Focussing on that wrong locution tempts one to ask, "justify to whom?" and thus pulls one towards contextualism. (3) But concern for experiential anchoring and explanatory integration are, I think, not parochial or local, but shared by all who care whether their beliefs are justified. (4) The ratification of standards for good evidence, of experiential anchoring and explanatory integration, can only be conditional ("if any truth-indication is possible for us ..., then ..."), and internal to the web of belief - but this doesn't mean we are in for an infinite regress, or for a

Department of Philosophy  
College of Arts and Sciences  
P.O. Box 248054  
Coral Gables, Florida 33124-4670  
305-284-4757  
Fax 305-284-5594

vicious circle.

My answer to your question about A's S-belief that p begins: your talk of "phases of justification" tends to suggest that you are thinking of justification - as I am not - primarily as something one does. My answer would continue: and it sounds as if you may be thinking of reasons and causes of a belief as more distinct than I do: by my lights, A's S-reasons for believing that p must be causally supportive of his S-belief that p, and may (though they need not) be causally supportive precisely because A realizes that they have a content which is logically supportive of p.


I hope that helps!

Also enclosed are some press cuttings that might interest you. The Swedish one is from one of the two main Swedish daily papers the day of my lecture in Stockholm at the start of my trip (3 weeks, 14 lectures, in Sweden, Finland, Poland and, of course, Lausanne). It gives a good summary of E&I, describes me as rescuing philosophy from scientism as well as from Rorty, and, of course, has that lovely illustration of a crossword.

The New York Times one is self-explanatory, but could give a false impression of the main theme of my paper. So I enclose a copy.

The Lingua Franca one is from an academic gossip magazine. The background is this. Alan Sokal is a physicist from New York University who wrote a spoof article parodying post-modernist and social-constructivist philosophy of science and submitted it to a ghastly journal called Social Text; it was accepted and published, the editors not noticing it was a parody! This is Sokal's reply to the editor's protests. I don't know him, by the way. I am told that he was shown the proofs of the proceedings of a conference at the New York Academy of Sciences last summer on "The Flight from Science and Reason" at which Janet Richards and I both spoke.

Oh: also enclosed is a photo of me dressed as young Charley Peirce for a performance of his conversation with Rorty. RR was asked to play himself, but (not surprisingly) declined. So Bruce Wilshire, of Rutgers university, formerly an actor, played RR, and his wife, an actress, wore my clothes and played SH!

Best regards,  
*Cordialement !*  
  
 Susan Haack

July 2, 1996

Prof. Susan Haack  
University of Miami  
Dept. of Philosophy  
P.O. Box 248054  
Coral Gables, Florida 33124-4670  
USA

Dear Prof. Haack,

I received the preprints and the book you sent me and have read them with profit and pleasure.

(I also got from Kevin Mulligan the conversation "We Pragmaticists ..." Rorty, by the way, has just published (in the London Review of Books) a review of Alan Ryan's book on Dewey. It is full of "we pragmaticists ...")

When we met in Lausanne, I had intended to tell you several things and to ask you some questions. What I had ~~wanted to tell you above all is that your book is delightful~~.

One of the questions concerns "A's S-belief that p". Such an S-belief has (already) a content, namely "p". Now it may be ~~that in some phases of justification we disregard the precise content of the belief. Or else, a S-belief is underdetermined by its causal antecedents and its causal consequences and gets its precise content only by the place it occupies in a nexus of logical connections.~~

In this context, it is interesting to note that Davidson has recently written about "[...] the combination of causal and ~~rational elements that must enter into an analysis of justified belief [...]~~" (J. of Phil. 1996, p. 236).

Another question is: "Who justifies?" The fact that "[...] a subject's evidence for belief must be construed as something accessible to the subject [...]" does not mean that justification is not an operation in the third person. But who then justifies the justifier? This question may seem to lead to an infinite regression. I think nevertheless that the chain (or set) of justifiers is limited to an adequate community of "believers" depending on the objective (!) context. (This is not a case of "we, on the third floor think like this.")

Once more, I ~~want to thank~~ you for the book and the preprints.

Cordially,

Edgar Ascher

P.S. By training, I am a (theoretical) physicist and worked as such. In the last years, however, I have mainly been interested in epistemology, philosophy of science (and technology) -- and political philosophy.