(p.vii) Manifesto

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Anglophone scholars in the human sciences often unwittingly frame their research hypotheses in English-specific terms. For example, when evolutionary biologists postulate a "universal sense of right and wrong" or puzzle over the evolutionary origins of "animal altruism," there is little awareness of the problematical fact that their words "right," "wrong," and "altruism" are English-specific constructs that lack precise equivalents in many languages of the world, including many European languages (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014, 251).

Philosophers who refuse to bother about semantics, on the grounds that they want to study the nonlinguistic world and not our talk about that world, resemble astronomers who refuse to bother about the theory of telescopes, on the grounds that they want to study the stars and not our observation of them. Such an attitude may be good enough for amateurs; applied to more advanced inquiries, it produces crude errors. Those metaphysicians who ignore language in order not to project it onto the world are the very ones most likely to fall for just that fallacy, because the validity of their reasoning depends on unexamined assumptions about the structure of the language in which they reason (Williamson 2006).

1. A Bit of History

Throughout much of the history of Western philosophy, the central goals of epistemology have included giving an account of what knowledge is, explaining how knowledge is possible, and setting out and defending a normative account of belief revision that specifies the good and bad ways of forming and updating beliefs. Many methods were used in an effort to achieve these goals.

(p.viii) In the middle years of the twentieth century, a new method became enormously influential in many branches of philosophy. The analysis of philosophically important concepts came to be seen as the central project of philosophy, and the method to be used was the careful examination of the ordinary use of words. This philosophical movement became known as "The Linguistic Turn" (Rorty [1962]1992), and its method was embraced by many philosophers concerned with epistemological issues. For example, according to Norman Malcolm,

> If we want to examine the use of a word we must study the use of the sentences in which the word occurs. We investigate the *concept of knowledge* by studying the usage of sentences in which "know" and cognate words occur. (1951, 336; emphasis added)

More recently, epistemology has seen what Peter Ludlow has dubbed "the new linguistic turn," as philosophers debating the contextualist response to skepticism and related issues have "explored the possibility that there might be linguistic evidence for or against" contextualism. Ludlow (2005) goes on to note that though the new linguistic turn in epistemology "breaks with the original linguistic turn in a number of respects, [it] follows it in the idea that we can use features of our language of knowledge attribution to support or . . . refute certain positions in epistemology" (12). A great deal has been written about the historical and philosophical reasons for the "first" linguistic turn; it is widely agreed that Wittgenstein played an important role, and so did Logical Positivism.

However, many philosophers have argued that the linguistic turn led epistemology in the wrong direction. Quine (1969) urged that epistemology should be naturalized and treated as a branch of psychology. Kornblith (2002, 28) agrees that epistemology should be naturalized and argues that knowledge is a natural kind to be studied by cognitive ethology. Sosa (2007) argues that the claim that analytic philosophy in general, and epistemology in particular, is primarily concerned with conceptual analysis is "deplorably misleading" (100). And Allan Hazlett (2010) has argued that the marriage of epistemology and the linguistic analysis of ordinary language is an unhappy one and it is time for a divorce.

2. The Motivation for this Volume
The challenges to the linguistic turns in epistemology raised by these philosophers and others are interesting and important. They were the **(p.ix)** backdrop for the planning of this volume. But on center stage when we decided to assemble the volume was a feature of the linguistic turns in epistemology that has received much less attention. The linguistic turns did not merely claim that we can "use features of the language of knowledge attribution to support or refute certain positions in epistemology" (Ludlow). Rather, as the earlier quote from Ludlow makes clear, it claimed that we can use features of "our" language,

and "our language" was almost always English. The new linguistic turn in epistemology attempts to use features of contemporary English knowledge attribution to support or refute certain positions in epistemology. In a similar way, the first linguistic turn in epistemology was actually aimed at analyzing the concept of knowledge used by contemporary speakers of English, by studying the usage of English sentences in which the English word "know" and cognate words occur.

The central question we want to pose in this volume is: *Is there any justification for this practice*? Another way to pose the question is: *What's so special about contemporary English*?

3. What's So Special About English?
Contemporary English is one of approximately 6,000 languages spoken in the world. It is the native language of less than 6% of the world's population. Moreover, when Western epistemology emerged, in Ancient Greece, English did not exist. So why should the usage of sentences in contemporary English in which "know" and cognate words occur, the concept of knowledge expressed by those words, or features of the language of knowledge attribution in contemporary English, play any special role in epistemology?

In addition to their theoretical importance, we suspect that these questions are of considerable *practical importance* for philosophers around the world. Though it is not often openly discussed, we think there is reason to believe that the dominant role of English usage and English locutions of knowledge attribution has a demoralizing effect on many philosophers outside the English-speaking world. Young philosophers who were initially interested in epistemology are, we believe, growing disillusioned with contemporary epistemology, where subtle facts about English usage are given great weight, and facts about Japanese or Chinese or Hindi or Korean usage are never mentioned. This may be part of the explanation for the relative lack of interest in and sympathy with analytic epistemology in Japan and elsewhere in Asia.

Is there any justification for this practice? One possible answer invokes what might be called the *universality thesis*, which claims that the properties **(p.x)** of the English word "know," English sentences of the form "S knows that *p*," and related locutions that have been studied by Anglophone epistemologists are shared by the standard translations of these expressions in most or all languages. If this were true, then the focus on English would simply be a matter of convenience for the vast majority of analytic epistemologists who are native speakers of or fluent in English.

There are a number of different ways in which the universality thesis has been or might be defended. Some of them are quite general, making claims about all

sentences in all natural languages. Others are specific to lexical terms like "know" or sentences involving them. We'll start with the general defenses.

According to Jerrold J. Katz (1976), what makes natural languages unique is what he calls the "effability thesis": "Every proposition is the sense of some sentence in each natural language" (37). And the effability thesis, Katz maintains, entails the "translatability thesis":

> For any pair of natural languages and for any sentence S in one and any sense σ of S, there is at least one sentence S′ in the other language such that σ is a sense of S′. (39)

Similar claims have been made by Sapir (1949) and van Benthem (1991). Von Fintel and Matthewson (2008) maintain that "a weakened version of translatability [that allows differences in presuppositions, implicature, etc., but still] maintains that at the level of core truth-conditional content, what one language can express any other can express as well . . . is a position that is quite widespread among linguists, and it seems like a reasonable stance to us as well" (2008, 146).

However, it is far from clear that either effability or translatability would provide the kind of universality that would be needed to justify the practice of focusing on English terms and sentences in epistemology and elsewhere in philosophy. For Katz and other defenders of the translatability thesis concede that there may be lexical items in one language (say, English) that have no translation into some other languages. For example, there are no words in Pirahã for "neutrino" and "mass," and no (current) way to translate "Neutrinos have mass." But Katz (1976) views this as merely a "temporary vocabulary gap" (40). Von Fintel and Matthewson follow suit, quoting Sapir (1949) saying it is "purely and simply a matter of vocabulary and of no interest whatever from the standpoint of linguistic form" (154). But if there are no sentences in contemporary Japanese (or Mandarin or Hindi) that have the same truth-conditional content as English sentences of the form "S knowns that *p*," and no sentences in contemporary English **(p.xi)** that have the same truth-conditional content as Japanese sentences of the form "S shitte-iru *p*" or "S wakatte-iru *p*" (which are typically viewed as the standard translations of "S knows that *p*"), then it is hard to see how the practice of focusing on English usage in epistemology would be vindicated by the (alleged) fact that a new term which captures the concept expressed by the English term "knows" could be introduced into Japanese.

A more promising approach to defending the universality thesis puts general claims about the nature of language to one side and focuses on the contemporary English term "know," the concept it expresses, and the use of contemporary English sentences of the form "S knows that *p*." If the concept is expressed by an ordinary expression in all languages, then the practice of

focusing on contemporary English terms, concepts, and sentences in epistemology is much less problematic (though *not* unproblematic, since one might have concerns about the "linguistic turns" themselves).

Perhaps the best known defenders of the claim that "know" is a lexical universal are Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard, the leaders of the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) program. According to Wierzbicka and Goddard, "know" is a *semantic prime* common to all languages (Goddard 2010, 462 and 474; Wierzbicka 2011, 382; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014, 12). Though this is interesting and provocative work, we are not convinced that the evidence offered by researchers in the NSM tradition supports a version of the universality thesis that will vindicate the focus on contemporary English in epistemology. At the center of our concern is the criterion of concept identity and cross-linguistic meaning identity that is appropriate for an epistemological analysis of knowledge.

Frank Jackson (1998) maintains that if an English speaker's intuitions about Gettier cases are different from "ours" (i.e., his and those of most philosophers), and if it is clear that she is not confused about the cases being considered, then the right thing to conclude is that her concept of knowledge is different from "ours." But the evidence marshaled in the NSM tradition gives us no reason at all to think that speakers of all languages share "our" Gettier intuitions. Indeed, there is some evidence suggesting that not all English speakers share "our" Gettier intuitions (Starmans and Friedman 2012, 2014). Jackson's view on concept individuation (or something close to it) was shared by Fred Dretske (pers. comm. with Mizumoto). The sort of evidence about Gettier intuitions that Jackson and Dretske would require before concluding that many (or most or all) languages have a term expressing the same concept that "know" expresses in English was not available to Wierzbicka and Goddard. So if this, or something in this vicinity, is the appropriate notion of concept identity for epistemology—and **(p.xii)** we think it is—then Wierzbicka and Goddard have not come close to showing that "know" is a semantic universal.

Similarly, if "know" in English is factive, then, for epistemological purposes, a verb in another language does not have the same meaning if it is non-factive. But here again the evidence marshaled in the NSM tradition clearly does not establish that verbs standardly translated as "know" are factive. Indeed, in an influential paper, Allan Hazlett (2010) has argued that "know" in English is not factive! We take no stand on Hazlett's provocative claim. What makes his paper important for our purposes is that it shows how *hard* it is to establish whether a verb is factive. If it has not been done for "know" in contemporary English, it is clear that work in the NSM tradition has not shown whether the standard translations for "know" are factive in Japanese (or Mandarin or Hindi or Pirahā). This provides another reason for concluding that Wierzbicka, Goddard, and their colleagues have not made a persuasive case that "know" is the sort of semantic

universal that would justify the practice of epistemologists focusing on the contemporary English term "know" and the concept it expresses.

Is the universality thesis true? The answer, we submit, is that at present, we really don't know. And since the universality thesis is the most obvious way to defend the prevailing practice of focusing on the epistemic language and epistemic concepts of contemporary English speakers, it is important to find out. Thus, the most important claim of our manifesto is that *epistemologists (and linguists, and psychologists and experimental philosophers) should pay much more attention to the epistemic language and epistemic concepts that prevail in cultures around the world*. Cross-linguistic and cross-cultural analysis of epistemic terms, sentences, and concepts has a crucial role to play in philosophical epistemology.

One possible outcome of the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies that we are urging is the discovery that "know" and its standard translations are indeed cross-cultural universals, expressing the same concept and exhibiting the same linguistic properties in all languages. This would be a remarkable discovery that would cry out for an explanation. It would open an important new area of interdisciplinary inquiry. The other possible outcome—and the one we suspect is more likely—is that the universality thesis is false, and that the epistemic concepts and locutions of contemporary English are culturally local and do not have close counterparts in many other languages and cultures. How should epistemologists deal with this outcome?

We think it important for epistemologists to explore and debate the options. In the remainder of this brief manifesto, we'll sketch three of those **(p.xiii)** options, though we are under no illusion that they are the only options, or the best ones.

4. Three Ways of Dealing with the Falsehood of the Universality Thesis
The first option we'll consider is suggested by Paul Grice (1989) in a passage in which he considers the possibility that other people may not use the philosophically important expressions he is analyzing in the same way he does.

> Even if my assumption that what goes for me goes for others is mistaken, it does not matter; my philosophical puzzles have arisen in connection with my use of E [some philosophically troubling expression], and my conceptual analysis will be of value to me (and to any others who may find that their use of E coincides with mine). (75)

In a recent article, Avner Baz (2012) expands on Grice's proposal, offering the following Grice-inspired response to the possibility of cross-cultural diversity in philosophical concepts:

> It seems eminently plausible that people who are sufficiently different from each other in their basic sensibilities, practices, and metaphysical commitments will also be different from each other, more or less significantly and more or less pervasively, in their concepts. . . . However, if the prevailing program can help us become clearer just with respect to our concepts—the ones we share only with those sufficiently like us . . . —this is enough to make it worth pursuing. The answer to [the] question of why we should care about what is merely our concept is accordingly simple: because it is ours, and to become clearer about it is to become clearer about those features and dimensions of ourselves and of our world to which this concept is responsive and of which it is therefore revelatory. (323)

Of course, people in other cultures can say exactly the same thing: "My conceptual analysis will be of value to me and to any others who may find that their use of

知っている (Japanese)

जानना (Hindi)

知道 (Chinese)

알고있다 (Korean)

ຮູ້ຈັກ (Lao)

دری (Arabic)

 (p.xiv) coincides with mine." So, the Gricean reaction to linguistic and conceptual diversity suggests a fragmentation of epistemology into

English epistemology

Japanese epistemology

Hindi epistemology

Chinese epistemology

Korean epistemology

Lao epistemology

Arabic epistemology

And so on. Here, it might be argued that these language-linked "epistemologies" should not be considered part of epistemology at all. Rather, they might more plausibly be viewed as part of linguistics—perhaps a part of comparative lexical semantics. One might also ask whether when a Japanese-speaking philosopher

says "S 知っている *p*" (which is standardly translated as "S knows that *p*") and an English-speaking philosopher says "S does not know that *p*," are they really disagreeing?

As we noted earlier, Hazlett (2010) has suggested that we "give up on the linguistic method" in epistemology, and has advocated "a divorce for the linguistic theory of knowledge attributions and traditional epistemology" (500). Though his reasons do not appeal to linguistic and conceptual diversity, a "Hazlett divorce" might be one tempting response to cross-cultural differences.

The final option we will mention is to integrate the findings about the epistemic language and epistemic concepts in many cultures to build a multicultural and multi-linguistic epistemology. This is an enticing idea. But it is far from clear—to us—how such a project could be carried out. One of our hopes in assembling this volume is that it will stimulate philosophical thought on what a multicultural and multi-linguistic epistemology might be.

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