

## CASSAM ON THE POSSIBILITY OF KNOWLEDGE AND TRANSCENDENTAL ARGUMENTS

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In the Preface and chapter 1 of *The Possibility of Knowledge*, Quassim Cassam proposes what might be termed a general framework for both (i) understanding and (ii) tackling epistemological how-possible questions (henceforth EHPQs): questions of the form ‘How is x possible?’, where x is some type of knowledge. Cassam takes this framework to embody ‘a version of transcendental epistemology that is different from the standard version’ (vii), where by the ‘standard version’ he means an approach that answers EHPQs by identifying, by means of transcendental arguments, necessary conditions for the existence of the type of knowledge whose possibility is questioned. Indeed, in chapter 2, Cassam goes further in claiming that his approach is not only different from, but superior to the transcendental argument approach.

In the paragraphs below, I take issue with these claims. First, I argue that Cassam’s framework fails to apply as smoothly as he would have us believe to the example EHPQs he discusses. In its present version, Cassam’s framework seems to me contrived and more obfuscating than enlightening. In the second section, I suggest that EHPQs come in (at least) two varieties, and claim that whereas a cleaned up version of Cassam’s framework might perhaps do justice to the one variety, it could not displace the transcendental argument approach with regard to the other variety.

### **1. Epistemological how-possible questions à la Cassam**

In this first section, I briefly review both the general recipe Cassam proposes for the interpretation and treatment of EHPQs and the specific interpretation and treatment he gives to a range of example cases in accordance with this recipe. As will soon transpire, Cassam succeeds in making his framework look plausible and helpful only by applying generous doses of imprecision, inconsequence and insouciance. On a more careful

analysis, it turns out that even Cassam's own example cases of EHPQs are too disparate probably to fit into any single structural schema, let alone Cassam's.

First then to the general schema Cassam envisages for any interpretation of and response to an EHPQ. The first thing to take account of in connection with EHPQs, according to Cassam, is their *obstacle-dependence*: Cassam claims that when we ask 'How is x possible?', it is the *apparent impossibility of x in the face of some perceived obstacle* that 'gives bite' to the question (cf. v, 2). 'We ask how x is possible when there appears to be an obstacle to the existence of x. We don't ask how x is possible if there is no perceived obstacle...' (2). Now I think one could have immediate doubts about the correctness of this observation, and I will formulate such doubts below in sct. 2; first, however, let's see what other generalisations Cassam propounds.

His next suggestion is that any EHPQ demands a 'multi-levels response' (vi, 9f.) that proceeds on three levels: on level 1, a 'means response' must be given, i.e. one or several means of acquiring the kind of knowledge whose possibility is questioned must be identified. Cassam (14) emphasises that the means to be indicated here need not be 'unique' means – the existence of further suitable means besides the proposed ones need not be excluded. What matters is that one or more 'practical' means of acquiring the knowledge in question are named. This point about EHPQs asking for practical rather than unique means prepares the ground for Cassam's main objection to the transcendental argument approach, to which I will return in section 2.

After such identification of a (number of) means on level 1, the next step, on level 2, must be to remove any 'intuitive, pre-existing obstacle' (20) there might be to the proper functioning of the means proposed on level 1 as a means to acquiring the relevant knowledge. In other words, any immediate qualms there might be about the utility of the proposed means must be allayed. This can be done either by *overcoming* the obstacle – i.e., showing that what the obstacle requires can actually be met by the proposed means – or by *dissipating* the obstacle – i.e., showing that the demands it makes are unjustified (cf. 2).

Finally, on level 3, less obvious and intuitive 'enabling conditions' are to be identified that must be fulfilled if the means proposed on level 1 is to generate the desired knowledge. Cassam distinguishes between two kinds of explanation that can be given on level 3: 'type A explanations', which specify relevant necessary conditions *for*

*the very existence of the means*; and ‘type B explanations’, which specify relevant necessary conditions *for the means to generate the kind of knowledge in question* (cf. 16). To judge from various passages of the text (e. g. 16ff., 40), Cassam seems to think that type A explanations can be either empirical or philosophical, whereas type B explanations are exclusively philosophical. Note, however, that any type A explanation must, trivially, also be a type B explanation: if condition c must be fulfilled for the means m to exist, then c must also be fulfilled for m to be able to generate the relevant knowledge (as Cassam notes himself on p. 46; cf. Bühler, this issue, for a sharp analysis of a whole range of problems surrounding Cassam’s notion of an enabling condition). (Cassam furthermore uses level 3 to distinguish between two kinds of epistemologists (cf. 19): ‘minimalists’, who hold that the philosopher’s job is done after level 2, and ‘anti-minimalists’, who think that philosophical level 3 answers are also necessary (‘extreme anti-minimalism’), or at least possible (‘moderate anti-minimalism’). This distinction can be ignored for my purposes.)

So much for Cassam’s general structural schema for understanding and responding to EHPQs. Let’s see then how he envisages the instantiation of this structure in specific EHPQs. I first turn to Cassam’s account of Kant’s EHPQ regarding synthetic a priori knowledge. It strongly appears that this is the guiding example Cassam had at the back of his mind when devising his general schema. In any event, it would seem to be the one case where the schema fits best; still, as we shall see, the difficulties start already here.

Kant’s question ‘How is synthetic a priori knowledge possible?’ (henceforth HPsap) would indeed appear to be ‘obstacle-dependent’ much in the sense introduced above: Kant wonders about the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge in the face of the obstacle that there seems to exist no means by which such knowledge could be acquired. For Kant, experience and conceptual analysis are the two basic sources of human knowledge, but neither can yield synthetic a priori knowledge (cf. 11). So HPsap is motivated by the obstacle that there appears to be no means to synthetic a priori knowledge – a ‘problem of sources’, as Cassam (12) calls it.

Note, however, that this is an obstacle that obtains, so to speak, at a level 0 that is not recognised by Cassam; it is an obstacle that is removed *by giving the means response on level 1* (‘problem of means’ would actually have been a more coherent

label for it than ‘problem of sources’). It is thus a new type of obstacle – obtaining at a new level 0 – that is to be distinguished from the obstacles to be dealt with on level 2, which are supposed to be obstacles to the utility of the means proposed on level 1. This distinction between two types of obstacles would seem to be fairly obvious. Cassam, however, fails to draw it, and we shall see that this failure helps to make his examples look more uniform than they are.

Given that the obstacle on which HPsap ‘depends’ is a lack of means, it *does* seem sensible to give a means response, as prescribed by Cassam’s schema. The means of acquiring geometrical knowledge (the specific kind of synthetic a priori knowledge in question) that Kant himself proposes is that of ‘construction in pure intuition’ (12). Kant then goes on to identify as an obstacle to the utility of this means the fact that any particular construction in pure intuition is singular, while geometrical propositions are general (what Cassam calls the ‘problem of universality’ (14)). This is again in line with Cassam’s schema in so far as we have here an obstacle to be removed on level 2. I’m not sure, however, how ‘intuitive and pre-existing’ this obstacle really was for Kant. I admit I do not know, but I would imagine that the ‘problem of universality’ only occurred to him while pondering the mechanics of his means. In my view, if there is anything like an intuitive and pre-existing obstacle playing a role in connection with HPsap, it is the absence of means, i. e. the level 0 obstacle. In any event, I would guess that it was *this* obstacle rather than the problem of universality that drove Kant to ask HPsap.

Having removed the ‘problem of universality’ on level 2 (according to Cassam, roughly by proposing that ‘it is the fact that construction is a rule-governed activity that makes it possible for geometry to discern “the universal in the particular”’ (15)), Kant moves on to level 3, where he gives a type B explanation by identifying ‘the fact that space itself is an “a priori intuition”’ (18) as an enabling condition for construction in pure intuition to generate geometrical knowledge. This once again fits Cassam’s schema: Kant discusses an enabling condition that must be fulfilled if the means proposed on level 1 is to generate the relevant knowledge. A question that can be raised, however – and that Cassam indeed himself raises (cf. 20f.) – is what distinguishes this level 3 response (this explanation of the power of construction in pure intuition to generate geometrical knowledge in terms of the ideality of space) from the obstacle

removal on level 2 (which amounts to nothing but a further explanation of the power of construction in pure intuition to generate geometrical knowledge, this time in terms of the rule-governedness of construction in intuition). Cassam argues that the difference is just that in the latter case, we deal with an intuitive, pre-existing obstacle, whereas the gap between the mental activity of construction in pure intuition and the *prima facie* mind-independent nature of physical space does not constitute an intuitive obstacle, but only *becomes* an obstacle once we start thinking about enabling conditions. My objections to this are (i) we've seen that the intuitiveness/pre-existence of the problem of universality is doubtful; and (ii) *if* the problem of universality can be regarded as intuitive, I don't see why the gap between mental construction and physical space should be any less so, be it for Kant or anyone else.

Already with what I think is his prototype case, then, Cassam gets into trouble. The example suggests that his general schema misses a distinction between two types of obstacles, one to be removed on level 1, the other on level 2. Moreover, it puts into question how intuitive the latter type of obstacles must be, and whether the distinction between levels 2 and 3 has any force. That would seem bad enough; but things get worse with other examples.

Chronologically the first case Cassam puts up for discussion in the text is: 'How is knowledge of the external world possible?' (HPew). Now, what strikes me immediately about this question is that a means response would seem totally beside the point here. The asker of HPew surely isn't asking for means, but whether the obvious means of acquiring knowledge of the external world really *do* generate such knowledge. *That* is how HPew must be taken.

This also entails that HPew is obstacle-dependent in a very different sense than HPsap is. The obstacle in the latter case was a lack of means – an obstacle to be removed by a means response on level 1. With HPew, in contrast, there simply isn't any such 'problem of sources'. Rather, what motivates the question must be some obstacle to the *utility of the obvious means* – in the terms of Cassam's schema, an obstacle to be removed on level 2.

At this point, Cassam might want to object that his theory of EHPQs is not about their *psychology*, but about their *logic*. Thus, although *the asker* of HPew may be *motivated* not by the absence of means, but by *worries* about the suitability of the well-

known means, it is still the case that from a strictly logical point of view, a complete response to HPew would include a means response. My reaction to this would be that apart from the fact that Cassam appears to be talking psychology throughout the discussion of his schema (in any case, he nowhere makes any such distinction between the psychology and the logic of EHPQs), it is obvious that while the maneuver might work for HPew, it could not work for the next example, HPpk (cf. below), where to give a means response is pointless not only from the psychological, but also from the logical point of view.

So back to my main line of argument. Cassam himself actually seems to sense the awkwardness of a means response to HPew, and also that the obstacle that ‘gives bite’ to HPew this time is one on level 2, when he lengthily explains (5f.) that the ‘obvious answer’ to HPew would be that there are means like ‘talking to people, reading newspapers, doing Google searches’, but that the problem is that the most basic means of all is perception, and that this is a problem because there are obstacles to sense perception. The conclusion he draws, however, is not that a means response in the case of HPew is redundant, but that it cannot be the whole story: ‘all that the proposed means response to (HPew) does is to shift the focus of discussion from this question to another how-possible question, namely: (HPpk) How is perceptual knowledge possible?’ (6).

In short, then, on Cassam’s story, giving a means response to HPew will inevitably lead us to HPpk, which subsequently demands a full-blown multi-levels response in its own turn. My story, in contrast, would be that what the asker of HPew asks (or means to ask) just *is* HPpk from the beginning. Now, I don’t really care much whether you prefer Cassam’s or my story. But do note that on Cassam’s, it becomes strictly speaking impossible to give a multi-levels response to HPew: such a response to HPew necessarily breaks off after level 1 – anything that follows after this level is a response to HPpk, and to HPew at best ‘by implication’ (8). On Cassam’s own account of HPew, then, the general schema does not apply smoothly to it. On my account, a response to HPew is just identical to a response to HPpk.

So how does Cassam’s general schema do with regard to HPpk? No better, I’m afraid. For as already signalled above, the pointlessness of a means response is even more acute in this case: after all, the means to the knowledge whose possibility is questioned here is mentioned in the very question. That is why a means response is

awkward even from what I called a strictly logical perspective above. This suggests, for one thing, that what is needed, rather than a means response, is again a removal of obstacles, on level 2, to the obvious means. Moreover, it casts doubt on Cassam's claim that level 1 means are practical rather than unique.

Cassam here actually takes some pains to uphold the validity of his schema by claiming that pointing to a *specific mode* of perception (seeing, feeling, etc.) would make for an intelligent means response to HPpk (cf. 7 and 8). Now, I think that's just not true. Such a response would not be intelligent, but entirely useless, and actually suggest that the respondent *hasn't understood* the question. Again, Cassam seems to sense this, given that he later returns to taking perception in general as the relevant means (cf. 24), and quickly moves on to identifying obstacles to this means and removing them on level 2.

As such an obstacle to perception, Cassam identifies what he calls 'Stroud's U' (cf. 24f., Stroud 2000 and 2004). From Cassam's presentation, it doesn't become clear what Stroud's U exactly amounts to, and unfortunately, Stroud himself isn't any clearer. Sometimes he seems to be talking *perceptual relativity* – the fairly straightforward point that what we perceive is compatible with various possibilities regarding what is the case. Sometimes he seems to have the stronger sceptical claim in mind that perception may at best generate the belief, but not the knowledge that the external world exists. Be that as it may, note that on either reading, Stroud's U, just like Kant's problem of universality, is hardly an 'intuitive, pre-existent' obstacle to perception. Rather, it is a more or less sophisticated objection from a trained philosopher.

Cassam next proposes to dissipate the obstacle posed by Stroud's U by means of Dretske's (1969) notion of *epistemic seeing*. Now, I can't refrain from briefly digressing here to point out that in my view, this cannot possibly work. Under either interpretation of Stroud's U, Dretske's epistemic seeing is of no force whatsoever against it (and isn't designed to be): for Dretske includes among the necessary conditions for epistemically seeing that *p* the condition that *p* is true. So epistemic seeing is only present where it's clear from the start that what is seen is true, and therefore, the notion of epistemic seeing totally begs the question Stroud's U poses as an obstacle to the possibility of perceptual knowledge.

However, my focus is not on the content, but on the form of Cassam's response to HPpk, and as far as this form goes, it complies with the general schema on level 2: Stroud's U poses an obstacle to perception as a means to perceptual knowledge, and this obstacle (thinks Cassam) can be removed with the help of Dretske's notion of epistemic seeing.

From here on, Cassam's discussion gets rather convoluted. On p. 28, he presents three 'reasons why one might fail to be convinced by this attempt at obstacle dissipation' (i.e. the attempt to dissipate Stroud's U by means of epistemic perception). Two of these, (a) and (b), are essentially obstacles to the utility of epistemic perception as a means to perceptual knowledge. Now, given that epistemic perception is the tool Cassam uses on level 2 to dissipate the obstacle posed by Stroud's U, (a) and (b) turn out to be something like second-order obstacles: obstacles to the utility of a tool used for obstacle removal on level 2. The removal of *these second-order obstacles*, in turn, which Cassam undertakes on pp. 28-34, would therefore appear still to belong to level 2, or, perhaps more precisely, to some new level 2' that is embedded within level 2. In any case, we have here a new component in a response to an EHPQ that is nowhere captured in Cassam's general schema.

Reason (c), finally, is presented by Cassam as asking for explanations of (i) what makes epistemic perception possible and (ii) what makes it possible for epistemic perception to generate perceptual knowledge – and these of course 'are questions about enabling conditions' (35). Now, according to the general schema, enabling conditions belong to level 3, and that is where Cassam believes to find himself at this point. However, the enabling conditions we are dealing with here do not concern the means identified on level 1 (as the general schema requires and as is the case in the example of Kant's HPsap): they do not concern perception, but *epistemic perception*, which only enters the stage on level 2. So once again, where we really find ourselves here is not on level 3, but still on level 2, or level 2'.

In short, then, on careful scrutiny, HPpk (and, 'by implication', HPew) fails to fit Cassam's general schema in several ways: it doesn't demand a level 1 means response; it puts into question Cassam's claim that means are not unique, but practical; the response Cassam proposes on level 2 includes elements nowhere specified in the

general schema; and Cassam's response, despite discussing enabling conditions, never really reaches level 3.

After these fairly detailed, and, I take it, rather exhausting reconstructions of Cassam's account of HPSap, HPew and HPPk, let me speed things up a little with the remaining examples 'How is knowledge of other minds possible?' (HPom) and 'How is a priori knowledge possible?' (HPapk).

Let's turn to the latter first. On the one hand, the case of HPapk parallels that of HPPk in that askers surely tend to be in the clear about what *candidates* there are for means to a priori knowledge. What they doubt, given their fundamental worry that there could be no genuinely non-experiential ways of acquiring factual knowledge, is that these candidates really create knowledge, or that they really create factual knowledge, or that the knowledge they create is really a priori (cf. 195). In other words, what motivates HPapk are once again obstacles to well-known candidate means – obstacles like Cohen's KR (cf. 201) – that are to be removed on level 2, rather than a felt lack of means. Note also that Cassam for once acknowledges (cf. 192) that the obstacles here – even when formulated summarily as what I've called the 'fundamental worry' of askers of HPapk – are hardly intuitive. Cassam therefore sees himself forced to try and give this fundamental worry 'intuitive backing', but I don't think he succeeds.

On level 3, on the other hand, HPapk parallels the case of HPSap: the enabling conditions Cassam discusses (cf. 215f.) *do* concern the means (presupposed rather than) proposed on level 1, as his general schema requires.

Regarding HPom, a natural treatment along modified Cassamian lines could be expected to go something like this: first, I would tend to claim (though I'm less confident here than with HPew and HPPk) that HPom is again motivated by qualms about various obvious candidate means (perception, inference, testimony, etc.) rather than by a felt absence of means. One would thus have to try to remove the obstacles to at least one of these means on level 2 (and if this step involved the use of tools which themselves are subject to obstacles, these second-order obstacles would have to be removed on level 2'). On level 3, one could then go on to discuss enabling conditions for those level 1 means the obstacles to which were successfully removed on levels 2 and 2'.

What then does Cassam do? He first proposes perception as the means of choice on level 1 (cf. 158). Now, since perceptual knowledge of other minds is perceptual knowledge, that would actually require him to deal, on level 2, with Stroud's U once again. On the (counterfactual) assumption that Stroud's U could be removed with the help of Dretske's notion of epistemic perception, Cassam would then have to go on to remove, on level 2', the second-order obstacles that are specific to epistemic perception as a means to knowledge of other minds.

Cassam, however, skips this initial step and just takes epistemic perception directly as the level 1 means to knowledge of other minds. Consequently, on level 2 (rather than 2'), he removes a range of obstacles to epistemic perception as a means to such knowledge. That's ok as far as it goes, but also here Cassam gives us reason to raise our eyebrows when he realises that his way of dealing with these obstacles 'blur[s] the dividing line between the obstacle-overcoming and obstacle-dissipating responses'; which, to be sure, he thinks is 'not necessarily a bad thing' (164). Well, it may not be a bad thing for the specific response at hand, but it certainly is for the general schema.

Finally, Cassam discusses two enabling conditions for epistemic perception as a means to knowledge of other minds, the 'Identity Condition' and the 'Spatiality Condition' (171). On p. 172, Cassam realises that the Identity Condition, like the enabling conditions in the HPsap example, once again raises the question whether explaining how enabling conditions are fulfilled does not really amount to removing obstacles, i. e. whether the distinction between levels 2 and 3 can be upheld. Cassam this time devotes an entire section (5.4) to the issue, arguing (just like in the case of HPsap) that there is a difference in intuitiveness between regular obstacles and those arising from enabling conditions; however, here as there, I can discern no such difference. In any event, while Cassam goes out of his way to save the distinction, he ends up saying that 'there is no need to go to the stake for the sake of maintaining a sharp distinction between Levels 2 and 3' (186). That is a bit of a blow to the charitable reader who up to here has tried hard to make sense of the distinction, and of Cassam's general schema as a whole.

We see then that Cassam's general structural schema of EHPQs starts to wobble badly even when applied – with care – to his own example cases. Now, Cassam can be expected to meet such criticism simply by toning down the strength of his claims.

We've seen that he already does so at various places in his book, and he has further done so in personal discussion. The question is what is ultimately left if his 'talk of the different "levels" of a multi-levels response shouldn't be taken too literally' (vi). If the remaining claim is just that 'a satisfactory response to [an epistemological] how-possible question has to do several different and interconnected things in the course of a single evolving enquiry' (ibid.), then not much.

In my view, then, Cassam's framework fails to capture the general structure of EHPQs – if indeed any such general structure, or any such structure of interest, there is. However, even if Cassam's schema were to fit the EHPQs he discusses in his book, I believe that it still could not fully replace transcendental arguments as an approach to EHPQs, as he argues in chapter 2. The reason is that there is (at least) one distinct variety of EHPQs which calls for treatment by the transcendental argument approach. I elaborate this point in the next section.

## **2. Epistemological how-possible questions and transcendental arguments**

I shall call the kind of EHPQs we dealt with so far 'type 1 EHPQs'. With this type, there is a clear implication that the asker of 'How is x possible?' has doubts, or would at least allow for the possibility of doubt, about the existence of x. An answer is expected to address such doubts, and the point of the answer lies primarily in putting such doubt to rest by telling us how x is possible (or, as the case may be, in confirming the doubt by showing that x is indeed impossible).

The case is different with 'type 2 EHPQs'. These come in the same surface form of 'How is x possible?', but can actually be paraphrased as 'What makes x possible?'. With this type of EHPQ, the asker of 'How is x possible?' has no doubts about the existence of x (as can be seen from the non-epistemological example 'How is *that* possible?', asked upon seeing a fakir lie down on his bed of nails). The point of an answer is not to allay any doubt about the existence of x (though it will inevitably contribute to doing so too). Rather, the existence of x is taken for granted, and the point of an answer lies in showing that something y is a precondition for the possibility of x.

Thus, whereas an answer to a type 1 EHPQ is intended to establish the possibility (or the impossibility) of x, an answer to a type 2 EHPQ is intended to

establish  $y$  by showing that it is a precondition for the possibility of  $x$ . Now, such an answer to a type 2 EHPQ, I take it, amounts exactly to what goes under the name of a ‘regressive transcendental argument’: the ‘proof’ (Ameriks) of something  $y$  by showing that it is a precondition for something  $x$  that is taken for granted (cf. Cassam: 57; Ameriks 2003: 51).

Cassam (58) admits that Kant uses regressive transcendental arguments, but says that he doesn’t use them to answer the EHPQ ‘How is empirical knowledge possible?’. My claim would be that Kant *does* pose and answer this EHPQ, or at least variants of it such as ‘How is perceptual knowledge possible?’ or ‘How is perceptual knowledge of objects possible?’. But he asks these questions not in the type 1 sense – which seems to be the only sense Cassam recognises for EHPQs – but in the type 2 sense. Kant asks questions like: ‘How is perceptual knowledge of objects possible?’ and gives answers like: ‘It is possible *thanks to categorial thinking!*’, thereby ‘proving’ that thinking is categorial by showing that this is a precondition of the (according to him, obvious) possibility of perceptual knowledge of objects.

How is talk of ‘proof’ and ‘proving’ to be understood in this context? Are Kantian ‘preconditions’ supposed to be *necessary* conditions? I conclude my comment with a number of remarks on this issue.

First, note that a regressive transcendental argument in support of  $y$  would appear to have force even if there could in principle be an infinity of other explanations  $y'$ ,  $y''$ , etc. for the possibility of  $x$ , as long as none of them is a lot more straightforward than  $y$  from the start. Kantian preconditions might thus not be necessary in the strictly logical sense, but in the sense that we epistemologists *cannot but* assume that  $y$  must be the case, given that no alternative explanations are in sight, let alone any more plausible ones.

Nevertheless, the general consensus – in which Cassam shares – seems to be that Kant *did* regard his preconditions to be necessary conditions in the strong sense, and it is not for me to make a case to the contrary here. What I dare claim, however, is that Kant would have wanted his preconditions to be understood as being necessary in the sense of necessary for the empirical knowledge *that we in fact have*, and not for some artificial minimalist conception of empirical knowledge. Kant’s proposal, for instance, that spatial perception is a necessary condition for the possibility of perceptual

knowledge of objects (cf. 88) could thus not be refuted by pointing out that, say, in a Strawsonian purely auditory world, perceptual knowledge would be possible without spatial perception – as Cassam tries to do in his ch. 3.

Indeed, Cassam's central objection against the transcendental argument approach to EHPQs is just that it tries to answer them by identifying necessary conditions (cf. e.g. vii, 52f., 58). This cannot be right, Cassam says, because an essential element in an explanation of the possibility of some type of knowledge is the specification of (one or several) means of acquiring such knowledge, and such means are never unique, but always only practical. But apart from the fact that these latter claims are doubtful even in connection with type 1 EHPQs like HPew and, especially, HPpk (cf. section 1), it should be clear that Cassam's objection is surely wrong with regard to EHPQs of type 2: if 'How is empirical knowledge possible?' is taken in the type 2 sense, then the identification of preconditions for the possibility of empirical knowledge – be they necessary or not – *is* the proper response, and it is the Cassamian multi-levels response that would be amiss. It *may* be that something like a multi-levels approach à la Cassam does make for a proper response to type 1 EHPQs; but pending a more elaborate version of such an approach than the one Cassam offers us in his book, that point remains to be established.

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