Topic: VSE and GISTE discussion on skepticism

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https://discordapp.com/channels/304608367384745994/659327634590456955/659327634590456955/659615918194719

Note: Quotations are selective, not complete. Messages may be grouped together if they appear to have a common theme/ idea, or if they contribute to the flow of discussion in the original chat. Quotes may be indicated by a ">" here when they were indicated some other way in the original chat. Some nodes are my summaries. I'm interested in your feedback (corrections, interpretations and criticism of my interpretations).

- VSE: defend your view against a skeptic who denies knowledge
  - GISTE: We have computers and spaceships. We made those cuz knowledge.
    - VSE: The skeptic wouldn't deny that we think we have knowledge. Knowledge can do things like build complex technology, they just claim that all we have are unwarranted beliefs.
      - GISTE: Do you not know how to criticize that ?
        - GISTE: What's the point of this ?
          - VSE: What's the point of doing philosophy? I think it's fun. I like to learn. I suppose the answer to that is overdetermined
      - GISTE: To that skeptic, I would explain what knowledge is. Cuz apparently he has a different view of what knowledge is.
        - VSE: I have a few preferred strategies. I'm interested in what you prefer. I am not an epistemic skeptic.
        - VSE: how you would describe knowledge?
          - GISTE: http://fallibleideas.com/knowledge
            - VSE: There seems to be a strong emphasis on "good" and "bad" in this definition. Do you use to determine what is a good explanation or useful so that we can distinguish knowledge from beliefs?
              - GISTE: what do you mean by beliefs? do you mean like the way theists have faith that god exists?
                - VSE: No, a belief is a first order intentional state.
                - GISTE: I know all of those words but not when they are in that order. pls translate to layman's terms.
                - VSE: Something is "first order" if it is primary or primitive in some sense. When discussing beliefs that means that they are in a way a "primary mental state". To paint the picture more, but not perhaps the clearest, I can also talk about "second order beliefs" which would be a belief ..about a belief... Something is "intentional" if it has an "aboutness". It is about something... Thus, it's aboutness makes it intentional. So a belief then is, roughly speaking, a primary mental state that is about something. I believe that "it is light outside" I have a first order intentional state ..about.. the light outside
                - GISTE: to help me understand what you're asking about, and what you mean by beliefs, pls answer this question: what's the point of differentiating between beliefs and knowledge?
                - VSE: Prima facie there seems to be a difference between the propositions. 1) I know my car is parked on the street. 2) I believe my car is parked on the street. Our everyday language makes a distinction between them. 1 does not seem to mean the same thing as 2 to most ordinary speakers. Therefore, it seems sensible to analyze them to see what difference(s), if any, exist.
                - GISTE: what differences do you see? this seems like semantics to me.
                - GISTE: I'm asking you what difference you see between I know X and I believe X.
                - VSE: I don't think beliefs need to be justified. Knowledge requires justification.
                - GISTE: knowledge does not require justification. are you seriously impossible. btw, the end of the essay I linked you talks about this.
                - VSE: Do you agree every day usage makes a distinction in our ordinary language? Not that this means that there is an actual distinction, but that we at least talk as though there is?
                - GISTE: what is the purpose you see in justification? isn't it so that you can judge if an idea is true? how do you ask what method we use to judge if an idea is true?
                - GISTE: why does it matter?
                - VSE: It seems deeper than semantics. There seems to be a conceptual distinction.
                - GISTE: the main part of my last comment is the question, not the comment following it. the comment was more like a clarification of the purpose of the question.
                - VSE: I suppose that is the purpose. We seem warranted that there is at least a potential conceptual distinction between concepts. If we are warranted in thinking there is a distinction between the concepts it seems we are obligated to do our best to find out whether there is if it turns out there isn't one - because then our duty as truth seekers will be fulfilled.
                - VSE: What do you think justification is?
                - GISTE: justification means using positive arguments/evidence to show that a theory is true or probably true.
                - VSE: Here's an argument. Let me know what premise you disagree with.

                  The Weak Argument for Justification

                  1. If I have some evidence for my belief that P P is justified (if)
                  2. I have some evidence for P (assertion)
                  C. My belief in P is justified (1,2 MP)

                  What premise do you disagree with?
                - VSE: The Weak Argument for Justification (WJ)

                  1. If I have a positive argument/ evidence for my belief that P then the belief in P is justified (if)
                  2. I have have a positive argument/evidence for P (assertion)
                  C. My belief in P is justified (1,2 MP)
                - GISTE: you said [previously, not quoted here] that justification is about having reasons for believing something (correct me if I misrepresented your position). I'm not sure if those reasons are negative or positive or either.
                - GISTE: I don't know how to answer you. if I was pressed, I would say that it's all wrong. you can't have evidence for a theory. you can only have evidence against a theory.
                - VSE: You claimed that justification is impossible. I have presented a valid argument with what I believe are sound premises. If, in the interest, and without challenge it seems successful, then it is not true that "justification is impossible".
                - BBL: "evidence for" and "evidence against" are asymmetric. Properly understood, they are "evidence compatible with" and "evidence incompatible with". Evidence compatible with belief P is also compatible with an infinite number of additional theories (P2, P3, ... PN) and therefore does not and cannot "justify" P versus P2, P3, ... etc. Whereas evidence incompatible with belief P invalidates P, regardless of whether or not it also invalidates P2, P3, ...etc. That's why "justify" doesn't work.
                - GISTE: thinking that evidence supports theories, is justification, which is impossible.
                - VSE: Can you propose a better definition? So I can amend it?
                - BBL: No. I don't think "justified" can be rescued.
                - VSE: Surely the word has meaning. Do you think the word "justification" is non-cognitive?
                - BBL: It has meaning, which is false. I don't know what "non-cognitive" means. Words like nonsense kinds like "God" is nonsense: It's an explanation that people commonly give, and think they know what they're talking about, they think it explains something meaningful, but it doesn't.
                - GISTE: well, it is meaningful. it's just wrong.
                - GISTE: [Re #1] But there are an infinite number of theories P2, P3, P4, ... PN which also agree with the argument/evidence, so why do you believe in P while ignoring P2, P3, P4, ... PN ?

                  if P is justified because it agrees with a particular positive argument/evidence, then P2, P3, P4, ... PN are also justified, but then that's meaningless.
                - VSE: VSE: So I will concede that justification is impossible. [CONTINUED IN BELOW LINE OF DISCUSSION]
                - GISTE: my argument against #1 stands. I don't think it's "justified". So it still works against your new version that doesn't use the word "justified".
                - VSE: [CONTINUED FROM ABOVE LINE OF DISCUSSION] I'm going to propose a new concept I call Schmustification.

                  ...

                  The Weak Argument for Schmustification (WS)

                  1. If I have some evidence for my belief that P than the belief in P is schmustified (if)
                  2. I have some evidence for P (assertion)
                  C. My belief in P is schmustified (1,2 MP)
                - VSE: [REMAKING PREMISE] 1. If I have some evidence compatible with my belief that P then the belief in P is schmustified (if)
                - BBL: The other problem with 1 here is "evidence for". AFAIK there is no such thing as "evidence for". There is only "evidence with" and "evidence incompatible with". Do you have a criteria that constitutes "evidence for"? As distinct from "evidence compatible with"?
                - BBL: Yes
                - GISTE: yes empirical evidence is possible. you can use it to try to negate a theory. your understanding of empirical evidence is that it can prop up a theory.
                - BBL: If your definition is to be usable it must be understandable. I don't understand the part that says "evidence for" is different from "evidence compatible with". Your clarification ("then it is possible empirical evidence.") does not help.
                - VSE: Do you think empirical evidence is possible?
                - VSE: First, we need to agree that the first premise is sound. Since I made up the word and I have the right to define my language, then it is true because of that. Do you agree I can define my word?
                - GISTE: WS contains the incoherent idea that evidence can be used to prop up a theory. I think BBL's question is the right question to ask at this point in the discussion. he said "Do you have a criteria that constitutes "evidence for"? As distinct from "evidence compatible with?"
                - GISTE: Still wrong, cuz why would you choose P when there are an infinite number of theories that are compatible with that evidence?
                - BBL: I understand #1. And I think the whole thing defines a word, "schmustified", that isn't useful for anything in reality.
                - VSE: [REMAKING ARGUMENT] The Weak Argument for Schmustification (WS)

                  1. If I have some evidence compatible with my belief that P then the belief in P is schmustified (if)
                  2. I have some evidence compatible with my belief in P (assertion)
                  C. My belief in P is schmustified (1,2 MP)
                - J: I think BBL'S initial comment was great and wish VSE would engage with rather than play word/definition games
                - VSE: This is a valid strategy in analytic philosophy. We work together to build a steel man of an argument
                - J: I believe you
                - BBL: Its that's kinda where I was going. "The Weak Argument for Schmustification" seems to have no actual correspondence to reality. It's valid as a logic game, but with no real referents because of the infinite compatibility problem.
                - SS: now about p2?
                - BBL: I think maybe the problem I have with p2 specifically is that there's an infinite number of referents, which makes the whole thing useless in reality. Like "Schmustified" doesn't do anything useful in separating P from an infinite P2, P3, ...Pn in reality.
                - VSE: I'm not arguing for it's utility. I'm arguing for it's validate thing and therefore not impossible. If my argument is sound Schmustification is possible. That is all I want.
                - GISTE: you read some of the knowledge essay and you asked for examples of its utility. its utility is its utility. so why are you trying to make an argument related to knowledge that doesn't involve utility?
                - c: just say ok now what?
                - VSE: We agreed empirical evidence is possible. Do you object to premise 2?
                - BBL: I don't object to any of it now. I just don't see it having any referents in reality. It's like a game where people dance on the head of a pin, given both an angel and a point are infinitely small.
                - VSE: My argument is about the possibility of this thing I call Schmustification. I'm not presently going to defend anything unrelated to that argument
                - GISTE: ok now what?
                - VSE: Sure it does. I defined it 1 what Schmustification refers to. You agreed that it is cognitive.
                - J: you can create arbitrarily many arga with the same logical form, each amounting to nothing as a guide to action in reality
                - VSE: We do this all the time. Games for example we define arbitrarily and then play those games exist? Like chess Does chess exist?
                - VSE: [REMAKING ARGUMENT] The Weak Argument for Schmustification (WS)

                  1. If I have some evidence compatible with my belief that P then the belief in P is schmustified (if)
                  2. I have some evidence compatible with my belief in P (assertion)
                  C. My belief in P is schmustified (1,2 MP)
                - VSE: Let's try the second premise.
                - GISTE: I don't get the point of this method. anyway BBL seems to be doing better than I am. so I'll let him discuss with you guys.