Anonymous Referee Report

Evidence at the Wrong Grain: Truth, Comprehension, and Restricted Reductio
Submission to Mind

The manuscript develops an original and potentially important objection to Incurvati and Schlöder's treatment of the Liar and to Schlöder's analogous treatment of Russell's paradox. The objection is admirably simple. Cases of blind endorsement show that unrestricted truth and extension rules are not uniformly evidence-preserving. They do not show that transparent applications of those rules fail to preserve evidence. Since strong reductio is governed by the evidential status assigned to rules, separating transparent from opaque applications can change strong-rejection consequences without changing the underlying commitment transitions. The author argues that an epistemically motivated proof restriction should be invariant under such refinements.

This is a sharp criticism, not a routine objection to non-transparent truth. It identifies a genuine pressure point in the inferentialist diagnosis: the examples offered as independent epistemic motivation appear to support less than the proof-theoretic restriction requires. The extension to comprehension shows that the problem is systematic rather than an artefact of quotation. The manuscript is exceptionally clear, economical, and well written. It introduces the multilateral apparatus efficiently, and a generalist reader can understand what is at stake without prior commitment to inferential expressivism.

The paper is also compelling to read. The contrast between blind and transparent endorsement makes the problem interesting immediately. The main contribution remains visible through the technical material, and the discussion of the grounded principle below gives the restriction a recognizable cost beyond the Liar itself. The conclusion succeeds in presenting the issue as one about the epistemic individuation of inference rules, rather than merely one more local dispute about semantic paradox.

$$\neg(S \wedge T[\neg S])$$

I nevertheless think that the central argument requires substantive further work before it meets Mind's standard.

Potentially fatal problem

1. The manuscript has not yet established that its proposed refinement preserves the relevant 'epistemic profile.'

The crucial step occurs across §§4–5. The author argues that understanding A, recognizing its canonical quotation, and having both sides displayed suffice to certify pure disquotation as evidence-preserving. But these conditions remove the defects exhibited by the guru and whiteboard cases; they do not yet establish evidence preservation. Absence of the known impediment is not positive evidence that the inferential performance transforms grounds in the manner required by strong reductio.

This matters especially in the Liar case. The target can concede that ordinary instances such as the inference from '"Snow is white" is true' to 'Snow is white' transmit evidence while denying that there is a single evidence-preserving generic inference encompassing both these cases and the Liar applications. On an agentive conception, an inference's epistemic character may depend on such matters as whether the premise can be coherently supplied with grounds, whether the

transformation of grounds is well-founded, or whether grasp of the sentence's inferential role is itself coherent. The manuscript presently assumes that display, canonical quotation, and linguistic competence exhaust the relevant epistemic differences.

There is also a danger of circularity in the formulation of R_τ on p. 7: one proposed side condition is that the subject 'can perform the transition as a means of acquiring evidence.' That is perilously close to building evidence preservation into the definition of the certified subrule. If arbitrary subsets may be certified by attaching that condition, the Refinement Result follows trivially but places no pressure on the target theory.

The smallest necessary correction is not to retreat from the grain objection. The author should either:

- give a non-circular account of transparent inferential performance and argue that the Liar applications satisfy it; or
- formulate the principal conclusion explicitly as an underdetermination result: opacity defeats uniform evidence preservation but supplies no reason for choosing the paradox-blocking grain, so the target owes an additional account of rule individuation or evidence transmission.

The manuscript often states this latter and, in my view, defensible conclusion. But it sometimes claims the stronger result that transparent disquotation actually is evidence-preserving and that the refined presentation therefore preserves the epistemic profile of every application. The argument given does not yet establish that stronger claim. If the paper cannot vindicate either version, the objection reduces to the unsurprising observation that a different classification of rules produces a different logic.

Important but repairable problems

2. The Evidential-Grain Requirement needs a more substantive defence against an intensional conception of inference rules.

The merged-rule example is effective against a system that literally inspects arbitrary rule names. But the intended theory need not regard displayed rules as extensional sets of premise–conclusion pairs. It can regard a generic inference as an inferential act or method, individuated partly by its role in the practice. On that view, merging or splitting schemata may change the represented method even when it preserves local commitment transitions.

The manuscript is correct that adding R_τ adds no primitive commitment transition. But that does not make the addition conservative in the dimension relevant to the dispute: it adds a new evidential authorization and hence new higher-order inferential consequences. The author acknowledges this, but then repeatedly describes the refinement as 'harmless' or merely presentational. That characterization is precisely what the target will deny.

The paper therefore needs to explain why the target's own conception of generic inference must recognize the transparent restriction as the same epistemic method—or why evidence-sensitive proof theory should be invariant even across changes in method-individuation. The current footnote on maximal generality does not carry enough weight, given that this is the philosophical centre of the article. More engagement with the literature on the individuation, generality, and identity of proof-theoretic rules would strengthen the argument considerably.

3. The claimed loss of grounded instances of the Heck principle requires a non-derivability result.

The manuscript shows that the natural reductio proof of the displayed principle is prohibited, and it persuasively explains why the particular ‘move truth outside’ technique described by Incurvati and Schlöder does not reconstruct that proof. It then concludes that the calculus ‘withholds’ ordinary grounded instances of the principle.

$$\neg(S \wedge T[\neg S])$$

That conclusion does not follow merely from the failure of those two derivational routes. Another proof may exist. This is especially important because the target calculus is advertised as validating all substitution instances of classical propositional laws while restricting metarules, and its relationship to supervaluational consequence makes unexpected alternative derivations quite possible. The grounded example is the manuscript’s strongest demonstration that the grain restriction has an ordinary philosophical cost. It should therefore be supported by a formal non-derivability argument or an appropriate countermodel. Otherwise the claim should be restricted to the defensible conclusion that the system blocks the natural grounds-transforming proof. This is a genuine overreach because the argument establishes the latter, not the former.

4. The dialectical conclusion should more precisely match the target’s stated ambitions.

The manuscript sometimes writes as though the target theory claims that opacity alone explains the failure of pure disquotation in the Liar. The target presentation is more complicated. Incurvati and Schlöder explicitly say both that paradoxical considerations favour classifying the truth rules as non-evidence-preserving and that there are independent reasons for denying uniform evidence preservation; they also explicitly say that the semantic paradoxes show failure even under pure disquotation. Schlöder likewise presents the Russell diagnosis as motivated by both the paradox and independent opacity cases.

This does not defeat the manuscript’s best objection. The independent considerations still appear not to determine the grain at which the proof restriction is imposed. But the conclusion should be stated exactly: the paper challenges the independent epistemic rationale for the paradox-blocking boundary and therefore the claim that this boundary constitutes a distinctively explanatory or independently motivated diagnosis. It does not show that the formal policy is incoherent, nor that paradox cannot provide a reason for it. The manuscript usually recognizes this distinction, but several formulations in the abstract, introduction, and conclusion suggest a stronger dialectical victory.

Optional improvements

The ‘Refinement Result’ is formally elementary; its importance lies entirely in the proposed invariance norm. Calling it a result is harmless, but the paper should not make its originality depend on the set-theoretic observation itself.

The comprehension section earns its space by showing recurrence of the problem, although it contributes less philosophically than the truth case. I would retain it. The overall structure is excellent and does not require substantial reorganization.

Assessment by criterion

Originality: High. The rule-grain objection is distinctive and, so far as I can tell, not already explicit in the cited discussion.

Philosophical significance: Potentially high. It challenges a prominent recent diagnosis of two central paradoxes and raises a general methodological constraint on evidence-sensitive proof theory.

Argumentative strength: Promising but incomplete at the decisive point. The negative claim about what opacity establishes is strong; the positive certification of transparent applications and the invariance principle require further defence.

Accessibility: Excellent. The manuscript is unusually successful at making specialist machinery intelligible to a philosophical logician who is not antecedently invested in this framework.

Engagement with the literature: Good on the immediate target and the paradox literature, but too light on the literature governing rule individuation and generality, which has become central to the argument.

Writing and presentation: Excellent. The prose is controlled, direct, and engaging; the technical machinery is proportionate to the payoff.

Verdict: Revise and Resubmit

REVISION AND RESUBMISSION RECOMMENDED.

The paper has a genuinely original objection, excellent exposition, and a plausible route to a contribution suitable for Mind. What most determines the verdict is that its central invariance claim presently assumes, rather than establishes, that transparent Liar and Russell applications retain the same epistemic profile as ordinary transparent applications. A satisfactory account of that point—or a disciplined reformulation as an explanatory-underdetermination argument—together with support for the claimed grounded non-derivability, would make the manuscript a serious candidate for publication.