

### 3. 3. 4 Systems of authority

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#### **3. 4. 1 The authority argument**

Bibl. st.: W. Salmon, *Logic*, Englewood Cliffs (New Jersey), 1963,63/67 (*Argument From authority*). Steller assumes the factual authority enjoyed by individuals (pop stars e.g.), groups (the research community of scientists e.g.), institutions (e.g. churches), texts (e.g. the scientific journal Nature) et al. Asked: "On what reason is authority supported?" .

1. "X claims p. So p is true". This is how the one who accepts authority reasons.
2. "The majority (happen to be the great, yes, overwhelming majority) of the claims of X have been established as true. Well, X asserts p. So p is (probably, very likely, yes, highly likely) true".

**From summative to amplificative induction.** The one who accepts authority reasons from claims established as true to ascertainable, untested claims. The infallibility claim stands or falls on that dual basis, one of which is true, the other probable and likely to be true.

Authority thus relies on another's understanding. Let us take a physicist. This person, insofar as he is really a physicist, possesses in his mind a concept with a content and a scope. In this case it concerns an understanding of "nature" (i.e. in a current understanding "matter" as far as accessible to exact (experimental - mathematical) approximation). This has been so since the days of Galilei et al. at the beginning of modern times: the natural phenomena - the physical facts - show themselves only insofar as they exhibit an experimental and mathematically formulaic being. The physical concept immediately includes a number of facts, laws, axioms, theories, whether or usually not established by a physicist himself. For example, the axiom "All matter is determined" is one partial concept in the mind of the physicist. Thus (in the physical

sense of "experimentally - mathematically testable") "particles" (electrons e.g.) exist. For example, the law of gravitation applies. All this as far as possible tested, i.e. found true concerning nature and its parts. This tested understanding is the reason for the physicist's authority. That tested understanding is in his mind.

Limited scope. Let us note that, as soon as the physicist, even if he were an Einstein or a Planck, exceeds the scope of his tested understanding of nature as the present physicist defines it as its object, immediately his conceptual content no longer applies to the appropriate conceptual scope. He could immediately be bogged down in incomprehension!

On the face of it, the authority argument is a matter of conceptual logic that assigns to each concept content - insofar as tested, of course - a well-defined concept scope.

### **3. 4. 2 Faith**

An awful lot has been written about faith. When one tries to organize it somewhat, one does not get very far: such are the divergent definitions and theses on the subject! We limit ourselves to what follows.

**Our paradigm.** "Maaïke believes there is a breeze outside." Philosophers of language since B. Russell (1872/1970) see at work in such a statement a "propositional attitude," i.e., an attitude toward a "proposition" (a sentence or utterance). Symbol shortening: "X (Maaïke) believes that P (there is a breeze outside)". One then seeks the truth conditions of this. Since 1950 there has been a discussion about this. We limit ourselves to what follows.

**Evidence types.** J. de Vries, *Gewissheit*, in: W. Brugger, Hrsg., *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*, Freiburg, 1961-1, 121f, distinguishes certainties according to evidential types. Immediately three types of belief (conviction) are distinguishable.

- **1.1 Objective certainty.** There is immediate (direct) presence of the fact that shows itself (phenomenon): Maaïke herself was outside for a moment and experienced the breeze herself in person. Here there is tested reality as the reason (truth condition) of belief. There is also no middle term between Maaïke and the breeze.

- **1.2 Objective certainty.** There is mediate (indirect) presence of the fact that shows itself through an intervening term: Maaïke sees the leaves of the linden tree tending eastward but

gently. Maaike herself experiences the tending leaves herself. From this she reasons - "that there is a breeze outside". A transitive (transitive) relation is noticeable: from Maaike over the tending leaves to the breeze.

*Note:* Here coherence and resemblance play a decisive role: the tending leaves are related to the breeze and today's breeze resembles previous experienced breezes.

- **2. Subjective certainty.** The fact is neither directly nor indirectly evident. Maaike "just thinks it because she likes gentle breezes". Therefore, she "believes" "that there is a breeze outside. Actually, it reads, "Maaike wishes there were a breeze outside".

*Another classification.* Lahr, *Cours*, 682/683, sees it as follows.

- **1.** Circumstantial meaning. "I take the train because such transportation is still the cheapest. I believe that anyway." Lahr reduces such a thing to "opinion.

- **2.** Philosophical meanings. Here he distinguishes two types.

- **2.1.** The broad meaning. Many sages-such as J. Stuart Mill-called any belief "faith. Lahr attaches less importance to this.

- **2.2.** The narrow meaning. In a nutshell, Lahr's narrow meaning boils down to what was said above about the objective but intermediate form of evidentiality and especially the subjective form of "evidentiality": "Maaike herself does not experience the given thing directly but 'believes' it by virtue of (= reason) an indirect contact or a purely subjective motive.

*Authority and testimony.* The middle term can be authority. Thus: "Scientists published in Science that reproductive cloning in rhesus macaques is simply impractical. At least that is the experience at the University of Pittsburgh (USA)". Authority, i.e. the correct understanding regarding some domain (scope of understanding), is here the middle term between the one who believes what scientists say, and that which they claim, i.e. "that reproductive cloning in rhesus macaques is simply impracticable (...)". The same is true regarding testimony in the ordinary sense: the credibility of the one who testifies is the middle term between the one who believes, and that which the witness says. So in court and constantly in everyday life: one "believes"!

'It is as S. Augustine once said, "There is plenty that we 'believe' day - in - day - out because we have not directly encountered and experienced the given fact ourselves." This is so true that

it is also true of scientists: they 'believe' most of what they claim, o.g. other scientists who have tested the fact themselves.

### **3. 4. 3 Consensus gentium**

Bibl. st.: G. Bolland, Hrsg., *Hegel's kleine Logik*, Leiden, 1899, 107/109. As a valid proof of God, Cicero (-106/-43) cites the unanimous conviction of peoples ("consensus gentium") on the matter. Those who reason in this way develop an authority argument. Let us consider how Hegel - in 1830 (*Enzyklopedie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*) - addresses this.

- **1.** The step from the proposition that a knowledge content - e.g., "God exists" - is located in all consciousness, to the proposition that that content is necessarily in the nature of consciousness itself, is obvious. Hegel's critique. Only if the nature of consciousness is not itself tested for the private and accidental in it, can the unanimity of all concerning a characteristic content push through a prejudice - namely, that this prejudice belongs to the nature of consciousness itself - as something authoritative. Meanwhile, that what shows itself to be universally present immediately necessarily shows itself to be general is not sufficiently proved by the consensus gentium.

- **2.1.** For, even if such a thing were a satisfactory proof, it has been given up as evidence in favor of faith in God on the basis of the observation that there are some individuals and peoples in whom faith in God is not present.

- **2.2.** If common belief were a criterion of truth (Note: a means of judging the character of truth), then every commonly accepted superstition and every commonly accepted idolatry would count as truth. For the Indian, the cow, the monkey or the brahmin, the lama, is a god, not by reasoning and syllogisms but he believes it.

- **2.3.** Finally, the average belief that God exists is limited to the fact that he is there, without an understanding of what he is. Precisely the latter would be true insight and reasoning paramount. With the position "that he is there," God as an object of religion shrivels up explicitly to "God without more," understand: "the vague transcendental," and the content of religion is shrunk to its minimum.

If it was really necessary to content oneself with something like maintaining the existence of a god or even establishing faith in that shrunken form, one had only to marvel at "die Armut der Zeit" (the poverty of our age) which considers even the most dubious concerning religious insight as a gain and has made it so far as to fall back on that altar in her church which was once located in Athens and dedicated "to the unknown god."

**Note:** One can see: Hegel does not rate highly a common unanimity concerning any knowledge content. What is, "vernünftig" (rational, as Hegel conceives it) seen, common consciousness actually worth? It can be common superficiality!

It is also clear from his critique that the concept of "God" is a very important concept in Hegel's interpretation: he is puzzled by "die Armut der Zeit," his time, regarding God consciousness. Although it is a fact that Hegel rethinks the handed-down concept of God (mainly from the Bible) in a very "vernünftige" (rational) way (it sometimes seems slightly pantheistic) and thus moves away from traditional Christianity on the matter, he still retains an elevated concept of "God."

What interests us in this text of Hegel's first place is the form of authority argument that is consensus gentium.

### **3. 4. 4 *Mentality is group taxonomy***

We take two "faits divers," samples, among thousands.

Bibl. st.: S. A., Meurtre (*L'honneur n'excuse pas tout*), in: *Journal de Genève / Gazette de Lausanne* 23.08.1996. On 10.01.93, an Albanian living in Switzerland murders his wife's lover, but without being able to kill her, whereupon three months later the young woman's own father kills his grandson and injures his daughter and granddaughter.

It becomes a court case. The grandfather answers: "I only applied the code of honor of my community. Actually, I didn't kill for no reason. But I did - he explained in court - act passionately in view of the violent state of mind arising from the duty of revenge."

Bibl. st.: T. van Dijk, *Turkish mores*, in: *HP De Tijd* 20.02.96. The rule of conduct is as follows. That family member for whom the imprisonment is least unfavorable is given the task

of avenging, i.e. "righting wrongs". E.g.: if the father has died and the eldest son is married, the youngest son avenges himself on "the madman" who had it in for the mother.

Steller. "Especially when it comes to acts which, although also punishable in Turkey, are committed to restore the honor of wife, family, sister, the perpetrator himself and for which admiration is reaped in one's own circle." Note: Such "mentality" is a form of heroic morality and thus the avenger considers himself a "hero" in the eyes of the group.

***Axiomatic-deductive view.*** A mentality is - logically speaking - an axiomatic, i.e.

premises of a system that is unconditionally accepted as a "code of conduct and honor. From this, group members infer their behaviors.

Axiom. "A person whose honor has been violated cannot regain prestige within the Turkish community until that honor is restored." That restoration of honor takes the following forms.

***Deductions.***

1. "That includes killing your sister's rapist."
2. "This entails that a son shall kill his mother if she associates herself with other men  
inlet"

***Conclusion.*** Given the moral axiom - mentality - within a group as an authority argument, after an outrage involving dishonor to those involved, legal redress - "revenge" - is predictable!

Outside the "milieu" of e.g. Albanians or Turks, this - given the others, e.g. Christian or modern or postmodern axioms - comes across as irresponsible or even "irrational. Within the "milieu," however, this comes across as "responsible" and "morally good. The use of language is co-determined by private axioms.

As *La Logique de Port-Royal* said, people - most of the time - reason correctly, but on the basis of axioms that may be questionable or subject to critical examination, whereby people are usually unaware of the finiteness of their environment and its assumptions.

### 3. 4. 5 *White mentality*

Bibl.st.: L. Debraine, *Pour soulager sa conscience la France restitue la "Vénus hottentote"*, in: *Le Temps* (Geneva) 25.02.2002, 28. Sawtsje was born on the banks of the Gamtoos (South Africa) in 1789. With her brothers and sisters, she became enslaved on farms.

Among other things, she ended up with a Boer near Cape Town in 1807, where she became addicted to tobacco and gin.

'Hottentotvenus'. According to J-C. Tamisier, *Dictionnaire des peuples*, 1998, 55/56 (Bochiman), the Bushmen are the primordial population in South Africa. A two thousand years ago they were driven out by the Khoisan and the Bantus to the Kalahari - desert (Namibia, Botswana, South Africa). But the Khoisan (Khan) also form a language group spread over a series of tribes. The Boers called those who spoke this way "Hottentots" ("stutterers") Hence, Sawtsje was called "the Hottentotvenus.

*Steatopygie*. With her tribal companions, Sawtsje exhibited very prominent thighs and extended labia ("steatopygie"). One thinks of the prehistoric venuses. In 1810, a British surgeon persuaded her to travel to London to display her body for a fee. She thought in this way she would be "appreciated as a White person."

On display. Henceforth she is called "Saartjie Baartman." For four years she is dragged around in England - notwithstanding the protests of abolitionists (who fought for the abolition of all kinds of inequalities). In passing: in 1811 she was even baptized as "Sarah Baartman"! But the laughter and mockery success of the exhibitions ebbed away.

In enlightened France. She was sold in Paris to a man who exhibited bears and monkeys. Her intelligence was examined: it was found that Sarah had an excellent memory and spoke South African and English fluently and was learning French. On the night of 29.12. 1815, Sarah died of a violent attack of fever that was aggravated by a high dose of alcohol.

The French Lumières. G. Cuvier (1769/1832) and his thinker G. Saint-Hilaire (1772/ 1844) found that Sarah approached the apes. To which L. Debraine noted "that this confirmed both of their racist theories." Cuvier, the founder of paleontology, makes a cast of Sarah's body but removes the brain, genitals and skeleton. He records his autopsy in sixteen pages, nine of which are devoted to the accurate "description" of Sarah's sex, breasts and thighs.

Honor Recovery. The abolitionists make it but with great delay. In 2002, France delivers

Sawtsje's body back to South Africa - "to come to terms with his conscience" (according to Debraine)! More than seven thousand people solemnly bid farewell to Sawtsje that year with songs and dances, with poems and rites that underscored the human dignity and identity of this "wild" woman. In the valley of the Gamtoos where she saw the light of life, she now rests "far from the European barbarians."

### **3. 4. 6 Righteousness method (Ch. Peirce)**

Ch. Peirce distinguishes in the method of authority (see 1.2.) 'uprightness': (1) there is a class of people "who know" and (2) there is another class who accepts as true what those who know claim and thus is 'upright', i.e. lives in conformity and obedience to those in authority. One does not confuse "upright" with "sincere" (which is a mental state such that one honestly expresses what one thinks inwardly). We illustrate with what follows.

Bibl.st.: I. Margolis, *Ces savants excommuniés*, in: *Courrier International* 195 (28.07.1994, 34. The French text is a translation of a text from The Sunday Times).

**1. Facts.** "Before their theory was accepted, L. Pasteur (1822/1895; founder of microbiology) and A. Einstein (1879/1955; founder of the theory of relativity) were dismissed as "dangerous deviants." Th. Edison (1847/1931; known for his edison effect) was accused of deception when he demonstrated his electric light bulb. The brothers Wilbur Wright (1857/1912) and Orville Wright (1871/1948) were disbelieved for two years after their revolutionary flight, because "science had proved that a machine, if heavier than air, could not possibly fly." When Alfr. Wegener (1880/1930; geologist) recited the theory concerning the drift of the mainland, he was ridiculed. ( ... )".

**2. Heretic.** BBC 2, in a TV series "Heretic," asked the question, "How should respected institutions react when renowned scientists proclaim revolutionary theories? The series showed six "heretics" ("heretics") who accidentally discovered a new truth "against established opinion" and were therefore expelled from the scientific milieu.

**Comments from established scientists.** We cite two.

**1.** L. Wolpert (prof of medical biology): "The BBC series is an absurd series. The way the broadcasts were recited made me frenzied with rage. ( ... ). I categorically opposed it ( ... )".



2. J. Maddox (physicist; editor-in-chief at the time of Nature, the authoritative journal) :

"R. Sheldrake who in his *A New Science of Life* proposed the morphogenetic fields as a hypothesis replaces science with magic. Such a thing may be condemned in the same terms as those of the popes who condemned Galileo. And for the same reason: it is heresy".

It comes across as more than astonishing to hear such language! But it betrays a mentality at "those in the know" in scientific circles. It is as if a Maddox has advanced nothing further since Galilei's conviction. Note: Maddox himself clearly states that Sheldrake presents his concept of "morphogenetic field" as a hypothesis, this is as not yet established truth. The concept of "morphogenetic field" involves what follows. Once that somewhere on earth a biological being could cross a boundary and introduce something new, it is observed that elsewhere around the globe beings of the same species exhibit the same crossing without direct physical contact with the pioneering being. Surely the fact that this was still only a hypothesis should have led Maddox to caution.

### **3. 4. 7. *This chapter summarized.***

*Those who accept authority reason from established and found true assertions to established, untested assertions. One moves from summative to amplificative induction. For example, the physicist possesses the concept of nature, which has a content and scope and has been tested as much as possible.*

*Regarding belief, there are a variety of definitions and propositions. Philosophers of language speak of a "propositional attitude," where one seeks the truth conditions of it. Three types of belief are distinguishable. These include objective and directly experienced certainty, indirectly experienced certainty and subjective certainty. Other classifications cite "opinions" and "belief" more broadly or narrowly defined. Credibility of those who testify is the middle term between the one who believes, and that which the witness says. There is much that we "believe" on a daily basis.*

*Unified belief is sometimes used as an authority argument. Untested, however, it may be bias.*

*A unified conviction we find e.g. also in a group taxonomy: i.e. premises of a system that is unconditionally accepted as a "code of conduct and honor. From this, group members infer their behaviors.*

*Outside the group, such axioms may come across as irresponsible or "irrational," but within the group, however, as "responsible" and "morally good. Although one's reasoning is usually valid, one is not always aware of the finiteness of one's own axioms. Similarly, a "white mentality" that could only recognize the dignity of a "savage" woman posthumously. Likewise a well-defined 'scientific' mentality which, to use Peirce's term, rejects all too straightforwardly new hypotheses and theses.*