**Modalism and Theoretical Virtues:**

**Toward an Epistemology of Modality**

**Otávio Bueno**

Department of Philosophy

University of Miami

Coral Gables, FL 33124-4670, USA

e-mail: [otaviobueno@me.com](mailto:otaviobueno@me.com)

**Scott A. Shalkowski**

Department of Philosophy

University of Leeds

Leeds LS2 9JT, UK

e-mail: [s.shalkowski@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:s.shalkowski@leeds.ac.uk)

**Abstract**

Modalism is the philosophical view according to which modality is primitive. Due to W.V.O. Quine’s quasi-eliminativist view and David Lewis’s influential reductive account of modality in non-modal terms, modalism may be thought of as a clear non-starter.

This assessment is inadequate. In this paper, rather than providing a full-blown defense of modalism, we examine its implications for modal epistemology, and develop a modalist account of modal knowledge. We start by examining a key argument used by Lewis, the theoretical utility argument, in defense of modal realism—the view according to which there is a plurality of concrete worlds. After resisting this argument, we sketch a strategy to dispense with possible worlds altogether. This paves the way for the development of an account of modal knowledge within a framework of primitive modality.