

## Reply to Schiffer

Paul A. Boghossian

In “Externalism and Inference”, I sought to describe a kind of case whose possibility has, it seems to me, been widely overlooked: that of a thinker in whom Earthly and Twin Earthly contents *cohabit*, without, however, there being any ‘internal’ indication of this. I further claimed that such a thinker would, as a result, be tempted to think logically valid inferences which are, on an externalist interpretation, invalid, and that this would be a mistake from which he would not be able to recover *a priori*. Part of the significance of such a case may be described as follows. The case of Pierre shows that externalism may well lead to a situation in which certain inferences *are* valid, but don’t *a priori* look to be so. The case of Peter, if it worked, would show something perhaps more surprising: that externalism may well lead to a situation in which certain inferences *look* valid, but aren’t.

Now, Stephen appears to agree with me on the first central claim —namely, that I have described a case in which Earthly and Twin Earthly contents cohabit. I quote from p. 31.

Paul is surely right that after a while, Peter would have beliefs about Twin Pavarotti which he would express using 'Pavarotti'; at some point on Twin Earth, for example, he might say 'Pavarotti is in good voice tonight' and be expressing a belief about Twin Pavarotti, the tenor within sight. Paul is also surely right that Peter would have retained on Twin Earth his memory belief that Pavarotti swam in Lake Taupo, and this is a belief he might express using 'Pavarotti swam in Lake Taupo'. So far so good.

But he wishes to resist a further claim:

But Paul next claims that these intuitive considerations allow us to conclude that Peter would have in his belief box 'Pavarotti swam in Lake Taupo' and 'Pavarotti is in good voice tonight' and that the two tokens of 'Pavarotti' would differ in reference: the first would refer unambiguously to Luciano, the second to Twin Luciano. And he further claims that these same intuitive considerations would show that reasoning which Peter can't be faulted for thinking is valid isn't valid. (*ibid.*)

One of the things that Stephen is worried about is that, whereas it may be perfectly legitimate to suppose that Peter *says* in his public language "Pavarotti swam in Lake Taupo" it doesn't follow that he is giving voice to a belief that involves a *name in thought*. He thus questions my right to claim that I have described a case in which the following inference occurs in Peter's *belief-box*:

Pavarotti once swam in Lake Taupo

The singer I heard yesterday is Pavarotti

Therefore: The singer I heard yesterday once swam in Lake Taupo

I think that Stephen is absolutely right that there are plenty of examples of beliefs which, although expressed by public language names, don't essentially involve them. And I also think he is right to say that the example would have to be described at much greater length if every conceivable doubt that Peter's 'Pavarotti' beliefs are of this kind is to be laid to rest; and that was certainly not attempted in the paper presented at the conference.

I must confess, however, to not being particularly worried about *this* aspect of the example, and for two reasons. First, because I don't see any special reason for doubting that Peter's 'Pavarotti'-beliefs involve names. Stephen describes himself admiringly observing a stranger dancing the lambada, whose name he learns to be 'Roberto'. Stephen rightly notes that if he, Stephen, were to say 'Roberto has certainly mastered the lambada' he would be giving expression to a belief that he would have had even without this particular vehicle for its expression. But Peter's relation to 'Pavarotti' is not like that at all. By stipulation, Peter knows a tremendous amount about 'Pavarotti'; there is no single description, or set of descriptions, that Peter would be willing to substitute for every occurrence of the name.

The second, and far more important reason for not worrying about this point overmuch, however, is that *the example has nothing to do with names, per se*. Remember, externalism is not a thesis that's confined to names; it is supposed to apply quite generally. I could have —and did—run the example with 'water', for instance. Take a belief involving the word 'water' ineliminably —presumably, there are such. Then my claim was that tokens of that word figuring in *memory beliefs about Earthly experiences* would be about water; whereas tokens of that word figuring in, say, memory beliefs about Twearthy experiences, or in current (twearthy) desires to quench thirst, would be about *twater*. Since Stephen accepts my basic claims about the principles governing the fixation of the semantic properties of memories —namely, that they trace the content back to the original cause of the memories— I don't see how he can deny that Peter will have some beliefs involving the mental word 'water' which will be about *water*, and other beliefs involving the mental word 'water' which will be about *twater*. I fail to see that much room has been left for wiggling out of that conclusion.

The preceding also explains my puzzlement at Stephen's much more threatening claim that, however 'Pavarotti' is understood in the first premise —*a fortiori*, even if it is understood as expressing a belief involving a mental token of 'Pavarotti'— it must be understood as possessing precisely

the same semantic values in both premises, and so the inference is not invalid after all:

... as regards the validity of the argument, it doesn't matter which answer is correct, for Peter will mean the same by both tokens of 'Pavarotti'. (p. 34)

But I cannot see the basis for his confidence here. I have claimed—and Stephen seems to have conceded—that memory-beliefs involving 'Pavarotti' or 'water' or whatever, originating in Earthly experiences, are about Pavarotti, water, and so on. And, correlatively, that memory-beliefs involving those words originating in Twearthy experiences will be about Twin Pavarotti, twin water, and so on. Now, just imagine a case—surely conceivable—in which Peter puts together two such memory beliefs, one stemming from an Earthly experience and the other from a Twearthy experience, in order to draw an identity conclusion he had not arrived at previously. I fail to see what could conceivably preclude this.

It may be that the fact that the conclusion in question concerns an *identity* claim is proving distracting here, so let me close by giving a case of invalid reasoning on Peter's part that involves no such claim. Imagine that after many years on Twin Earth, Peter learns that Twin Pavarotti has just sworn under oath to never having been in (as it must be, twin) New Zealand. He records this belief in his belief-box, just as you would expect:

— Pavarotti swore that he has never been in New Zealand  
This sentence, as we have agreed, is about Twin Pavarotti and Twin New Zealand. But then he recalls his Earthly experience of running into Pavarotti at Lake Taupo in New Zealand. This memory-belief, however, as we have agreed, is about the Earthly Pavarotti and the Earthly New Zealand. Yet, it is quite clear that he would be willing to put these beliefs together to draw a conclusion that he would record with the sentence:

— Pavarotti swore to an untruth

And regardless of how this final token of 'Pavarotti' is understood, the inference will be invalid.