Amia Srinivasan's "Normativity without Cartesian Privilege"
Ripley Stroud

1. The Case for Anti-Cartesianism (2-6)

there has been increasing evidence in support of the conclusion of Anti-Cartesianism: there are no conditions that are transparent for creatures like us. (2)
➡ empirical psychology data; Williamson on anti-luminosity (liminal cases); introspection (self-knowledge is fuzzy).

Q1: why think empirical psychology ought to make a difference to our epistemology? why presume we're not doing ideal theory?

Q2: one way to push back on the support for Anti-Cartesianism is to say that our mental states are partially constituted by our access to them. e.g., the mental state <I am mad, and I know that I'm mad> is different than <I am mad, but I do not know that I'm mad>. lacking self-knowledge of the state you're in itself changes the nature of the state you're in.

2. Anti-Cartesianism's Implications for Normativity (6-11)

epistemic internalists/ethical subjectivists hold norms which turn on certain facts being apparent to the agent in question (e.g., evidence). contrast with epistemic externalists/ethical objectivists, who hold norms that turn on certain facts being true of the world.

Anti-Cartesianism throws a wrench in this picture.
➡ without transparency, we will not always be in a position to know what the relevant norms demand of us. the 'triggering condition' will be non-transparent.

a norm is Lucid just in case a competent agent who knows the norm is in a position to know of every basic action available to her whether it would be in conformity with the norm. (9)

thus Anti-Cartesianism entails
➡ Anti-Lucidity: there are no lucid norms. (10)

Q3: at several points throughout the paper I was uncertain how strong Srinivasan's formulations were supposed to be. as formulated above, Anti-Cartesianism and Anti-Lucidity seem very strong: there are no conditions that are transparent, and there are no norms which are lucid. but at several points it sounds like she's far more committed to saying there are no conditions which are *always* transparent, and no norms which are *always* lucid. but this seems far less radical a view, and thus less of a problem for internalists.

3. Concerns from Action-Guidance (11-16)

why fret about Anti-Lucidity? well, action-guidance is taken to be a central desideratum for any adequate normative theory: what good is a norm if you can't 'do' anything with it?

Srinivasan suggests a conception of action-guidance that doesn't hinge on lucidity:
➡ Passover norm; merely <u>contextual</u> lucidity is *sufficient* for action-guidance and followability
➡ Ferrari norm; contextual lucidity is not *necessary* for action-guidance and followability.

this presents the internalist with a dilemma:
➡ if contextual lucidity is *not* required for action-guidance, then action-guidance is not a reason to go internalist.
➡ but if contextual lucidity *is* required for action-guidance, then internalism is just as good as externalism.

Q4: surely there is some point where merely contextual lucidity fails to be action-guiding (right?). if *no one* RSVPs to my Seder and I thus have no sense of how many to set the table for, I will be unable to set the table in any meaningful way (this is why I would be justified in complaining that no one RSVP'd!)

upshot of Q4: if the externalist is not concerned about their norms being action-guiding, and they think much of the time we will merely be excused for not following, what kind of norms are they, really? cf. Knowledge Norm of Assertion.

4. Problems for the Alignment View (17-24)

why (still) fret about ANTI-LUCIDITY? well, there's reason to want an 'intimacy' between the deontic and the hypological facts.

➡ DEONTIC FACTS: the facts about what agents are obligated or permitted to do.

➡ HYPOLOGICAL FACTS: the facts about whether agents are blameworthy for their actions.

> so, one is blameworthy *iff* they've failed in their obligations; one cannot be blameworthy if they have done what is permissible.
>> so epistemic internalism/ethical subjectivism must be true, otherwise you could fail in your obligations blamelessly (because you didn't know any better).

ALIGNMENT VIEW: if a competent agent knows a norm and yet violates it, then she is *ipso facto* blameworthy.
> "the only possible excuses for normative violation are either incapacity or ignorance of the norms." (18)

but! per ANTI-CARTESIANISM, we get
> PERVASIVE PERFORMANCE LUCK: there are no norms such that an agent's performance vis-à-vis that norm is immune from violation through bad performance luck. (22)

and in turn, we get
> BLAMELESS VIOLABILITY: any norm can be blamelessly violated by a competent agent who knows the norm. (23)

Q5: shouldn't it be "if a competent agent knows a norm and yet *intentionally* violates it, then she is *ipso facto* blameworthy"?
> lightswitch murder cases, eg: I know that killing is wrong, if I violate this norm by flicking a lightswitch that (unbeknownst to me) immediately kills someone in the basement, I am plausibly not blameworthy because there was no intention.

Q6: wouldn't this revision also circumvent the problem of ANTI-CARTESIANISM's incompatibility with the ALIGNMENT VIEW, because it only picks out cases where the norm-violation is already apparent to us?

5. Weakening the Demands (24-25)

Srinivasan has suggested that internalist normativity is at odds with ANTI-CARTESIANISM. and insofar as there are strong arguments for ANTI-CARTESTIANISM, we should throw out internalist normativity. so, there are "no norms that are always action-guiding or that are never blamelessly violable."

the internalist might say: okay, try a weaker version of the view. it's not that the norms must *always* be action-guiding; they must just be *sufficiently* action-guiding.

two responses from Srinivasan:
1. weakening the view in this way nullifies the decisive advantage it has over externalist/objectivist theories.
2. empirical psychological data shows that it's not merely that we don't have flawless access to our internal states; rather, we are significantly worse at knowing our internal states than we are at knowing the external world. so it's hard to think the norm could be even sufficient.

Q7: Q1, repeated; Q2, repeated.

Q8: I'm not sure that it would be such a dialectical shift to weaken the view. can externalist norms say *anything* about substantial action-guidance? it would still be a decisive advantage if the internalist norms could be sufficiently action-guiding.

6. Oedipus Rex (25-27)

it is a misunderstanding to ascribe responsibility to Oedipus for his tragedy.
> "The tragedy of Oedipus, then, is not of a great man brought down by moral weakness. It is rather of a great man brought down (to put it with thundering banality) by normative non-lucidity." (26)

Q9: I appreciate the (illuminating!) analogy a great deal, but I wonder if it's not a bit of a stretch. why can't we say it is a moral weakness *and* normative non-lucidity?

Q10: general concern about externalism — how do we preserve normal and effective hypological practices if our norms seem so brittle and easily transgressed?