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Reihe: Naturalismus in der Erkenntnistheorie

Kontakt: Prof. Dr. Christoph Jäger christoph.jaeger@uibk.ac.at

**Prof. Dr. Wayne Davis
(Georgetown University)**

Knowledge Claims and Context

Mi., 15.10.2008, 18.00 Uhr c.t., Madonnensaal (Karl-Rahner-Platz 3)

The use of 'S knows p' varies from context to context. Contextualist theories explain this variation in terms of semantic hypotheses: 'S knows p' is relative or indexical in meaning, referring to practical features of either the subject's context (Hawthorne and Stanley) or the ascriber's context (Lewis, Cohen, and DeRose). The linguistic evidence against both forms of contextualism is extensive. I maintain that the contextual variation of knowledge claims results from common pragmatic factors. One is variable strictness. In addition to its strict use, 'S knows p' may be used loosely to implicate that S is close enough to knowing p for contextually indicated purposes. Here I will show that there is another pragmatic variable: belief about what is known. While variation in strictness accounts for the variation in the bank, parking, and some lottery cases, variation in belief accounts for the variation in other lottery cases and the epistemology cases. Along the way, I sketch a strong but non-skeptical invariantist semantics, and show how it works with these pragmatic factors.

Wayne Davis is Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Philosophy Department at Georgetown University. He received his B.A. from Michigan in 1973, and his Ph.D. from Princeton in 1977. His research interests are centered in philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, epistemology, and logic, and are focused mainly on the nature of mental states (particularly belief, desire, and thought) and the concept of meaning. Professor Davis has taught at UCLA (1976), Rice (1977), Washington University (1978), and Georgetown University. Professor Davis is the author of *An Introduction to Logic* (Prentice-Hall, 1986), *Implicature* (Cambridge, 1998), *Meaning, Expression, and Thought* (Cambridge, 2003), *Nondescriptive Meaning and Reference* (Oxford, 2005), plus numerous articles on logic, philosophy of science, epistemology, philosophical psychology, and philosophy of language in *Philosophical Review*, *Mind*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Noûs*, *Linguistics and Philosophy* and other journals. He is a member of the editorial board of *Philosophical Studies* and *Philosophical Inquiry*.

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