

Intellectualists Get a Failing Grade at Gradability

In *The Concept of Mind*, Gilbert Ryle presents readers with a distinction between two species of knowledge—knowledge-that and knowledge-how—that generates a dichotomy between two theoretical positions: intellectualism and anti-intellectualism. Different aspects of distinction are the foundation of his arguing that philosophers generally have adhered to what he called the *Intellectualist Legend*. The intellectualist legend takes it to be the case that, “...an action shows intelligence, if and only if, the agent is thinking what he is doing while he is doing it, and thinking what he is doing in such a manner that he would not do the action so well if he were not thinking what he is doing” (Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*: 29). Ryle sums up the intellectualist position by noting that their argument makes it the case that, for all epistemically evaluable actions, “[The actor] must preach to himself before he can practise” (Ryle: 29). In short, the goal of the intellectualist is to reduce all knowledge-how—the kind of knowledge that a person has that makes their actions epistemically evaluable—into knowledge-that, or the kind of knowledge that can be explicitly represented by propositions.

Ryle devastates the intellectualist position early in *The Concept of Mind* by arguing that, “Knowing how to apply maxims cannot be reduced to, or derived from, the acceptance of those or any other maxims” (Ryle: 31). Problematically, characterizing ability knowledge as akin to knowing a rule or maxim as an antecedent to an intelligent performance generates an infinite regress. On the intellectualist view, if we are to know how to apply a rule to practice, there must be a rule that dictates how we are to apply that maxim, and a rule that dictates how we are to apply that rule to apply that maxim, and so forth ad infinitum. The regress is but one of many arguments put forth by Ryle in *The Concept of Mind* against the intellectualist legend, the most compelling of which is the argument from gradability:

Attention has already been drawn to certain parallelisms and certain non-parallelisms between the concept of knowing that and the concept of knowing how. A further non-parallelism must now be noticed. we never speak of a person having partial knowledge of a fact or truth, save in the special sense of his having knowledge of a part of a body of facts or truths. A boy can be said to have partial knowledge of the counties of England, if he knows some of them and does not know others. But he could not be said to have incomplete knowledge of Sussex being an English county. Either he knows this fact or he does not know it. On the other hand, it is proper and normal to speak of a person knowing in part how to do something, i.e., of his having a particular capacity in a limited degree. An ordinary chess-player knows the game pretty well but a champion knows it better, and even the champion has still much to learn (Ryle: 59).

In this passage, Ryle brings to the forefront the observation that in our ordinary language we would never epistemically evaluate a knower as having partial knowledge of some binary fact. There is an implicit argument in this passage, as well: knowledge-that can be transferred wholly from person to person through language, while knowledge-how often fails to meet that condition. The argument from gradability, then, suggests that there is a much heartier reason to

accept that there is a real and worthwhile distinction between knowledge-how and knowledge-that than that of the regress argument. The regress argument can be met with the simple (yet faulty) objection that there is some reliable mechanism in place that translates propositional knowledge-that into performances. Intelligent performances, then, inherit their epistemic evaluation from the intelligence inherent in knowing that or those propositions responsible for the performance being done well after they are translated by mechanisms. This response to the regress argument from intellectualists often comes in the form of pointing to stupidly simple or elementary—to be read as non-epistemically evaluable—actions that make up more complex actions which are ultimately and only guided by propositional knowledge. However, if epistemic evaluations of intellectual performances are gradable, then the kind of knowledge responsible for intellectual performances comes in degrees as well. This makes the case that there is more than an epistemic stance at stake in this debate; there is a metaphysical difference between the two species of knowledge, and that difference is recognizable from an epistemic point of view.

According to the argument from gradability, if one can know *better* or *worse* how to ride a bike but not that what they are attempting to ride is in fact a bike then knowledge-how and knowledge-that must be two different species of knowledge. This line of thinking is the backbone of one of the most enduring legacies of Gilbert Ryle's work: its propagation of a mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive dichotomy regarding the nature of know-how. Either knowledge-how is responsible for epistemically evaluable ascriptions of intellectual performances, or knowledge-that is. When we say of an actor that they are quite good at riding a bicycle, we are either pointing to their performance itself, their dispositions, and their abilities, or some propositional knowledge or maxims underlying or preceding that performance which must be consulted in order for that performance to be an intelligent one. However, I argue—consistent with very few in the literature—that this is a false dichotomy. A third position—pluralism—exists and is advocated for in the literature.¹

Pluralists claim that both propositional knowledge and abilities can and often do play epistemically significant roles in explaining and evaluating cognitive capacities. I see four possible versions of pluralism. The first, which I call *exclusive symmetry*, holds that know-how can be instantiated by either propositional knowledge alone or abilities alone. The second, which I call *coupled symmetry*, holds that know-how requires both propositional knowledge and abilities. The third view, which I call *propositional asymmetry*, holds that know-how fundamentally involves propositional knowledge, but that abilities can also sometimes play a significant role in the explanation and epistemic evaluation of abilities. The fourth, which I call *ability asymmetry*, holds that all instances of know-how involve abilities in their explanation and epistemic evaluation, but that propositional knowledge can also play a significant role in the explanation and epistemic evaluation of certain instances of know-how.

In this paper, I will outline why, on their explicit views, intellectualists cannot be purists about know-how. I have a suspicion that anti-intellectualists cannot hold their purist position, either, but that is an undertaking that would require a project at least twice the length of this one. For intellectualists, I will show that abilities *always* play an epistemically and metaphysically non-trivial role in their theorizing. Ultimately, by leaning on my characterization of the pluralist

¹ Charles Wallis, in *Consciousness, Context, and Know-how*, spells out what I call *ability asymmetry pluralism* and inspired my categorization of the kinds of pluralism I find to be possible based on his theoretical framework.

landscape, I will argue that purist intellectualists are actually proposing a kind of *coupled symmetry pluralism*, where it must always be the case that propositional knowledge **and** abilities are present for epistemically evaluable ascriptions of knowing-how. In order to do so, I will first make the case that although there is a third reasonable position to be found in pluralism, nearly all of the figures in the know-how literature accept this binary characterization of the theoretic possibilities. In my view, this dichotomy both polarizes and distorts the literature on know-how. In forcing participants in the debate to think they must take a stand, theorizing on both sides is done with the hopes of maintaining their purist view and rejecting the possibility of a wider theoretic landscape from the start. In showing how the literature accepts the dichotomy as true, and in deference to Ryle, I will give strong reasons as to why it is that taking a stance on the dichotomy presented by Ryle in *The Concept of Mind* is attractive given the argument from gradability. Then, through exegesis of the intellectualist literature, I will bring to light their reliance on epistemically non-trivial abilities. Given the intellectualist reliance on epistemically non-trivial abilities, I will show how the dichotomy presented by Gilbert Ryle is a false dichotomy in light of the fact that one of the polarized camps implicitly rejects their purist stance and presents a pluralist stance—*coupled symmetry pluralism*.

It is quite clear that nearly every figure in the literature takes one of the binary stances provided by what I claim is the false dichotomy between anti-intellectualism and intellectualism. For example, Alva Nöe responds to Stanley and Williamson by claiming that, “What I have tried to do is show that Stanley and Williamson give us no reason to reject Ryle’s distinction.” (Alva Nöe: 290). John Bengson and Marc A. Moffett begin the introductory essay of their edited volume on knowledge-how with the statement: “...since Gilbert Ryle’s attack on what he unsympathetically labeled the ‘intellectualist legend,’ it has been widely accepted that knowledge how to do things is fundamentally distinct from knowledge that something is the case” (Bengson and Moffett: 3). In a similar fashion, Joshua Habgood-Coote tells readers that, “The debate about the nature of knowledge-how is standardly thought to be divided between intellectualist views, which take knowledge-how to be a kind of propositional knowledge, and anti-intellectualist views, which take knowledge-how to be a kind of ability” (Joshua Habgood-Coote: 87).

Where intellectualists take it to be the case that all intelligent performances have the necessary antecedent of considering some propositional knowledge, Ryle suggests that it is, “...possible for people intelligently to perform some sorts of operations when they are not yet able to consider any propositions enjoining how they should be performed. Some intelligent performances are not controlled by any anterior acknowledgements of the principles applied in them” (Ryle, 30). Thus, Anti-intellectualists follow Ryle in supposing that know-how consists exclusively in abilities—that is, the exclusive basis for epistemic evaluation of task performance consists in the nature of the abilities responsible for that performance: “When a person is described by one or other of the intelligence epithets such as ‘shrewd’ or ‘silly’, ‘prudent’ or ‘imprudent’, the description imputes to him not the knowledge, or ignorance, of this or that truth, but the ability, or inability, to do certain sorts of things” (Ryle, 27). Intellectualists follow Jason Stanley and Timothy Williamson in claiming that, “...knowledge-how is simply a species of knowledge-that” (Stanley and Williamson: 411). In other words, for the intellectualist, the exclusive basis for epistemic evaluation of task performance consists in propositional knowledge-that.

The above argument from gradability has clearly inspired both the adoption of the dichotomy and motivated an extensive set of appeals to gradability throughout the literature by intellectualists and anti-intellectualists alike. Daniele Sgaravatti and Ella Zardini (2008), Michael Michaelis (2011), Bengson and Moffett (2011), as well as David Wiggins (2012) have all offered versions of the gradability argument, and likewise, Stanley and Carlotta Pavese embrace the dichotomy presented and feel the need to respond to Ryle's argument in a way that will preserve their purist intellectualist stance. Pavese explicitly holds that, "...the phenomenon of gradability can be used to mount a powerful argument against intellectualism about know-how—the view that know-how is a species of propositional knowledge" (Carlotta Pavese, *Know-How and Gradability*: 346). Pavese underscores the difficulty that gradability poses to the intellectualist account of knowing-how: "If, as the phenomenon of gradability suggests, know-how can hold to different degrees or to different extents, whereas propositional knowledge is absolute, then know-how and propositional knowledge have different properties; hence they must be different kinds of states (anti-intellectualism about know-how)" (Pavese: 346).

According to Stanley & Pavese, "Intellectualism about know how is the view that knowing how to perform a task is a matter of knowing a proposition that answers the question 'How could one perform it?'" (Carlotta Pavese, *Knowing a Rule*: 165). Thus, in response to Ryle's challenge in the argument from gradability, Stanley & Pavese seek to maintain the binary nature of knowledge ascriptions consistent with the intellectualist position by shifting the source of gradability to the relative adequacy of a proposition in the form of 'X knows w , where w is a way to ϕ ' that acts as the answer to the embedded question 'How can one ϕ ?' Furthermore, on Stanley & Pavese's view, comparative or gradable ascriptions of know-how require two actors; Ryle's challenge is fairly specific in that gradability is a property of know-how that contributes to the epistemic evaluation of the performance of one actor as being a better or worse performance. I will argue later that intellectualists cannot account for the kind of gradability implied by Ryle's argument, but their primary attempt at a response to Ryle's challenge will do fine to expose how abilities are *always* required in epistemically evaluable ascriptions for know-how on their view. Stanley explains:

Ryle holds that when we utter (1), we are comparing their relative states of knowing how – it is this special cognitive relation of knowledge how that is being compared:

(1) John knows how to play Chopin better than Mary does.

However, this is not what we are doing when we say that John knows how to play Chopin better than Mary does. Rather, we are comparing the way in which John knows how to play Chopin to the way in which Mary knows how to play Chopin, and declaring the first superior to the second (Jason Stanley, *Know How*: 34).

Specifically, on Stanley & Pavese's account "John knows how to play Chopin better than Mary" really reads "John knows that w_1 is a way to play Chopin **and** Mary knows that w_2 is a way to play Chopin **and** w_1 is a better answer than w_2 to the embedded question 'how do you play Chopin?'. This account of gradability is supposed to rely on answers that are binary in their truth-values. In effect, they advocate a paraphrase of a paraphrase of the original comparison since the intellectualist position paraphrases the ascription "John knows how to play Chopin" as

“John knows that w is a way to play Chopin.” As noted, this is but one window through which their implicit pluralism becomes apparent.

Stanley & Pavese’s variety of intellectualism purports to claim that propositions of the form, “ w_1 is a way to play Chopin,” explain both the performance as well as the epistemic evaluation inherent in know-how attributions. However, the intellectualist illusion that equates knowing-how with knowing-that falls away almost instantly. In responding to the potential objection that both John and Mary might have the same knowledge that “ w_1 is a way to play Chopin” yet still differ in their abilities, Pavese tells readers:

According to intellectualism, know-how is knowledge of an answer that involves a practical mode of presentation. The distinctive practical aspect of practical modes of presentation derives from the fact that one practically represents a task only if one possesses certain abilities—that is, the ability to follow certain rules (Pavese 2015b, 9–12). Hence, this ability is built into the knowledge component because it is built into the *practical mode of presentation*² component of the knowledge (Pavese: 375).

Thus, Stanley & Pavese hold that all instances of knowing how necessarily involve abilities in both their explanation and their epistemic evaluation in a **non-trivial fashion**. At the very least, then, Stanley & Pavese actually hold a *coupled symmetry pluralism* in which abilities as well as beliefs are required for explaining and evaluating putative cases of know-how. Consistent with this suspicion, I argue here that intellectualist attempts by Stanley & Pavese to accommodate gradability in attributions of know-how to individuals ultimately covertly smuggles abilities into their view as a necessity. One can pull from Stanley & Pavese’s literature on know-how at random and find that this must be the case. Indeed, abilities clearly play such a central role in their responses to gradability that all attempts by intellectualists to avoid relying on abilities fails either implicitly or explicitly, so much so that Pavese argues for the ‘Principle’ upon which her intellectualist, rule-based theory rests: “One knows a rule to reason just in case one has the ability to reason according to that rule” (Pavese, *Knowing a Rule*: 168). ‘Principle’ is also an implicit attempt to respond to the regress argument by proposing the lack of a necessary propositional antecedent to a performance of reasoning as a capacity, but I digress.

It is obvious that Pavese is actually presenting readers with a kind of *coupled asymmetry pluralism* in arguing for ‘Principle’ which suggests that know-how requires propositional knowledge—rules—**and** the *ability* to reason. Pavese is not a pure intellectualist, and neither are Stanley, Bengson and Moffett, nor any of the other generally linguistic theorists that interject themselves into the literature as purists but ultimately put forth a pluralist view. The prescient point is that Pavese holds this view across multiple, if not all of her papers on know-how. ‘Principle’ is effectively just a way of cashing out know-that in the practical mode of presentation; to know how to reason according to a rule is both to know the rule and to believe that rule in the practical mode of presentation.

It is quite clear that, contrary to their overt claims, Stanley & Pavese’s theory depends upon the epistemic contribution of abilities. In the quote above, Pavese tells readers, “The distinctive practical aspect of practical modes of presentation derives from the fact that one

² My italics.

practically represents a task only if one possesses certain abilities.” Consider Bill_p who believes some way to play Chopin in the practical mode of presentation and Bill_{np} who does not. Hence, on Stanley & Pavese’s account, only Bill_p *knows how* to play Chopin. Bill_{np} also believes that w_1 is a way to play Chopin—in fact, he believes in *exactly the same way* to play Chopin as Bill_p—but his belief is presented in a non-practical mode of presentation (sans ability). Hence, on Stanley & Pavese’s account Bill_{np} does not know how to play Chopin. Their implicit endorsement of *coupled symmetry pluralism* becomes obvious.

On the intellectualist view, the only difference between the Bills is the ability expressed by Bill_p as a result of his believing in his way w_1 to play Chopin in the practical mode of presentation. The practical mode of presentation, then is just the performance. Pavese calls the performance the ‘possession of abilities’ to avoid using phrasing that suggests that one must act in order to exhibit know-how, but it is clear, nonetheless. In short, Bill_{np}, who does not know how to play Chopin, fails to know-how in virtue of his not having the ability to play, whereas Bill_p knows how to play Chopin in virtue of that fact that he actually can play the piece. On Stanley & Pavese’s explicit claims, know-how *always* includes ability. Sans the presence of ability, believing some proposition that is a way to ϕ which is an answer to an embedded question is inert when it comes to action.

I have argued to this point that Stanley & Pavese require abilities to differentiate regular propositional knowledge from know-how. They might acknowledge that it is true that know-how requires ability, but that the abilities that account for the practical mode of presentation are omnipresent but trivial. In fact, the epistemic importance of the abilities gets explicitly deprecated time and time again by Stanley & Pavese. Consider, for example, Pavese’s description of persons with abilities sans propositional knowledge as more-or-less mindless brutes when it comes to the purpose of Principle: “The subject who blindly exercises his ability to reason according to modus ponens is like the ordinary cases of perceptual knowledge: he does not need to know how to reason correctly from the premises before coming to know what follows from them” (Pavese, *Knowing a Rule*: 172).

Incredible tensions abound within their explicit views; all of the heavy theoretical lifting is being done by abilities. Even after underscoring the importance of abilities at every turn, they end each passage with some paraphrase of the claim that although it may be the case that abilities are necessary, they are epistemically trivial. They always claim that propositional knowledge is the fundamental aspect in epistemic evaluations of know-how, yet they have no clear story to tell about how or why they think that must be the case. Abilities are both necessary and epistemically non-trivial. Moreover, they are critically epistemically non-trivial in that they explicitly play a role in the explanation of performances and the evaluation of the epistemic status of the knower on Stanley and Pavese’s intellectualist account. One cannot know-how sans ability; this is just what the practical mode of presentation says. On the other hand, one can have binary knowledge—that of a way attributed to someone who has know-how given the practical mode of presentation, but, without the ability, they simply do not possess know-how under any circumstance.

To make my point further, consider a case of explicitly represented knowledge of what Stanley and Pavese might call a ‘way to play Chopin’ encoded on sheet music. What would it mean for someone to believe that the way encoded on the sheet was a ‘way to play Chopin’ in

the practical mode of presentation? They would have to be able to translate the music encoded on the sheet into the action of playing; they require the ability to play. Knowing how to translate music from a sheet into action is itself an ability that is obtained rigorously through years of practice and is an epistemically non-trivial ability or set of abilities in its own right. One can know how to read only the C scale—and it is often taught this way—before moving on to G without ever interacting with a piano. One must learn which notes on the sheet correspond to which keys, and how to apply expressive notation in order to play the music. As a long-time music instructor, there is almost nothing more painful than hearing a student attempt to play a piece of music from a sheet which they have never actually heard before nor had the chance to practice, even if they are starting to read fairly well.

As regards sheet music, Stanley & Pavese would essentially argue that the expression of each note, the timing of the piece, and the velocity with which each note is to be played are all elementary, stupidly simple, epistemically uninteresting, or useless. Simultaneously, they would acknowledge that those abilities are absolutely essential to the performance, and the performance itself is the expression of the practical mode of presentation. Consider again B_p versus B_{np} . Each of them knows that the way to play Chopin encoded on the sheet music is a way to play. Furthermore, they each know which notes correspond to which keys, can read expressive notation, know the time signature, and so on. B_p knows all of this in the practical mode of presentation, whereas B_{np} does not. What is it that B_p knows that B_{np} fails to know?

On the intellectualist account, B_p knows how to play Chopin. He knows how to lift his hands over the right keys and play the keys with the right rhythm and velocity by pressing down. More important to the context, he knows how to do it by looking at the explicitly represented knowledge on the sheet and translating it into the action of playing. That is what the practical mode of presentation amounts to. The explicitly represented information on the sheet—akin to propositional knowledge—cannot ever be solely responsible for epistemically evaluable ascriptions of knowing-how. Knowing some propositions cannot simply translate into ability on the intellectualist view because knowing that w is a way to ϕ is not enough sans some mechanism to translate that propositional knowledge into ability. Stanley & Pavese covertly introduce the necessity of such a mechanism by relying on the practical mode of presentation. And yet, the intellectualist provides no such possible mechanism on their purist view.

Given the necessity for some mechanism for translating explicitly represented information into action and the fact that ways to ϕ considered as answers to embedded questions simply cannot contribute to ascriptions of know-how on the intellectualist view without abilities in tow, Stanley & Pavese's view unravels. Once intellectualists make the concession that they cannot make epistemically evaluable know-how attributions without the presence of abilities, they are in real theoretical trouble. Intellectualists, as purists, cannot make this concession and maintain their purity. However, they do, and abilities become the entire basis of epistemic evaluations and attributions according via the practical mode of presentation. The problem is exacerbated when their response to Ryle's argument for the gradability of know-how comes under scrutiny. Again, Stanley & Pavese's response to Ryle takes the form of a comparison of two ways to ϕ , where one way is *better* than the other. But what could possibly make one way better than the other, apart from the performance? The practical mode of presentation and their discussion of it shows that it must at least be the case that each way to ϕ must be presented in the

practical mode of presentation to be considered an instance of know-how, and so their comparative analysis of ways in response to Ryle must also be taken under this context. Recall that Stanley expresses their response to the problem of gradability as follows:

Ryle holds that when we utter (1), we are comparing their relative states of knowing how – it is this special cognitive relation of knowledge how that is being compared:

(1) John knows how to play Chopin better than Mary does.

However, this is not what we are doing when we say that John knows how to play Chopin better than Mary does. Rather, we are comparing the way in which John knows how to play Chopin to the way in which Mary knows how to play Chopin, and declaring the first superior to the second (Stanley: 34).

On Stanley and Pavese's view, John's being able to play Chopin better than Mary requires (a) both John and Mary knowing a way to play Chopin and (b) that one way is superior to the other. *Prima facie*, there is nothing interesting or controversial about these claims. Once they attempt to transfer epistemic merit to performances based on John and Mary's knowing these ways, however, their view falls apart. As I have argued, there is nothing about knowing the proposition that answers the embedded question, 'How does one play Chopin?' that actually provides either John or Mary with ability to play Chopin, if there is some propositional answer to that question at all. This is because, even if some such propositional knowledge contributes to know-how, it requires a mechanism for translation into action for the proposition to be believed in the practical mode of presentation. Once that mechanism is inserted into their view, it further commits them to a kind of *coupled symmetry pluralism*, and their account of gradability comes under duress.

To show why Stanley & Pavese's intellectualist theorizing fails according to the problems mounted by gradability, consider the focal problem of gradability that any intellectualist theory of know-how must present possible solutions to by relying solely on propositional knowledge:

The Problem of Gradability for Intellectualists: Two actors know exactly the same propositional knowledge-that (w) which is supposed to be an answer to the embedded question, "How does one ϕ ?" but differ in their abilities to perform.

How can the intellectualist possibly provide a solution to this puzzle in a way where abilities or attributes do not do *all* of the work in explaining gradable instances of know-how? Their view explicitly relies on the gradable differentiation of instances of know-how being characterized as two actors knowing ways to ϕ , w_1 and w_2 , where one way is better than the other, and each way is supposed to be entirely composed entirely of knowledge-that (in that ways represent answers to the embedded question, 'How should one ϕ ?') What could the property of a way characterized as an answer to an embedded question be that allows for the possibility of 'ways' to address the Problem of Gradability posed above? Stanley & Pavese will have to answer this problem in one of two ways, neither of which is adequate, nor are they purely intellectualist responses to the problem:

- (1) Two different actors know the same way to ϕ but differ simply because of dispositional differences. The problem of gradation is met by propositional knowledge coupled with dispositions. The dispositions are epistemically trivial and elementary.
- (2) Two different actors can never know the same way to ϕ because of dispositional differences, and so the problem of gradation is met by propositional knowledge coupled with dispositions. The dispositions are epistemically non-trivial, but only in determining the ways.

In (1), where two people know the same way to ϕ in the practical mode of presentation, but one performs better or worse, it *must* be a difference in abilities (or physical attributes) that accounts for the gradation in their performances. The ways are the same, and so propositional knowledge (as ways are generally characterized) is the same. Under this characterization, ways are more akin to instructions; they are the kinds of information about abilities and actions that can be expressed propositionally. For (1) to get off the ground, Stanley & Pavese need only appeal to the practical mode of presentation while degrading abilities as trivial and epistemically unimportant. In what follows, I show how abilities and attributes are non-trivial as regards the gradability of knowing-how, and thusly, how (1) fails to be a useful solution to the problem of gradability if intellectualists want to continue to characterize themselves as intellectualists. Simultaneously, accepting pluralism on this accord makes their explicit claims untenable, as abilities and attributes are necessarily non-trivial if they afford any momentum to adequately responding to this aspect of the challenge posed by gradability.

Consider another musical example: When a new guitar student—call him our Novice—progresses through the ranks of musicianship, it would be egregious to suggest that they sit down, study the propositional content codified in the sheet music until they know it perfectly, visualize the fretboard in their mind, learn every propositionally encoded phrase perfectly, and compose a way to conduct themselves that captures all of this information before ever picking up a guitar. Then, instruct them to pick up a guitar and through elementary, epistemically invaluable physical manipulations perform that piece perfectly. The mechanism required to translate the propositional content takes time to develop.

Imagine a guitar virtuoso's abilities and what it would mean to ascribe to Jimi Hendrix that, 'Jimi Hendrix knows how to play guitar.' Say our Novice, though, has been playing for some time. He has learned a way to play the Jimi Hendrix song *Little Wing* by studying all of the propositional content available and watched hours of Hendrix playing the song, and so knows a way to play *Little Wing* that contains all of the explicitly representable propositional content that could possibly account for w_H . W_H is 'the way that Jimi Hendrix performs *Little Wing*.' If, on Stanley & Pavese's view, gradability is accounted for by two different ways, and one way being better, then presumably Jimi Hendrix and our Novice—both of which know that w_H is a way to play *Little Wing*—and believe that way in the practical mode of presentation, then they are incomparable. They are both equally skilled. This cannot be true. For any Hendrix song, there is a highly complex learning curve to be able to perform not the whole piece, but each phrase. He is naturally separated from his peers by the size of his hands, and practically by the strength and dexterity of his fingers, his long-term concentration, his robust musical endurance, and so on.

Most players cannot play Hendrix according to w_H simply because their hands are not big enough nor their thumbs strong enough to use their thumbs on the bass note of the chord.

This means that inherent in w_H —the way that should unmistakably be considered to be the best way to play guitar à la Hendrix—is a set of non-trivial abilities that although codifiable in some non-trivial sense in the form of sheet music cannot be translated by stupidly simple elementary physical manipulations as described by Pavese. Furthermore, there are some physical pre-conditions—like long thumbs and guitar necks that aren't too wide—for an agent to be able to play w_H at all, much less well. Very few players have thumbs which, even if long enough or strong enough, can find the comfortable position such that the note can in actuality be played. Once someone develops the thumb position and strength—itsself an unbelievably difficult, non-trivial technique—they often find that the rest of their fingers refuse to follow suit, acting as an alien entity and resisting being used as fingers at all. In attempting to meet the challenge of gradability by appealing to (1), it is apparent that abilities and attributes cannot be epistemically trivial; knowing-how and failing to know-how turns on whether or not one has the abilities or attributes to execute the way, and so it is not the way that accounts for gradability of know-how, but the performance.

According to Stanley & Pavese's explicit claims, comparing two versions of w_H that are both believed in the practical mode of presentation is not possible, and so they cannot meet the explanatory demands of (1). Neither actor can be *better* or *worse* by relying solely on propositional knowledge—that as w_H is explicitly believed by both to be a way to ϕ and both actors exhibit equal ability by definition. As I have shown, w_H and reliable performances of it are not epistemically trivial in any way, shape, or form. If w_H is supposed to be an answer to the question, 'what's the best way to play *Little Wing* like Jimi Hendrix?', then the propositional answers provided in the response, ' w_H is the best way to play like Jimi Hendrix' cannot be satisfactory because w_H inherently relies on natural and epistemically non-trivial abilities that are cultivated over time and are relativized according to resources (like thumb length). Even after one learns w_H 's structural composition and how to get their hands in the right place without floundering, watching Hendrix actually perform according to w_H amazes our Novice because of Hendrix's execution of his performance.

Again, what we really see is that attributions of belief absent abilities don't actually amount to know-how for purist intellectualists, no matter often they say so, but now the explicit intellectualist position is further decimated by the fact that even if two persons knew the way w to ϕ in the practical mode of presentation, their performances are obviously gradable, and so Ryle's challenge has not been met. There is no way out of this problem for purist intellectualist theorizing; in effect, it's always the differences in abilities—and on Stanley & Pavese's view, whether or not someone has them at all—that are the basis for ascriptions of know-how generally, and the differences in actual abilities that are specifically (and explicitly, on the intellectualist view) required for gradability to be introduced. Their reliance on (1), then, puts them firmly in the pluralist camp: know-how is not know-how absent abilities and attributes.

If they cannot meet the challenge presented by means of (1)—that all gradation requires abilities and attributes, but those abilities and attributes are trivial in ascriptions of knowing-how—then then must look next to (2): No two actors can know the same way to ϕ . All of the

propositional knowledge that is usually characterized as a way to ϕ that could be an answer to an embedded question, ‘How should one ϕ ?’ is only a part of the equation. Two different persons with exactly the same propositional knowledge by default know two *different* ways to ϕ . Our Novice, then, knows w_h —all of the propositional knowledge contained in w_H coupled with his dispositions to perform—whereas Hendrix knows w_H . Both of them know how to play *Little Wing*, but given Hendrix’s abilities and attributes, he knows how to play it *better*. The Novice can never come to learn w_H , no matter how hard he tries. His hands are just too small.

The difference between our Novice and Hendrix’s knowledge of how to play *Little Wing*—given that they are both playing in a practical mode of presentation—has nothing to do with their knowing two different propositions that act as answers to the embedded question ‘How does one play *Little Wing*?’ but that they *play Little Wing differently*. Their explicit response as to how an intellectualist theory deals with gradability is strictly inadequate. It is the level of ability—and thus, a gradable difference in know-how—that differentiates the two players. Moreover, abilities such as ‘playing Little Wing’ are incredibly complex, the intellectualist ‘ways’ of which would themselves be even more complex (if they could be propositionalized at all). What the intellectualist position has failed to make explicit about our Novice is that his only chance to go from knowing w_h to w_H would be because of an incredible amount of specified, non-elementary motor practice being combined with his actual physical resources and acumen such as hand strength and dexterity. If he lacks those physical resources and acumen, he can *never* come to learn how to play *Little Wing* according to w_H . Again, they are pluralists; there is no epistemically evaluable ascription of know-how sans abilities. Stanley & Pavese’s response that the Novice knows w_h , whereas Hendrix knows w_H is not an adequate reply to the problem of gradability as it is normally understood, nor is it a response to my explicit formulation of the problem wherein two actors know the exact same way w but differ gradably in knowing-how. As I have shown, they would actually know two *different* ways to ϕ , the difference of which is based solely on abilities and attributes, *not* propositional knowledge.

Perhaps they have a third response which, although they must sacrifice their own characterization and general response to gradability, works out better for their overall theoretical framework: All gradation is contextual in nature. Epistemically elementary abilities, motor skills, physical acumen, and propositional knowledge are all built into w which acts as an answer to an embedded question. This move would be an attempt to make sense of the intellectualist way w as an indexical that includes the abilities, the propositional knowledge, **and** the knower. So, each knower could both know the same propositional knowledge that relevant to the situation, differ in abilities, know the same way w to ϕ , and thusly meet all of the intellectualist conditions for their explicit response to Ryle’s challenge. Once we relativize the propositions to the context of the ability, though, w itself no longer becomes a *better way* to ϕ . If you try to differentiate the ways as indexicals, it no longer makes sense to introduce gradation because there is nothing to compare. This is because w_h and w_H no longer look like answers to the same embedded question, ‘How could one play *Little Wing*?’; the questions become differentiated themselves for every individual, and it changes for each individual across time.

The problem is, on this response, for each way w , there is a different embedded question which arises. w_h can now be an answer to, ‘How should our Novice play *Little Wing*?’ and w_H is now an answer to, ‘How should Jimi Hendrix play *Little Wing*?’ The contextual elements

themselves become the means for gradability, not the propositions, when they are removed from the context in which they are framed. The original (intellectualist) case for gradability was made by asking, ‘Who plays *Little Wing* better?’ and *not* ‘Which way is a better way to play *Little Wing*?’ The latter is the original intellectualist translation which was an attempt to make sense of epistemically evaluable ascriptions of know-how as being reducible to know-that.

Although this final attempt is superior to the other two, what I have shown is that once abilities are built into the propositions as indexicals, the propositions no longer answer the original embedded question proposed by intellectualists, and so we have no strong reason to accept the characterization of ways as answers to embedded questions seriously—thus reducing know-how to know-that—given the immense challenges posed by the original problem of gradability. In effect, Stanley & Pavese’s w presupposes individuals and their abilities, attributes, and knowledge at a certain time. The result is that w_H —unequivocally the *best* way to play *Little Wing*—becomes a *worse* way to play *for the Novice*. This is a real problem for Stanley & Pavese’s view; there is nothing about the belief in some proposition that the Novice holds about his knowing how to play *Little Wing* that contributes to his playing *Little Wing* well, and in fact, on their best response to the problems posed by Ryle’s argument from gradability, it can be the case that his propositional knowledge of the absolute best way to ϕ can actually harm his gradable claim to knowing-how. If our Novice only knows w_H —the best way for Hendrix to play the tune—and he fails to meet the conditions for ability and physical acumen, he simply fails to have know-how on their view.

What our Novice lacks on this indexical designation of w is the dispositional characteristics necessary to accomplish the performance. Moreover, if he attempted to play *Little Wing* according to w_H , his performance would be *worse* than if he played it according to w_h , which has accounted for the differentiation in his abilities, attributes, and physical acumen. Indexed to the Novice, w_h is the best way to play *Little Wing*. Furthermore, it answers the embedded question ‘How should our Novice play *Little Wing*?’ (albeit, in virtue of his dispositional capacities, abilities, and attributes) **and** it explains answering of the question ‘Who plays *Little Wing* better?’—Hendrix, of course—when we compare two indexed ways where one is defined as the gold standard. What is of key importance here is *why* the indexed approach works. It is not a function of the characterization of the index as an answer to an embedded question (even if it happens to be), but a function of the fact that the gold standard in this context is defined as ‘the way that Hendrix plays *Little Wing*.’ Once a gold standard, or task-specification, is introduced, epistemically evaluable ascriptions of know-how indexed to the performance according to that standard are relatively easy to accomplish. All they require is the task-specification, the abilities, and the attributes present in order for the actor to perform the task. On Stanley & Pavese’s account, propositional knowledge-that may as well be inert as regard epistemically evaluable ascriptions of knowing-how, even if they contribute to the performance.

To this point I have argued that intellectualists cannot hold the purist view that they argue for in virtue of their epistemically evaluable ascriptions of know-how requiring the presence of epistemically non-trivial abilities. If the difference between knowing-how and not knowing-how is believing in the practical mode of presentation, and the difference between non-practical and practical modes is abilities, then abilities are fundamental to epistemically evaluable ascriptions

of know-how on the intellectualist account. This nudges them into the realm of pluralism. If pushed to pluralism, intellectualists must hold, at the very least, a kind of *coupled symmetry pluralism* wherein both beliefs **and** abilities are required to be present in order to remain closer to their explicitly claimed views. Pavese is right to suggest that the gradability of know-how is a death knell for the intellectualist legend, but not for the reasons she thinks. It is not the gradability itself that necessarily cuts intellectualism at the knees, but, when properly scrutinized, it is the intellectualist response to the problem of the gradability of know-how that forces us to look at propositions themselves and evaluate their role in intellectualist theorizing.

Under scrutiny, as I have shown, a proposition's assumed role is *never* played in isolation, and always comes along with an ability in tow when attributions of know-how are made. As previously laid out, the gradable comparison of two performances is supposedly explained by an appeal to two ways, w_1 and w_2 and one of the ways is a better answer to the embedded question, 'How could one ϕ ?' Furthermore, on Stanley & Pavese's view, there is the concealed notion wherein w_1 and w_2 must both be believed in the practical mode of presentation to be compared at all. As I argued, this leads to a major instance of gradability that the intellectualist legend cannot explain wherein there is an appeal to one way, w_ϕ , known by two different people, both of whom believe that way in a practical mode of presentation, but one person holds the ability to a better degree.

When we appeal to one way, w_ϕ , known by two different people, both in the practical mode of presentation, Stanley & Pavese are cornered into arguing that these performances are not gradable. As I have thoroughly argued, this is absurd. Two performances by two individuals according to exactly the same explicitly represented content, such as Jimi Hendrix and our Novice both playing *Little Wing*, are epistemically evaluable as *better* or *worse* with no issue. Moreover, these are often the conditions under which epistemically evaluable performances tend to be important. In this case, we need only appeal to the performance, which is smuggled into the intellectualist view along with propositional knowledge, forcing a kind of *coupled symmetry pluralism*.

In considering the failure of Stanley and Pavese to respond to this problem in a purist intellectualist fashion, I argued that they have consistently conceded that in order to forge epistemically evaluable ascriptions of know-how we must appeal to abilities. The difference between $Bill_p$ and $Bill_{np}$ is simply that $Bill_p$ can actually perform the action, whereas $Bill_{np}$ cannot. Once this appeal to ability in know-how has been conceded by the intellectualist, they find themselves plugging the holes of a dam with their fingers only to watch another leak spring just out of reach. As I have shown, multiple leaks are directly attached to the problem Ryle presents in arguing for the gradability of knowledge-how.

Given the necessity of abilities for know-how on Stanley & Pavese's account coupled with the pivotal contribution of abilities to the explanation and evaluation of know-how, it is clear that they are explicitly condoning a kind of *coupled symmetry pluralism*, wherein there is a requirement for the presence of both beliefs **and** abilities in all instances of know-how. One wonders, though, whether Stanley & Pavese actually have good reason to adopt *coupled symmetry pluralism* over *ability asymmetry pluralism*. *Coupled symmetry pluralism* about know-how is characterized by a necessity to include both propositional knowledge and ability

knowledge in ascriptions of knowing-how. Due to the necessity of the practical mode of presentation, propositions themselves don't actually provide an explanation of know-how because propositions themselves are not actions, nor are they consistently causally efficacious in every reliable performance. It is through the camouflage of the practical mode of presentation smuggling in the abilities or dispositions to potentially utilize the propositional knowledge that an answer to the embedded question, 'How can, or how should one ϕ ?' even seems to be a remotely plausible solution to the problem.

As a result, on Stanley & Pavese's explicit view, at least part of the work is *always* done by abilities. The question left to post to Stanley & Pavese (and intellectualists at large) is: Are propositions necessary at all? Do Stanley & Pavese really give us a good reason to hold that they are *coupled symmetry* theorists as opposed to *ability symmetry* theorists? Can they successfully argue that beliefs **and** abilities are always required to be present in epistemically evaluable ascriptions of know-how? Or could it be the case that Ryle is correct in arguing that some epistemically evaluable ascriptions of know-how require no antecedent belief in any propositions at all? It is quite clear that, on the so-called intellectualist view, we *always* need abilities; all examples of gradability and their attempts to explain it away thoroughly illustrate this point. There is no getting away from focusing on abilities as they are central to every aspect of their theorizing. If it is the case that we do not *always* need beliefs to instantiate know-how—i.e., there is one single case of know-how that is instantiated sans belief—then *coupled symmetry* fails to be explanatorily powerful. On a clear re-examination of their arguments, it seems that there might be no way for self-proclaimed intellectualists can give good, non-question begging reasons for supposing that epistemically evaluable attributions of know-how *always* need beliefs (or ever *solely* need beliefs), but this is a consideration for a much larger project.

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