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AVOIDING THE DOGMATIC COMMITMENTS OF CONTEXTUALISM

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Summary

Epistemological contextualists maintain that the truth-conditions of sentences of the form 'S knows that P' vary according to the context in which they're uttered, where this variation is due to the semantics of 'knows'. Among the linguistic data that have been offered in support of contextualism are several everyday cases. We argue that these cases fail to support contextualism and that they instead support epistemological invariantism—the thesis that the truth-conditions of 'S knows that P' do *not* vary according to the context of their utterance.

According to the thesis of epistemological contextualism, the truth-conditions of sentences of the form 'S knows that P' and 'S does not know that P' vary according to the context in which they are uttered, where this variation is due to the semantics of 'knows'. Among the linguistic data that have been offered in support of epistemological contextualism are cases that are ordinary in the sense that they involve a consideration neither of skeptical hypotheses nor of skeptical arguments. Both Stewart Cohen and Keith DeRose, contextualism's two most prominent proponents, provide such cases. In a recent paper, DeRose goes so far as to claim that such cases provide the best grounds for accepting contextualism (see DeRose *forthcoming*, 1). In what follows, we argue that these cases do not support contextualism. In fact, they point in the direction of epistemological invariantism—the thesis that sentences of the form 'S knows that P' and 'S does not know that P' do *not* vary according to the context in which they are uttered.

1. *The cases*

Let's begin with the cases. Here, first, is DeRose's bank case:

> [O]ne character (myself, as it happens), claims to know that a bank is open on Saturday morning in the "low standards" case. This belief is true, and is based on quite solid grounds: I was at the bank just two weeks ago on a Saturday, and found that it was open until noon on Saturday. Given the practical concerns involved—my wife and I are deciding whether to deposit our paychecks on Friday, or wait until Saturday morning, where no disaster will ensue if we waste a trip to the bank on Saturday only to find it closed—almost any speaker in my situation would claim to know the bank is open on Saturdays. And, supposing "nothing funny" is going on (there has not been a recent rash of banks cutting their Saturday hours in the area, etc.), almost all of us would judge such a claim to know to be true. But in the "high standards" case, disaster, not just disappointment, would ensue if we waited until Saturday only to find we were too late: We have just written a very large and very important check, and will be left in a catastrophically bad situation if the check bounces, as it will if we do not deposit our paychecks before Monday. (And, of course, the bank is not open on Sunday.) Given all this, my wife seems reasonable in not being satisfied with my grounds, and, after reminding me of how much is at stake, in raising, as she does, the possibility that the bank may have changed hours in the last couple of weeks. This possibility seems well worth worrying about, given the high stakes we are dealing with. Here I seem quite reasonable in admitting to her that I "don't know" that the bank is open on Saturdays, and in endeavoring to "make sure." Almost everyone will accept this as a reasonable admission, and it will seem true to almost everyone. (DeRose *forthcoming*, 5–6)[1]

Next is Cohen's airport case:

> Mary and John are at the L.A. airport contemplating taking a certain flight to New York. They want to know whether the flight has a layover in Chicago. They overhear someone ask a passenger Smith if he knows whether the flight stops in Chicago. Smith looks at the flight itinerary he got from the travel agent and responds, "Yes I know—it does stop in Chicago." It turns out that Mary and John have a very important business contact they

1. DeRose notes that he first offered the case in his (1992, 913). For more on the history of these cases, see the next footnote.

have to make at the Chicago airport. Mary says, "How reliable is that itinerary? It could contain a misprint. They could have changed the schedule at the last minute." Mary and John agree that Smith doesn't really *know* that the plane will stop in Chicago. They decide to check with the airline agent." (Cohen 1999, 58)[2]

Each of these cases involves two conversational contexts. In one context, someone utters a sentence of the form 'S knows that P', and we are urged to take this as true. In the other context, however, someone utters a sentence of the form 'S does not know that P', that is, an utterance according to which the same person, S, in just the same circumstances at just the same time *fails* to know just the same proposition, P. And we are urged to take this utterance too as true.

Consider Cohen's case.[3] The first context is one in which Smith says, "Yes I know—it does stop in Chicago." The second is one in which Mary says, "Smith doesn't really know that the plane will stop in Chicago." Both utterances are about Smith's belief that the plane stops in Chicago: Smith says that he knows that the plane stops in Chicago; and Mary says that he doesn't know.

There are three views about the standards that govern knowledge attributions (or attributions of a lack of knowledge) such as these. According to *the high standard view*, one high standard governs both attributions. Smith fails to meet this standard, and so when he says that he knows, he says something false. According to *the low standard view*, one low standard governs both attributions. Smith meets this standard, and so when Mary says that Smith doesn't know, she says something false. According to the third view, *contextualism*, different standards govern the two attributions. The standard that governs Smith's self-attribution is the low standard, and he truly attributes knowledge to himself. However, a higher standard is active in the second context, and Smith fails to meet that standard. Thus, according to contextualism, Mary says something true when she says that Smith fails to know.

Cohen is primarily concerned to show that the low standard view is inadequate. To do this, he focuses on the disagreement between con-

2. Cohen reports in Cohen (1999, 83, fn. 3) that he first presented his case at a 1990 meeting of the APA. He also notes that Dretske (1981) presents similar cases.

3. DeRose points out that there are extra complications with the first case. These complications arise from the fact that the ascriptions are first-person in nature. See DeRose (*forthcoming*, section 5).

textualists and proponents of the low standard view—he focuses, that is, on whether Mary says something true in the second context. Cohen argues that, in that context, the operative epistemic standard is high, not low. He says:

> If we say that contrary to what both Mary and John presuppose, the weaker standard is correct, then we would have to say that their use of the word 'know' is incorrect. But then it is hard to see how Mary and John should describe their situation. Certainly they are being prudent in refusing to rely on the itinerary. They have a very important meeting in Chicago. Yet if Smith knows on the basis of the itinerary that the flight stops in Chicago, what *should* they have said? "Okay, Smith knows that the flight stops in Chicago, but still we need to check further." To my ear, it is hard to make sense of that claim. Moreover, if what is printed in the itinerary is a good enough reason for Smith to know, then it is a good enough reason for John and Mary to know. Thus John and Mary should have said, "Okay, *we* know the plane stops in Chicago, but still, we need to check further." Again it is hard to make sense of such a claim. (Cohen 1999, 58–59)

There are two arguments here. Both employ a claim that Cohen takes to be indisputable, namely, the claim that John and Mary need to check further. The first argument focuses on John and Mary's third-person attribution

(1) "Smith knows that the flight stops in Chicago, but still, we need to check further",

while the second argument focuses on their first-person attribution

(2) "We know that the flight stops in Chicago, but still, we need to check further."

Cohen maintains that it is difficult to make sense either of (1) or of (2). Still, in each case, he takes the second conjunct to be indisputable. The problem, therefore, must lie with the first conjuncts—in the first case, with the claim that *Smith* knows that the flight stops in Chicago; and in the second case, with the claim that *we* (Mary and John) know that the flight stops in Chicago.

Cohen's arguments turn on two claims: that it is difficult to make sense of either (1) or (2); and that the second conjunct of each is true.

We focus on the former claim. Now, either of two reasons might explain why it is difficult to make sense of (1) and (2): each of those conjunctions could be false (i.e., semantically deficient)—in which case, given that their second conjuncts are true, their first conjuncts will be false—or they could simply be pragmatically deficient.

Now, according to the low standard view, both Smith and John and Mary know that the plane stops in Chicago. Thus, proponents of the low standard view may not maintain that (1) and (2) are false (given that they agree with Cohen that John and Mary need to check further). Those who favor the low standard view must therefore maintain that (1) and (2) are pragmatically deficient. If it turns out, however, that (1) and (2) are *not* pragmatically deficient, then we must abandon the low standard view. In the next section, we examine Cohen's argument against diagnosing (1) and (2) as pragmatically deficient.

2. *Cohen's argument against a diagnosis of pragmatic deficiency*

Cohen argues that we should diagnose neither (1) nor (2) as pragmatically deficient. Since his argument involving (1) is identical to the one involving (2), we focus here on (2). Cohen utilizes a simple test in order to determine whether suitable conjunctions are semantically deficient or pragmatically deficient. When faced with an odd-sounding conjunction, p & q, we should consider the conditional $p \supset \sim q$. If this conditional is true, then the conjunction sounds odd because it is false. On the other hand, the conjunction, p & q, is only pragmatically deficient if the conditional, $p \supset \sim q$, is false. To determine whether that conditional is false, we see whether we can cancel the implication from p to $\sim q$. So, for example, there are circumstances in which my saying that Mario is a good soccer player suggests that he is not a great soccer player. In those circumstances, the conjunction *Mario is a good soccer player, and he is a great soccer player* will sound odd. Is this due to a pragmatic deficiency, or to a semantic one? If it is a pragmatic deficiency, then the implication from *Mario is a good soccer player* to *Mario is not a great soccer player* will be cancelable. And it *is* cancelable by saying, for example, "Mario is a good soccer player—in fact, he is a *great* soccer player." It follows that when it sounds odd to say, "Mario is a good soccer player, and he's a great soccer player," it does so because that conjunction is pragmatically, rather than semantically, deficient.

Employing this simple test, then, Cohen maintains that (2) is not pragmatically deficient. Consider the implication from the first conjunct of (2)—*we know that the flight stops in Chicago*—to the negation of its second conjunct—*we need not check further*. We cannot cancel this implication, for, as we have already noted, it sounds odd to say, "We know that the flight stops in Chicago, but we *do* need to check further." Thus, whenever the conjunction *We know that the flight stops in Chicago, but we need to check further* sounds odd, it does so because that conjunction is semantically, rather than pragmatically, deficient. This suggests, therefore, that we ought to abandon the low standard view. For there is no way to maintain, as proponents of the low standard view must, that (1) and (2) are pragmatically deficient.

This argument succeeds, however, only if it is true that *we know that the flight stops in Chicago* semantically entails *we need not check further*. That there is such an entailment is a dogmatic thesis. For if one's knowing that P entails that one should seek no further evidence for P, then a form of dogmatism is true, a dogmatism according to which knowers might need to revise their beliefs in accordance with incoming further evidence, but they are under no obligation to *seek* further evidence. Knowers are therefore permitted to be apathetic dogmatists—they are permitted to be indifferent toward the active pursuit of new evidence.[4]

3. *Epistemic directives and other cases*

Is apathetic dogmatism defensible? To answer this question, we need to take a closer look at claims of the form 'We ought to seek more evidence that P'. We call claims of this and similar forms *epistemic directives*. Epistemic directives are statements that assign a deontic status—e.g., obligatory, permissible, impermissible—to someone's relationship to some body of evidence—e.g., that they seek that evidence, or ignore it, or request it, or demand it. For example, each of the following is an epistemic directive: *It is obligatory that S seek more evidence that P*; *it is obligatory that S ignore evidence that P*; *it is permissible that S seek more evidence that P*; *it is permissible that S ignore evidence*

4. For more on apathetic and other forms of dogmatism, see Murphy (*manuscript*). Harman (1973) credits Kripke with first formulating the basic paradox of dogmatism.

that P; *it is impermissible that S to seek more evidence that P*; and *it is impermissible that S ignore evidence that P*.

Now, to retrace our steps: If, as Cohen argues, 'S knows that P' cannot felicitously be conjoined with 'S ought to seek more evidence that P', then there is a semantic entailment, and not just a pragmatic implicature, from 'S knows that P' to 'It is not the case that S ought to seek more evidence that P'. But by the usual rules of deontic implication, 'It is not the case that S ought to φ' entails 'It is permissible that S refrain from φing'. If this is correct, then Cohen is committed to the claim that 'S knows that P' entails 'It is permissible that S refrain from seeking further evidence that P'. This means that Cohen is committed to dogmatism, the thesis that it is permissible not to seek further evidence that some proposition is true. But such dogmatism, as we will now argue, is mistaken. Given that our arguments are sound, we should reject Cohen's argument against the low standard view, for that argument is based on dogmatism.

Is there, as Cohen alleges, always something infelicitous about claims of the form 'S knows that P, but S ought to acquire more evidence that P'? Consider a case in which I learn by testimony that someone knows something—I read in a trustworthy text, for example, that Einstein knows that $E = mc^2$. Skepticism about testimony aside, I know that Einstein knows that $E = mc^2$. Still, it might be that I ought to acquire more evidence that $E = mc^2$. Perhaps, for example, I will be asked for evidence that $E = mc^2$ on an upcoming physics exam, and the professor will not accept my testimonial evidence that I read in a trustworthy text that $E = mc^2$ is true and that Einstein knows that $E = mc^2$. In light of this, it seems perfectly acceptable to say,

(3) "Einstein knows that $E = mc^2$, but I ought to acquire more evidence that $E = mc^2$."

There is nothing infelicitous about this utterance.

While (3) conjoins a claim that someone else knows something with a claim that *I* ought to acquire more evidence, there are other counterexamples that are not like this. Consider a second case, one that is similar to (2) in that it conjoins two first-person claims. Under the assumption of fallibilism, understood as the view that the smallest degree of evidence sufficient for meeting the evidence condition on knowing that P need not entail that P is true, there is such a thing as inductive knowledge.

Suppose, then, that a scientist has inductive evidence for her belief that P, and that, on the basis of that evidence, knows that P. However, if she acquires further evidence that P, she increases her chances of receiving a research grant. She says

(4) "I know that P, but I ought to acquire more evidence that P."

Here again, there seems to be nothing infelicitous about this utterance.

Even if fallibilism is false, one might nevertheless have good reason to acquire further evidence that P when one knows that P. For example, a mathematician might have a deductive proof that P, a proof on whose basis she knows that P. As is frequently the case, mathematicians seek multiple proofs, and so our mathematician might seek further evidence in the form of additional proofs that P. Suppose moreover that she wishes to have her findings published in a journal that requires multiple proofs. She says,

(5) "I have a proof that P, but I ought to acquire more evidence that P."

Again, her utterance seems perfectly felicitous.

These three cases suggest that the second conjuncts of (1)–(5), each of which is of the form 'S ought to acquire more evidence that P', are elliptical. For in each case it makes sense to ask, *for what end* ought S to acquire further evidence that P? Is it for the sake of winning a research award? Or for the sake of doing well on an exam? The thought here is quite intuitive: When we seek further evidence, we often do so in order to achieve certain goals, some of which are epistemic, and some of which are not.

This certainly applies in John and Mary's situation. They ought to check further in order to increase the probability that they will achieve their important goal of meeting their business contact. Suppose for a moment that John and Mary know, on the basis of Smith's testimony, that the plane stops in Chicago. This knowledge would be inductive rather than deductive. So, whatever justifies their belief fails to entail that their belief is true. This means that John and Mary can acquire more evidence for their belief that the plane stops in Chicago. Putting this in terms of probability—of some sort, at least—we can say that

initially, John and Mary's belief is probable, given their total evidence at that time, to some degree *d*. Yet *d* falls short of a probability of 1, which means that John and Mary's acquiring additional evidence will increase the degree to which their belief is probable, given their new total evidence, and therefore will help them to achieve their goal.[5] On this reading, then, (1) and (2) are elliptical for

(1*) "Smith knows that the flight stops in Chicago, but still, we need to check further *for the sake of meeting our business contact*."
(2*) "We know that the flight stops in Chicago, but still, we need to check further *for the sake of meeting our business contact*."

At this point, someone might object that if knowledge entails truth, and one knows that P, then it follows that one has epistemic access to the truth as to whether P. So why check further? Why acquire further evidence? This objection goes too far, however. For consider mere true belief. If I merely truly believe that P, then I have epistemic access (in one sense) to the truth as to whether P. It is obvious, however, that those who merely truly believe that P have good reason to acquire further evidence that P. For one thing, they should acquire further evidence that P for the sake of knowing that P. We conclude that apathetic dogmatism is not defensible, and that the possibility remains open that (1) and (2) are pragmatically, rather than semantically, deficient.

Still, someone might suggest that the second conjuncts of (1*) and (2*) should have the following form: We ought to acquire more evidence that P *for the sake of knowing that P*. This response, however, begs the question against those who favor the low standard view. For if John and Mary ought to acquire more evidence for P in order to know that P, then they don't already know that P. Once we determine that contextualism is correct, we may then maintain that the second conjuncts of (1*) and (2*) are elliptical for *We ought to acquire more evidence that P for the sake of knowing that P*. Until then, however, we should not beg the question against proponents of the low standard view.

5. In fact, even in cases where someone has deductive knowledge of some proposition, as with a mathematical proof that P, it seems to us that there is a real sense in which the person can acquire yet more evidence for believing that P—for example, the person might construct a second independent proof that P.

Third, someone might object that we have provided counterexamples only against a certain form of apathetic dogmatism, which we might call Strong Apathetic Dogmatism, or

(SAD) S's knowing that P entails that it is not the case that S ought to seek further evidence that P.

One who objects in this way might go on to maintain that Cohen's view needs only a weaker form of dogmatism, against which our counterexamples are ineffective. Call this weaker form Weak Apathetic Dogmatism, or

(WAD) S's knowing that P entails that it is not the case that S ought to seek further evidence that P *for the sake of ensuring (or making sure) that P is true*.

Given this distinction, someone might argue that whether SAD or WAD applies in a particular case depends on whether, in that case, S's goal can be achieved only if P is true. In particular, WAD applies only in cases in which S's goal can be achieved only if P is true, while SAD applies in cases in which S's goal can be achieved even when P is false.

Now, WAD does not apply, an objector might argue, in the cases surrounding (3), (4), and (5). For, in the case of (3), the goal is to do well on the exam, and that goal can be achieved even if P is false—whether one will do well on the exam depends on whether one provides certain kinds of evidence, not on whether P is true. In the case of (4), the goal is to get a research grant, and that goal can be achieved even if P is false—whether one will get the grant depends on whether one provides sufficient evidence, not on whether P is true. In the case of (5), the goal is to get one's findings published in a particular journal, and that goal can be achieved even if P is false—whether one's findings will be published in that journal depends on whether one provides another proof, not on whether P is true. Thus, we cannot use the cases surrounding (3), (4), and (5) to show that WAD is defective. We can use those cases only against SAD.

Moreover, in Cohen's Airport Case, Mary and John's goal is to meet their business contact in Chicago today, and they can achieve that goal only if P is true, that is, only if it is true that the flight will stop in Chicago today. Cohen might therefore urge that (2) is elliptical for

(2**) We know the flight stops in Chicago, but still, we ought to check further for the sake of making sure that it is true that the flight stops in Chicago.

In order to hold that (2**) is false, Cohen need rely only on WAD. And Cohen might maintain that since none of our counterexamples tell against WAD, we have done nothing to show that the conjunction in the Airport Case is not semantically deficient.[6]

We reject the idea that WAD does not apply in the cases surrounding (3), (4), and (5), and thus the idea that we cannot use those cases to show that WAD is defective. For, just as in (2), the truth of P is important in each of (3), (4) and (5). In (2), Mary and John's principal aim is to seek evidence that will help them to make sure that their belief (that the plane stops in Chicago) is true. Yet in spite of the fact that this is their principal aim, we describe the end of further inquiry in practical terms—they should check further for the sake of meeting their business contact in Chicago. Now, each of the other cases that we provide—those surrounding (3), (4), and (5)—share both of these features with the Airport Case. First, in each of the cases surrounding (3), (4), and (5), what's principally important for the epistemic agent as the end of further inquiry is the acquisition of evidence that will, when added to the evidence she already possesses, make it more likely that her belief is true, thus helping her to make sure (or to become more sure) that her belief is true. Moreover, just as in the Airport Case, in each of the cases surrounding (3), (4), and (5), the acquisition of this evidence helps the subject to achieve her practical end. There is, then, no distinction along these lines to be drawn between (2) on the one hand and (3), (4), and (5) on the other. We conclude, then, that WAD does apply in the cases surrounding (3), (4), and (5), and we may use those cases as we have in order to show that WAD is defective.

We have now seen that we should avoid apathetic dogmatism, and that we should consequently leave open the possibility that (1) and (2) are pragmatically deficient. In the next section, we explain how epistemological invariantism helps us both to provide a pragmatic explanation of the infelicity of (1) and (2), and to avoid the dogmatism of contextualism.

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6. Thanks to Doug Portmore for voicing this concern and for formulating both (SAD) and (WAD).

4. *How to avoid contextualism's dogmatism*

To avoid contextualism's dogmatism, we should reject the claim that if it sounds odd to say, "S knows that P, but S needs to check further," then the implication from *S knows that P* to *S need not check further* is a semantic entailment and not simply a pragmatic implicature. Once we see that there are counterexamples to this conditional—that is, cases in which it sounds odd to say, "S knows that P, but S needs to check further," and in which we can cancel the implication from *S knows that P* to *S need not check further*—we open the door to a rejection of Cohen's argument against the low standard view. We also revive the possibility of a pragmatic explanation of the impropriety of "S knows that P, but S needs to check further."

How is the invariantist to explain the pragmatic impropriety of that assertion? Here's our suggestion: The conjunction of 'S knows that P' and 'S needs to check further' sounds odd because its second conjunct pragmatically implicates that S needs to check further *for the sake of knowing that P*.[7] The conjunction therefore both says that S knows that P and pragmatically implicates that S needs to check further in order to know that P. Moreover, the second of these claims suggests that S does not know that P. For if S needs to check further in order to know that P, then S does not already know that P. But this claim and the claim made by the conjunction's first conjunct are contraries—it cannot be true both that S knows that P and that S does not know that P. According to our suggestion, then, the assertion, "S knows that P, but S needs to check further" sounds odd because it is pragmatically deficient—in making that assertion, we say that S knows that P, and we pragmatically implicate the contrary claim that S does not know that P.

Moreover, we suggest that we can cancel the implication from *S knows that P* to *S need not check further*. To do so, we need only to assert that S *does* need to check further, but for some sake *other* than knowing that P, for example, for the sake of receiving a research grant, or for the sake of meeting a business contact. We might say, "S knows that P, but S needs to check further—*not*, mind you, for the sake of knowing that P, since she *already* knows that P, but for the sake of receiving a research grant." This opens the door to a rejection of Cohen's

7. Perhaps it does so because knowledge—or, in general, some epistemic state—is mentioned so prominently in the first conjunct.

argument against the low standard view, and it breaths life back into epistemological invariantism.

We should also address DeRose's Bank Case. DeRose maintains that in the (alleged) high-standards context of that case, he seems quite reasonable in admitting to his wife that he doesn't know that the bank is open on Saturdays, and in endeavoring to make sure that it is open. In the high-standards context, then, DeRose's utterance, "I don't know that the bank is open on Saturdays, and I need to make sure that it is," would be perfectly felicitous. We grant that in this same context if DeRose were to utter "I know that the bank is open on Saturday, but I need to make sure that it is," his utterance would sound odd. But, again, we claim that the utterance would be pragmatically, not semantically, deficient. Moreover, the second conjunct of this utterance is sufficiently different from the second conjuncts of Cohen's examples—each of which has the form 'S needs to check further'—to warrant attention. For it seems that 'S needs to make sure that P' is not elliptical in the way that 'S needs to check further' is. In fact, in the case of 'S needs to make sure that P', the end of further checking—namely, to make sure that P—seems to be written directly into the conjunct.

So how can the epistemological invariantist explain the pragmatic impropriety of DeRose's conjunction? Here's our suggestion: The conjunction of 'S knows that P' and 'S needs to make sure that P' sounds odd because its second conjunct pragmatically implicates, rather than semantically entails, that S does not know that P. Here again, then, this claim and the claim made by the conjunction's first conjunct are contraries—it cannot be true both that S knows that P and that S does not know that P. Thus, according to our suggestion, the assertion, "S knows that P, but S needs to make sure that P" sounds odd because it is pragmatically deficient.

The natural and obvious worry, though, is this: It seems to be an epistemological maxim that S knows that P only if S is sure that P (that is, only if S believes that P sufficiently confidently). And given that S needs to make sure that P, it follows from this alleged maxim that S does not know that P. This suggests, contrary to our proposal, that the assertion, "S knows that P, but S needs to make sure that P" is *semantically* deficient.

But is it indeed true that S knows that P only if S is sure that P? It seems that there are plenty of counterexamples to this alleged maxim. It might be, for example, that Ashley knows the answer to a question on

her history exam—say, that Washington surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754—even though she does not confidently believe that Washington surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754. She knows that Washington surrendered the fort, but she nevertheless isn't sure whether he did.

Suppose, however, that Ashley's lack of confidence generates in her the belief that Washington might *not* have surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754. Will her having this belief keep her from knowing that he surrendered it? We think not. We are not averse to maintaining that Ashley can know that Washington surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754 even though she believes that he might not have. Here's why: Either Ashley has evidential grounds for her belief that Washington might not have surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754, or she doesn't. Suppose that she *doesn't*—her belief is simply a product of her doubts and based on no evidence whatsoever. In this case, we don't see why we should be forced to say that Ashley's believing that Washington might not have surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754 is incompatible with her knowing that he did surrender it. This case therefore seems to reveal no incompatibility between Ashley's knowing that Washington surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754 and her not being sure whether he did.

Suppose, on the other hand, that Ashley *does* have evidential grounds for her belief that Washington might not have surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754. In this case, Ashley's evidence might play a defeating role, in which case her evidential grounds for the belief that Washington surrendered the fort might no longer be sufficient for knowledge. Ashley, then, fails to know that Washington surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754. It is false *both* that she knows that Washington surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754 *and* that she is sure that he did. Thus, this case too reveals no incompatibility between, on one hand, Ashley's knowing that Washington surrendered Fort Necessity in 1754 and, on the other, her not being sure whether he did.

There is another, more general and perhaps more convincing way of calling into question the alleged maxim. To do this, we need first to modify Cohen's airport case: In that case, it seems that Mary, for one reason or another, is not sure whether the plane stops in Chicago. Thus, given the alleged maxim, Mary does not know that the plane stops in Chicago. Moreover, it ought to seem to Mary that *Smith* doesn't know that the plane stops in Chicago. After all, (i) Mary (recognizes that she) doesn't know, and (ii) she recognizes that Smith has no evidence that she doesn't have.

But is this enough to make it seem to Mary that Smith doesn't know? That is, will (i) and (ii) do the trick by themselves? It seems that they won't, and that we should supplement (i) and (ii) with the following: Mary believes that (iii) evidence is all that matters epistemically. Suppose, though, that Mary is epistemologically informed and believes that (iii) is false. Suppose, that is, that she believes that our alleged maxim is indeed a maxim. Suppose, furthermore, that Mary recognizes that Smith has sufficient evidential grounds for his belief, as well as that Smith is free from the uncertainties that plague her (and from any other relevant uncertainties). This means, according to the alleged maxim, that Smith's epistemic position *vis-à-vis* the proposition that the plane stops in Chicago is better than Mary's. May she therefore consult Smith in order to allay her doubts or, more generally, in order to improve her epistemic position? It seems that she may *not* (see Cohen 2000, 95–97).[8] This point, as it turns out, is significant, for it's the centerpiece in an argument against the alleged maxim. Here's the argument:

(6) Suppose that both evidence and confidence matter epistemically (i.e., S knows that P only if S has sufficient evidential grounds and believes that P sufficiently confidently).

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8. Of his Airport case, Cohen says, "When Smith says, "I know…", what he says is true given the weaker standard operating in that context. When Mary and John say "Smith does not know …", what they say is true given the stricter standard operating in their context" (Cohen 2000, 97). Yet he also maintains that "Mary and John agree that Smith doesn't really know that the plane will stop in Chicago on the basis of the itinerary. They decide to check with the airline agent" (Cohen 2000, 95). In this case, then, even though, according to Cohen, Smith is in a better epistemic position than Mary and John—he knows, but they do not—Mary and John may not consult him regarding whether the plane will stop in Chicago; Mary and John must consult the airline agent instead. (Compare DeRose, 2004, 348: Suppose that Thelma is being interrogated by the police in a context in which the epistemic standards have been raised. In this context, Thelma claims *not* to know that John was at the office on the day in question. Meanwhile, Thelma's friend, Louise, who has the same evidence as Thelma for John's being at the office, but who is in a *low*-standards conversational context, claims to *know* that John was at the office. "And suppose," DeRose says, "that Thelma is somehow aware of all this about Louise's context. Still, in Thelma's "high-standards context," if Thelma is counting herself as a non-knower, then, when she is considering Louise as a potential informant, she will likewise describe Louise as a non-knower, regardless of Louise's conversational context" (DeRose 2004, 348). In this case, too—one that is much more similar to the case I construct, since Thelma knows so much about how things stand epistemically with Louise—Thelma may not consult Louise even though (she recognizes that) Louise is in a better epistemic position than she is.)

(7) There is a context, C2, in which S and S* have identical (and individually sufficient) evidential grounds for believing that P. Moreover, in C2, S* believes that P sufficiently confidently (and knows that P), but S does *not* believe that P sufficiently confidently (and hence does *not* know that P).
(8) Thus, S*'s epistemic position *vis-à-vis* P is better than S's.
(9) If S*'s epistemic position *vis-à-vis* P is better than S's, then S may consult S* regarding P.
(10) Thus, in C2, S may consult S* regarding P.
(11) But S may *not* consult S* regarding P in C2.
(12) Thus, it is *not* the case that both evidence and confidence matter epistemically.
(13) It is clear that evidence matters epistemically.
(14) Thus, confidence does not matter epistemically.

This suggests that our alleged maxim is false, and therefore that it cannot stand in the way of a pragmatic explanation of the infelicity of "S knows that P, but S needs to make sure that P."

Still, if we are to provide a pragmatic explanation of that infelicity, we need to be able to cancel the implication from *S knows that P* to *S need not make sure that P*. We suggest that in order to cancel that implication, we need only to assert that S *does* need to make sure that P, perhaps for the sake of making herself confident that P to a satisfying degree. Here again, let's allow that Mary has inductive knowledge, on the basis of Smith's testimony, that the plane stops in Chicago. Given this, whatever justifies her belief fails to entail that it's true. So, Mary can acquire more evidence for her belief that the plane stops in Chicago. Moreover, it might be that Mary acquires enough evidence to know that P long before she acquires enough evidence to make herself confident to a satisfying degree.[9] To cancel the relevant implication, then, we might say, for example, "S knows that P, but S needs to make sure that P in order to make herself confident that P to a satisfying degree." Once again, this opens the door to a rejection of arguments against the low standard view, and it revitalizes epistemological invariantism.

9. This allows us to say, for example, that while the standards for knowledge are invariant across contexts, the standards for being confident to a satisfying degree vary from context to context, perhaps even on the basis of contextual features highlighted by contextualists, e.g., "speaker intentions, listener expectations, presuppositions of the conversation, salience relations, etc." (Cohen 1999, 61).

5. *Conclusion*

An examination of the linguistic data that have been offered in support of epistemological contextualism by its most prominent proponents reveals that contextualists are committed to apathetic dogmatism, the claim that knowers may refrain from seeking further evidence. We have shown, however, that apathetic dogmatism is indefensible. Furthermore, given that dogmatism is an essential element of contextualists' argument for the claim that certain odd-sounding conjunctions are semantically deficient, we have reason to set those arguments aside. This opens the door to a pragmatic explanation of the fact that those conjunctions sound odd, and this is just the sort of explanation that epistemological invariantists need to provide. We have also supplied, on behalf of invariantists, pragmatic explanations of the infelicity of certain conjunctions, explanations that also make it clear just how we can cancel certain relevant implications. Thus, since invariantists can provide the pragmatic explanations that they must provide, and since contextualists' semantic explanations seem to force them to adopt a gravely problematic form of dogmatism, we conclude that invariantism has the upper hand on contextualism.

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