

# E=K and The Gettier Problem: A Reply to Comesaña and Kantin

Rodrigo Borges<sup>1</sup>

Received: 16 November 2015 / Accepted: 4 November 2016 / Published online: 16 December 2016  
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2016

**Abstract** A direct implication of E=K seems to be that false beliefs cannot justify other beliefs, for no false belief can be part of one's total evidence and one's total evidence is what inferentially justifies belief. The problem with this alleged implication of E=K, as Comesaña and Kantin (*Philos Phenomenol Res* 80(2): 447–454, 2010) have noted, is that it contradicts a claim Gettier cases rely on. The original Gettier cases relied on two principles: that justification is closed under known entailment, and that sometimes one is justified in believing a falsehood. In this paper I argue that E=K, contrary to what Comesaña and Kantin would want us to believe, is compatible with the agent being justified in believing a falsehood.

A direct implication of the claim that all and only one's knowledge constitutes one's total evidence (i.e., E=K) seems to be that false beliefs cannot justify other beliefs, for no false belief can be part of one's total evidence and one's total evidence is what inferentially justifies belief. The problem with this alleged implication of E=K, as Juan Comesaña and Holly Kantin<sup>1</sup> have noted, is that it contradicts a claim Gettier cases rely on. The original Gettier cases (Case I, a.k.a “The Coin Case”, and Case II a.k.a “The Ford Case”) explicitly relied on two principles. One principle

---

<sup>1</sup> Comesaña and Kantin (2010).

---

Thanks to Claudio de Almeida, Juan Comesaña, Duncan Pritchard, and Ernest Sosa for their generous feedback on earlier versions of this paper. Thanks also to two referees for *Erkenntnis* for their helpful suggestions. Very special thanks to Peter Klein, who read way too many drafts of this paper. I hope the end product does some justice to Peter's infinite support and helpfulness. The research in this paper was partially funded by the CAPES/Fulbright commission through a doctoral fellowship, and by FAPESP through a post-doctoral research fellowship. I am very grateful for their support.

---

✉ Rodrigo Borges  
epistemen@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil

claims that justification is closed under known entailment. The other principle Gettier asked us to assume, the one that is seemingly incompatible with  $E=K$ , states that sometimes one is justified in believing a falsehood. Call this principle “The Fallibility Principle” or FP, for short. In what follows, I will argue that  $E=K$ , contrary to what Comesaña and Kantin would want us to believe, is compatible with the agent being justified in believing a falsehood—at least in one sense of “justified” that is epistemologically important.

If  $E=K$  is true, then not only is FP seemingly false, but the protagonist in the original Gettier cases (and other cases with the same general structure) do not have a justified true belief, because this belief, by the very nature of the cases, depends essentially on a falsehood for its alleged justification, and false beliefs are not part of one’s total evidence. Since the intuition that the agent in Gettier cases is justified is accepted by virtually everyone,<sup>2</sup> the friend of  $E=K$  is well advised to either drop the view (for it entails that the agent is not justified) or find a way to accommodate the widespread intuition about those cases. I will propose a way in which the friend of  $E=K$  can accommodate this widespread intuition about Gettier cases. But first let me make the challenge to  $E=K$  more precise by offering an argument in its support.<sup>3</sup>

Against  $E=K$

1. All and only knowledge is evidence and only knowledge inferentially justifies belief. [Assume for *reductio ad absurdum*]
2. Evidence inferentially justifies belief. [from 1]
3. False beliefs are not part of one’s evidence. [from 1]
4. The protagonist in a Gettier case has a justified true belief whose justification depends essentially on a justified false belief. [Assumption]
5. False beliefs are sometimes part of one’s evidence and do sometimes justify via inference other beliefs. [from 2 and 4]
6. Only knowledge justifies belief inferentially, and it is not the case that only knowledge inferentially justifies belief. [from 1 and 5]
7. Either it is false that all and only knowledge is evidence, or it is false that only knowledge inferentially justifies belief. [from 1, 2–5 by *reductio ad absurdum*]

I will take issue with step 4 in this argument. Since the idea that Gettiered agents rely essentially on falsehood for their justification is virtually a dogma in contemporary epistemology, Comesaña and Kantin are in good company when they appeal to this idea in their argument against  $E=K$ . However, as I will argue below, justification is a notoriously ambiguous notion and it is far from clear what notion of justification is assumed in Gettier cases. But I am getting ahead of myself. Before I turn to my preferred response to this argument, let me briefly discuss a response I find unconvincing.

Consider Gettier’s Coins case.<sup>4</sup> Smith comes to believe truly (e) “The person who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket” via deduction from his false belief

<sup>2</sup> Including people such as Weatherson (2003) and Hetherington (2011) who think agents in some Gettier cases are not only justified, but also know.

<sup>3</sup> This is my reconstruction of Comesaña’s and Kantin’s main argument against Williamson.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Gettier (1963).

in (d) “Jones is the man who will get the job and Jones has ten coins in his pocket.” One might want to say that it is not the false proposition *d* that is doing the justifying of *e* for Smith, but the nearby truth Smith also believes (*d*\*) “The president of the company assured me that Jones will get the job and Jones has ten coins in his pocket.” Since it is plausible to think that Smith knows *d*\*, the E=K proponent could say that *d*\* is part of Smith’s evidence and that it justifies his true belief in *e* (after all, the president’s say-so is the only reason Smith has to accept the first conjunct of *d*). One could say something similar about Gettier’s Ford case: even though Gettier says that Smith is justified in believing the true (*g*) “Either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona” via deduction from the false (*f*) “Jones owns a Ford,” one might want to say that it is Smith’s true belief in (*f*\*) “I believe Jones owns a Ford” that is doing the justifying instead. Here too, Smith may plausibly be said to know *f*\* and, hence, that it is also part of his total evidence (again, according to Gettier, Smith’s sole reason for believing “Jones owns a Ford” is that Smith “has strong evidence” for it. If this is right, then he has even stronger evidence for *f*\*). One could think that E=K has been vindicated by this reply to Comesaña’s and Kantin’s argument and that the intuition that Gettiered agents arrive at a justified true belief via inference was, as a result, accommodated. I think this is not the correct argument for the friend of E=K to posit in response to this argument.

Comesaña and Kantin consider what is roughly the same strategy and also find it wanting. They think that in order for this response to work it is

not enough to find some propositions that you know and that justify you, it is necessary to argue that every proposition that justifies you is something that you know. And there is no argument that we can think of to the effect that your belief that Jones got the job plays no part whatsoever in justifying you in thinking that whoever got the job has ten coins in his pocket.<sup>5</sup>

The problem with Comesaña’s and Kantin’s claim that they cannot think of any argument in favor of the claim that Smith’s false belief does not do any justifying is that it simply begs the question against Williamson who has offered positive arguments for the claim that no false belief is part of one’s evidence. We can do better than that. I think we can reject this defense of E=K without begging any questions.<sup>6</sup>

The real problem with this reply is twofold. First of all, this reply presupposes a controversial account of the basing relation. Plausibly, one is doxastically justified in believing that *p* on the basis of some ground *g* only if *g* at least partially causes one’s belief that *p*. The reply we are considering mistakenly assumes that (*d*\*) “The president of the company assured me that Jones will get the job and Jones has ten coins in his pocket” (doxastically) justifies Smith’s belief in (*e*) “The person who

<sup>5</sup> Comesaña and Kantin (2010, pp. 499–500).

<sup>6</sup> Weatherson (2012) has made a different point about Comesaña’s and Kantin’s claim that they “can’t think of any argument” in support of the claim that false beliefs are not part of one’s evidence. According to Weatherson, their claim suffers from a failure of imagination, for one can always think of an argument for *p*, namely God knows that *p*, therefore *p*. Comesaña and Kantin could say, I think, that this is an uncharitable reading of their claim and that they meant to say that they can’t think of any *good* argument in favor of the claim that no false belief is part of one’s evidence.

will get the job has ten coins in his pocket” even though Smith’s reasoning caused his belief in *e*, that reasoning *did not* include *d\** as a premise. This assumption is at odds with the usual epistemological understanding of the concept of doxastic justification, which takes (doxastic) justifiers to be partial causes of the target doxastically justified belief. What is more, doxastic justification is the kind of justification required for knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Hence, *d\** does not justify Smith’s belief in *e* in the way epistemologists always assumed *d* justified *e* in the original Gettier cases. Secondly, if we think that Gettier cases are such that they all instantiate the Closure Principle and the Fallibility Principle, then the reply to Comesaña and Kantin sketched above cannot help the *E=K* proponent fend off the charge that *E=K* entails the non-existence of Gettier cases, for neither *d\** or *f\** entail the conclusion of Smith’s argument. So, if we think that Gettier cases necessarily instantiate those two principles, then the reply above, if correct, will ensure that Gettier’s own cases are not “Gettier cases.” As I argue in Borges (2017), we have reason to believe that Gettier cases necessarily instantiate those principles.<sup>8</sup>

Here is a better reply to Comesaña’s and Kantin’s argument, one that I think works. As far as I know, no one has suggested it, or even considered it, even though one can easily extract it from what Williamson says about proper assertion.<sup>9</sup> According to Williamson, knowledge is the constitutive norm of assertion and this entails that one asserts that *p* properly only if one knows that *p*. When presented with an example of an assertion that seems proper but whose proposition is not known, we may appeal to a distinction between *S* having a warrant to assert something and for it to be reasonable for *S* to assert something.<sup>10</sup> In what follows I will argue that the friend of *E=K* should extend this distinction to cases, like the Gettier cases, in which one seems to believe properly (i.e., justifiably) propositions one does not know. This will allow her to reply to *Against E=K* in a principled way. Or so I think.

Let us consider, first how we should think about this distinction. To that effect, consider the following case discussed by Williamson:

<sup>7</sup> To see that, suppose *S*’s evidence set included *r*, *r*<sub>1</sub>, and *r*<sub>2</sub>. Suppose further that only *r* is in fact evidence for *p* and that, in spite of this, *S*’s belief that *p* is caused only by *r*<sub>1</sub>. In this scenario, *S* fails to know that *p*, even though he would have known that *p* if her belief that *p* had been at least partially caused by *r* instead of *r*<sub>1</sub>. The idea is that *having* the right reason is not sufficient for knowledge, knowledge requires that one “use” it in support of the target truth. Thus, one’s belief that *p* is *doxastically justified* by a reason *r* only if *r* is partially causally responsible for one’s belief that *p*. One is *propositionally justified* by a reason *r* in believing that *p* even if *r* is not partially causally responsible for one’s belief that *p*. Doxastic justification entails propositional justification, but the converse is not true. cf. Korcz (1997) and Korcz (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Shope (1983, p. 4) suggests a few plausible necessary conditions on a case *C* being a “Gettier case”: *C* is a Gettier case only if *S* has a justified true belief that *p* in *C*, *S* does not know that *p* in *C* and there is some false proposition, *q*, *S* is either justified in believing is true or at least *S* would be justified in believing that *q* in *C*. For the purposes of my discussion here, I will accept Shope’s partial characterization of a Gettier case. I offer a slightly different characterization in Borges (2017), where I discuss the Gettier Problem itself.

<sup>9</sup> Williamson (2000, ch. 11).

<sup>10</sup> DeRose (2002, p. 180); DeRose (2009, pp. 94–95) also make this distinction but call it “primary” and “secondary propriety”. Weiner (2006) and Benton (2011) also endorse the distinction. But see Lackey (2007) for some doubts about the distinction.

### The Fake Snow Case

It is winter, and it looks exactly as it would if there were snow outside, but in fact that white stuff is not snow but foam put there by a film crew of whose existence I have no idea. I do not know that there is snow outside, because there is no snow outside, but it is quite reasonable for me to believe not just that there is snow outside, but that I know that there is; for me, it is to all appearances a banal case of perceptual knowledge. Surely it is then reasonable for me to assert that there is snow outside.

On the basis of this case, Williamson (2000, p. 257) distinguishes between *having a warrant to assert* and it *being reasonable for one to assert* and explains how the case is consistent with the knowledge norm of assertion according to which one appropriately asserts that p if and only if one knows that p:

The case is quite consistent with the knowledge account [of assertion]. Indeed, if I am entitled to assume that knowledge warrants assertion, then, since it is reasonable for me to believe that I know that there is snow outside, it is reasonable for me to believe that I have warrant to assert that there is snow outside. If it is reasonable for me to believe that I have warrant to assert that there is snow outside, then other things being equal, it is reasonable for me to assert that there is snow outside. Thus, the knowledge account can explain the reasonableness of the assertion. However, granted that it is reasonable for me to believe that I have warrant to assert p, it does not follow that I do have warrant to assert p[.]

The distinction between S having a warrant to assert something and for it to be reasonable for S to assert something allows us to say that it is reasonable for Williamson to assert that there is snow outside even though he did not have a warrant to assert it. The intuitive idea is that, even though Williamson does not know that there is snow outside, he is *blameless* (has an excuse) for asserting that there is, for the proposition that he knows that there is snow outside is very probable on his evidence.<sup>11</sup> We can express the idea that it is reasonable for some S to believe that x is the case more precisely:

$$(R) \quad R_s\phi \leftrightarrow P(K_s\phi \mid e) > \Omega$$

According to R, it is reasonable for S to believe that  $\phi$  if and only if the probability that S knows that  $\phi$  conditional on her total evidence  $e$  is higher than some threshold  $\Omega$ .

It should be noted that the notion of having a warrant to assert that p is an on/off notion while it is a matter of degree how reasonable it is for someone to assert something. In the passage I quoted, Williamson says that asserting that there is snow outside is “quite reasonable” for him, rather than merely “reasonable.” But the idea is also intrinsically plausible. If p is false, then I do not have a warrant to assert that

<sup>11</sup> I develop this distinction further in Borges (2015).

p. Full stop.<sup>12</sup> Intuitively, however, asserting that there is snow outside might be more reasonable for Williamson than it is for me, if we had different evidence which bears on whether there is snow outside, for the probability that *I* know that there is snow outside on *my* evidence could be different from the probability that *Williamson* knows that there is snow outside on *his* evidence. All it would take for this to be the case is that there is some proposition *m* such that *m* is a member of one of those evidence sets but not a member of the other.<sup>13</sup>

For example, suppose that I live on Williamson's, street, that I, like him, am also looking through my window and am also oblivious to the fact that there is a film crew going around spreading snow-like foam. Suppose further that I, *unlike* Williamson, heard fake news broadcast by the film crew which said that a snowstorm was expected to dump more or less the same amount of snow I now think I see outside my window. Intuitively, the proposition that I know that there is snow outside is (even if ever so slightly) better supported by my evidence than by Williamson's. For one thing, my knowledge that it was broadcast that there would be a snowstorm is a reason I have for believing that there is snow outside that is independent from it appearing to me that this is a "banal case of perceptual knowledge." The consequence is that, given R, even though asserting that there is snow outside is reasonable for both Williamson and I, asserting that proposition is more reasonable for me than it is for him, for "I know that there is snow outside" has a higher probability of being true conditional on my evidence than on Williamson's.

Of course, since neither Williamson nor I know that we know that there is snow outside, neither one of us have a warrant to assert "I know that there is snow outside." Note also that from the fact that it is reasonable for both Williamson and I to assert that there is snow outside it does not automatically follow that it is reasonable for either one of us to assert that we know that. In order for it to be reasonable for us to assert "I know that there is snow outside" we would have to satisfy R, in which case "I know that I know that there is snow outside" would have to be sufficiently likely to be true on our evidence. Maybe that proposition,

<sup>12</sup> One might object that it is sometimes appropriate to say that S might have *more* warrant to assert that p than S\* does. For example, when S has two conclusive arguments for p while S\* has only one. However, since having a warrant to assert that p, on a knowledge-first kind of picture, requires that p have probability 1 on one's evidence, strictly speaking S cannot have "more" warrant than S\*, for 1 is the highest degree of probability according to the probability calculus. We can, however, accommodate the intuition that it is sometimes adequate for someone to say "S has more warrant to assert that p than S\* does." Sentences like "S has more warrant to assert that p than S\* does" are easily understood as expressing something about the comparative degree of psychological certainty of S and S\*. Those sentences express, in appropriate contexts, that both S and S\* have a warrant for asserting that p, but S is more (psychologically) certain of p than S\* is. Thanks to Peter Klein for discussion here.

<sup>13</sup> That Williamson takes the reasonability of an assertion that p to vary with how probable "I know that p" is on one's evidence is explicit in the following passage: "One may reasonably assert p, even though one does not know p, because it is very probable on one's evidence that one knows p" (2000, p. 256). The locution "very probable on one's evidence" should be understood as saying that it is reasonable for one to assert that p only if the evidential probability of "I know that p" on one's evidence falls within some arbitrarily high range of values short of 1, say, .95 to .99. If the probability of "I know that p" on one's evidence falls within that range, then one is in a position to assert that p *reasonably*. See Williamson (2000, p. 256 fn. 9) for a formalization of this account.

conditional on either of our evidence sets, is sufficiently likely to be true. Maybe it is not. For one thing, it is not clear that the evidence Williamson and I have makes “I know that I know that there is snow outside” as likely to be true as it makes “There is snow outside”. I raise this issue only to put it to the side, however, since it is not very relevant to my concerns here. What *is* relevant, however, is that we are clear about the fact that “it is reasonable for me to assert that  $\phi$ ” does not automatically entail “it is reasonable for me to assert that *I know* that  $\phi$ .”

Also, whether I have a warrant to assert that  $p$  and whether it is reasonable for me to assert that  $p$  may not overlap. No matter how reasonable it is for one to assert that  $p$ , it does not follow that one has a warrant to assert that  $p$ . Neither does it follow from one having a warrant to assert that  $p$  that asserting that  $p$  is reasonable for one, for one might know that  $p$  (and thereby have the warrant to assert that  $p$ ) even though “I know that  $p$ ” has an evidential probability on one’s evidence arbitrarily close to 0.

Now, belief and assertion are clearly related. If one asserts that  $p$  sincerely and in one’s “own voice,” rather than, say, as the spokesperson for an institution, then, other things being equal, one believes that  $p$ . Likewise, if one believes that  $p$ , then, one is disposed to assert that  $p$  (under the right circumstances). It is natural to think that, at least in the usual cases, assertion is the external counterpart of belief or, conversely, that belief is the internal counterpart of assertion. Williamson himself accepts something that comes really close to this view. He says that assertion is “the verbal counterpart of judgment and judgment ... the occurrent form of belief”<sup>14</sup> and that asserting  $p$  represents oneself as at least believing that  $p$ .<sup>15</sup> The tight connection between assertion and belief suggests that the distinction between  $S$  having a warrant to assert that  $p$  and  $S$ ’s assertion that  $p$  being reasonable may be extended to the case of belief.<sup>16</sup> Here are a couple of noteworthy similarities between assertion and belief.<sup>17</sup>

One might have the warrant to assert that  $p$ , but withdraw from actually asserting that  $p$  for many different reasons (e.g., one is tired and asserting that  $p$  would start a new conversation and prevent one from going to bed; or one might be afraid one will be harmed if one asserts that  $p$  in the presence of  $p$ -deniers). Likewise, we should think that some agent having a warrant to believe that  $p$  does not entail that the agent knows that  $p$ , for he might have the warrant to believe that  $p$  and not believe that  $p$  (e.g., because one fails to put “two and two together” or because one is epistemically timid).

Secondly, in the case of assertion, one might have a warrant to assert that  $p$ , assert that  $p$ , but do so not in virtue of having a warrant, but in virtue of something else altogether. For example, one might know that  $p$  and therefore have a warrant to

<sup>14</sup> Williamson (2000, p. 10).

<sup>15</sup> Williamson (2000, p. 252 fn. 6).

<sup>16</sup> As I will suggest below when we discuss the knowledge norm of inference, a similar strategy can be used to address cases where, even though the agent inferred something from something else she does not know, it seems appropriate to say that she knows the inferred proposition.

<sup>17</sup> See Adler (2002) for a good defense of the claim that belief is the external analog of assertion. See, specially Adler (2002, pp. 274–277) for an extensive list of similarities between belief and assertion.



assert that p, but assert that p because one wants to hurt one's audience's feelings. In cases like this, even though one has a warrant to assert, one's assertion is not as appropriate as it would have been if one asserted *in virtue of* having that warrant.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, one might have a warrant to believe that p, believe that p but do so not in virtue of having such a warrant, but in virtue of something else. For instance, suppose I form the belief, at t, that Mary is having an extra-marital affair in virtue of being ill disposed towards members of Mary's ethnic group. Suppose further that, at t1, I receive an email with pictures showing Mary and her lover kissing during a business trip they took to Europe. In this case I have a warrant to believe that Mary is having an extra-marital affair, but I believe that she is having an affair not in virtue of having that warrant, but in virtue of the prejudice I have. In cases like this, even though one has a warrant to believe that p, one's belief that p is not as appropriate as it could have been if one believed that p *in virtue of* having that warrant.

The same two points apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the question of whether it is reasonable for one to assert/believe that p. It might be reasonable for me to assert/believe that p, but I might either (1) fail to assert/believe that p; or (2) assert/believe that p in virtue of something different than what makes asserting/believing that p reasonable for me.

One other important point before we move on. Even though there are all those similarities between the propriety of asserting and believing, there is also one noteworthy difference between them. If one has a warrant to assert that p, then one knows that p and, given that knowledge is factive, p is true. The consequence is that, in the case of assertion, what provides the warrant is always a *known proposition*. The same is not true in the case of belief, since one's belief that p may be warranted by something *different* from a known proposition (e.g., by perceptual experience).<sup>19</sup> This is important because, even though one can have a warrant to believe some falsehood f, f itself cannot serve as a warrant for anything else, for only known propositions warrant belief.

So, keeping those points in mind, I am now ready to characterize two distinct notions of justification based on this brief discussion of the distinction between having a warrant to believe and believing reasonably:

(Jw) S is w-justified in believing that p only if S has a warrant to believe that p and S believes that p in virtue of having that warrant<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Turri (2011) calls this view the "Express Knowledge Account of Assertion".

<sup>19</sup> Hence, it is false that 'if knowledge of p requires warrant q then either q must be known or knowledge of p would be baseless.' for, although knowledge of p *does* require warrant, this *does not* entail that this knowledge is baseless unless it is based on a known proposition q. One's knowledge of p may be based on/warranted by experience e instead. My view is compatible with a type of foundationalism that takes experience to provide one with known propositions even though experience is not itself constituted by known propositions (and so is E=K). (See Williamson (2000, pp. 201–202) for discussion.) Thanks to a reviewer for *Erkenntnis* for discussion here.

<sup>20</sup> This account may bear some relationship to Alvin Plantinga's definition of "warrant" in Plantinga (1993) in the sense that my account, like his, entails that all things being equal, believing truly in virtue of having a warrant w is sufficient to give you knowledge of that truth. I say "may" because I am not sure I fully understand Plantinga's account. I am sure of one thing, though: I do not want my account of



- (Jr) S is r-justified in believing that p only if it is reasonable for S to believe she has a warrant to believe that p.

We may now apply these two senses of “justified” to the snow case in the following way. Given Jw, Williamson is not w-justified in believing that there is snow outside. Given Jr, however, Williamson is r-justified in believing the same proposition.<sup>21</sup>

The protagonist of Gettier cases is in a similar situation. Given Jw, it is true that Smith is not w-justified in believing either that Jones will get the job or the truth he infers from this falsehood (i.e., that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket). On the other hand, given Jr, Smith is r-justified in believing both propositions.

The distinction between w-justification and r-justification also helps bring to light a central feature of Gettier cases. Even though the target true belief in those cases is clearly not an item of knowledge, it does enjoy some positive epistemic status. Jw helps explain why the target true belief is not known—it is not w-justified—while Jr helps explain what is epistemically good about it—it is r-justified. Moreover, the reason why Smith is r-justified but not w-justified can be traced back to the fact that his true belief relies essentially on a falsehood. Since falsehoods cannot be w-justified, the fact that Smith deduces a true proposition from the false one cannot yield w-justification for his belief in the true one, for his belief in the false one has no w-justification to transmit via deduction to begin with. Because Smith deduces the true proposition from the false one and Smith’s belief in the false one is r-justified, Smith is r-justified in believing the true one as well. Unfortunately for Smith, r-justification is not sufficient for knowledge.

Our distinction deals with Gettier’s Ford Case in a similar way. According to Gettier, even though Smith knows nothing about Brown’s whereabouts he deduces that either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona from the false but justified belief that Jones owns a Ford. Because Smith’s premise-belief is false, it cannot be w-justified for him. On the other hand, because Jones has just offered Smith a ride in a Ford and Jones has, within Smith’s memory, always owned a Ford (Gettier 1963, p. 122), it is reasonable for Smith to believe he knows Jones owns a Ford. Thus, although Smith’s premise-belief is not w-justified for him it is r-justified for him and the deduction he performs transmits at most the latter epistemic status to its

---

Footnote 20 continued

“warrant” to be committed to anything like a theory of proper functioning. For criticism of Plantinga’s account of warrant and proper function, see the contributions to Kvanvig (1996), specially Klein (1996).

<sup>21</sup> In a reply to Williamson’s statement of the Gettier Problem in *Epistemic Logic* in Williamson (2013a), Stewart Cohen and Juan Comesaña Cohen and Comesaña (2013) attack a couple of different ways in which one might distinguish between a strong and a weak sense of “justified.” I agree with Cohen and Comesaña that one should not argue for the distinction in the way they discuss in their paper. However, the way I am drawing the distinction is significantly different from the ways Cohen and Comesaña discuss in their paper. Unfortunately, replying directly to Cohen and Comesaña is beyond the scope of this paper. But see Williamson (2013b) for a principled reply to Cohen and Comesaña.

conclusion. Smith's belief that either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona is, thus, (at most) r-justified for Smith.<sup>22</sup>

So, Comesaña's and Kantin's argument against E=K fails. The argument mistakenly presupposes that "justification" expresses only one epistemically relevant concept and that this unequivocal concept is present in Gettier cases. With the help of the distinction between warranted and reasonable assertions we can sort out different senses of "justified" and thereby accommodate the intuition that Gettiered subjects are justified.<sup>23</sup> This completes the task of discharging the objection that E=K eliminates the Gettier Problem.<sup>24</sup>

**Funding** This research has been partially funded by the CAPES/Fulbright Commission and by a CAPES/FAPESP Post-Doctoral Fellowship Grant.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of interest** The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

## References

- Adler, J. (2002). *Belief's own ethics*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Benton, M. (2011). Two more for the knowledge account of assertion. *Analysis*, 71(4), 684–687.
- Borges, R. (2015). *Knowledge from knowledge: An essay on inferential knowledge*. PhD Thesis.
- Borges, R. D. (2017). Inferential knowledge and the Gettier conjecture. In R. Borges, C. de Almeida & P. Klein (Eds.), *Explaining knowledge: New essays on the Gettier problem*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, S., & Comesaña, J. (2013). Williamson on Gettier cases and epistemic logic. *Inquiry*, 56(1), 15–29.
- Comesaña, J., & Kantin, H. (2010). Is evidence knowledge? *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 80(2), 447–454.
- DeRose, K. (2002). Assertion, knowledge, and context. *The Philosophical Review*, 111, 167–203.
- DeRose, K. (2009). *The case for contextualism: Volume one*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gettier, E. (1963). Is justified true belief knowledge? *Analysis*, 23(6), 121–123.
- Hetherington, S. (2011). *How to know*. Malden: Blackwell.

<sup>22</sup> Thanks to a reviewer for Erkenntnis here.

<sup>23</sup> Notice that the point here is that *Gettiered subjects are r-justified*. The point is *not* that r-justification is what turns true belief into knowledge according to the traditional analysis of knowledge. Quite the opposite, Gettier showed once and for all that knowledge is not r-justified true belief. Knowledge is (at least) w-justified true belief. The cases Gettier discussed did not touch this reading of the traditional analysis of knowledge, for their protagonist based his true belief on a falsehood and, thus, could not be w-justified. I am thankful to a reviewer for Erkenntnis for prompting me to address this issue here.

<sup>24</sup> One might reasonably wonder whether my reply to Comesaña and Kantin yields, at the end of the day, the most plausible version of fallibilism one could have. I believe it does, but arguing for this claim would require a different (and much longer) paper, for it would demand that I compare the version of fallibilism I am offering here to other versions of fallibilism one finds in the relevant literature. Having said that, the present paper has, I believe, achieved its modest but important goal: showing that E=K is compatible with (a form of) fallibilism. This is true even if we have to postpone answering the related and important question of whether this version of fallibilism is, at the end of the day, in fact the most plausible version of fallibilism there is. Nonetheless, I do hope I will have the opportunity to tackle the latter issue in the future. I am indebted to another reviewer for Erkenntnis here.

- Klein, P. D. (1996). Warrant, proper function, reliabilism and defeasibility. In J. L. Kvanvig (Ed.), *Warrant and contemporary epistemology: Essays in honor of plantinga's theory of knowledge*. Savage: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Korcz, K. A. (1997). Recent work on the basing relation. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 34(2), 171–191.
- Korcz, K. A. (2010). *The epistemic basing relation*. Retrieved March 2014, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/basing-epistemic/>.
- Kvanvig, J. (1996). *Warrant and contemporary epistemology: Essays in honor of plantinga's theory of knowledge*. Savage: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lackey, J. (2007). Norms of assertion. *Noûs*, 41(4), 597–626.
- Plantinga, A. (1993). *Warrant: The current debate*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shope, R. (1983). *An analysis of knowing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Turri, J. (2011). The express knowledge account of assertion. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 89(11), 37–45.
- Weatherston, B. (2003). What good are counterexamples? *Philosophical Studies*, 115(1), 1–31.
- Weatherston, B. (2011). *Only knowledge is evidence*. Retrieved June 2012, from <http://tar.weatherston.org/2011/04/22/only-knowledge-is-evidence/>.
- Weiner, M. (2006). Must we know what we say? *Philosophical Review*, 114(2), 227–251.
- Williamson, T. (2000). *Knowledge and its limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Williamson, T. (2013a). Gettier cases in epistemic logic. *Inquiry*, 56(1), 1–14.
- Williamson, T. (2013b). Response to Cohen, Comesaña, Goodman, Nagel, and Weatherston on Gettier cases in epistemic logic. *Inquiry*, 56(1), 77–96.