1. **Fact Constructivism & Fact Relativism**

1.1. **Reminder: fact constructivism**
- Whether or not something is a fact depends on how we describe it.

1.2. **Fact relativism defined**
- **Non-absolutism**: There are no absolute facts of the form $p$.
- **Relationism**: If our factual judgments are to have any prospect of being true, we must not construe utterances of the form “$p$” as expressing the claim $p$. Rather, utterances of “$p$” express the claim: According to the theory, $T$, that we accept, $p$.
- **Pluralism**: There are many alternative theories for describing the world, but not facts by virtue of which one is more faithful to the way things are in and of themselves than any of the others.

2. **Problem of Causation**

2.1. **The constructivist’s problem...**
1. If fact-constructivism is true, then our description of dinosaurs caused the fact that dinosaurs exist.
2. Dinosaurs existed 200 million years ago.
3. Our description of dinosaurs is 400 years old.
4. $\therefore$ If fact-constructivism is true, then a 400-year-old description caused a 200-million-year-old fact. (From 1-3)
5. A 400-year-old description cannot cause a 200-million-year-old fact
6. $\therefore$ Fact constructivism is not true (From 4,5)

2.2. **...the relativist’s solution**
1. If fact-relativism is true, then, according to the paleontological theory that we accept, dinosaurs existed 200 million years ago, and were not caused by our description of dinosaurs.
2. If fact-relativism is true, then, according to the intellectual historical theory that we accept, our description of dinosaurs is 400 years old, and did not cause dinosaurs to exist.
3. $\therefore$ If fact-relativism is true, then a 400-year-old description did not cause a 200 million year old fact. (From 1, 2)

3. **Problem of Conceptual Competence**

3.1. **The constructivist’s problem...**
1. If the concept electron is coherent, then electrons could only exist independently of our descriptions of them.
2. If electrons could only exist independently of our descriptions of them, then fact constructivism is not true.
3. **The concept electron is coherent.**
4. $\therefore$ Fact constructivism is not true. (From 1-3)

3.2. **...the relativist’s solution**
1. If the concept electron is coherent and fact relativism is true, then, according to the theory of electrons that we accept, electrons could only exist independently of our descriptions of them.
2. **The concept electron is coherent.**
3. $\therefore$ If fact relativism is true, then, according to the theory of electrons that we accept, electrons could only exist independently of our descriptions of them. (From 1,2)

4. **Problem of Disagreement**

4.1. **The constructivist’s problem...**
1. It’s possible that we have constructed the fact that P at the same time that another society has constructed the fact that not-P.
2. If fact constructivism is true, then all facts are socially constructed.
3. $\therefore$ If fact constructivism is true, then it’s possible that P and not-P. (From 1,2)
4. **It is impossible that P and not-P.**
5. $\therefore$ Fact constructivism is not true. (From 3,4)
4.2. **...the relativist’s solution**

1. If fact-relativism is true, then, for us, \( p \) means: *According to the theory, \( T_1 \), that we accept, \( p \).*
2. If fact-relativism is true, then, for others, not-\( p \) means: *According to the theory, \( T_2 \), that they accept, not-\( p \).*
3. For some \( p \), it’s possible that we accept \( p \) and another community accepts not-\( p \).
4. ∴ If fact-relativism is true, then it’s possible that
   a. *According to the theory, \( T_1 \), that we accept, \( p \);* and
   b. *According to the theory, \( T_2 \), that they accept, not-\( p \).* (From 1-3)

5. **Boghossian vs. Fact Relativism**

5.1. **Local & global relativisms**
- Local relativism targets a specific domain of discourse, such as morality, aesthetics, or etiquette.
- Global relativism targets all domains of discourse, i.e. not only morality, aesthetics, and etiquette, but also science, mathematics, etc.

5.2. **Traditional objection to relativism**

T1. Either it is an absolute fact that there are no absolute facts or it is not.
T2. If it is an absolute fact that there are no absolute facts, then there is an absolute fact.
T3. This is inconsistent.
T4. If it’s not an absolute fact that there are no absolute facts, then only fact relativists have reason to believe in fact relativism.
T5. ∴ Either fact relativism is inconsistent, or only fact relativists have reason to believe in fact relativism. (From T1-T4)

5.3. **Rebuttal to traditional objection**

T4*. If it’s not an absolute fact that there are no absolute facts, then only fact relativists have EPISTEMIC reasons to believe in fact relativism.
P. However, others may have PRAGMATIC reasons to believe in fact relativism.
C. ∴ Even non-relativists may have (pragmatic) reasons to believe fact-relativism. (From T4*, P)

5.4. **Boghossian’s objection: big picture**

B1. Fact relativism holds that there are no absolute facts, and that any statement of \( p \) as a fact is shorthand for *according to the theory we accept, \( p \).*
   a. But are there absolute facts of the form, *according to the theory that we accept, \( p \)?*
B2. If there are absolute facts of this kind, then fact relativists face three big problems:
   a. There are absolute facts (about the theories that we believe), so global relativism is false (self-defeat);
   b. Counter-intuitively, there are not absolute facts about mountains, atoms, etc. but there are absolute facts about people’s beliefs (idealism); *which in turn implies…*
   c. Global relativism is unmotivated. Relativists’ claim was not that facts about the physical world are on shakier ground than facts about beliefs. Rather, it was that the very concept of an absolute fact (whether about the physical or the mental) is indefensible (motivation).
B3. If there are not absolute facts of this kind, then fact relativists face one big problem:
   a. According to another theory, \( T^* \), that we accept, there is a theory \( T \) that we accept, and according to \( T, p \);
   b. According to a third theory, \( T^{**} \), that we accept, there is a theory \( T^* \) that we accept, and according to \( T^*, p \); there is a theory \( T \) that we accept, and according to \( T, p \); etc.
   c. But we do not accept an infinite number of theories.
   d. ∴ There must be some absolute facts. (From a-c)
B4. ∴ Fact relativists face big problems. (From B1-B3)

* For a reply to this objection, see PowerPoint.