

# Kripke and the dogmatism paradox

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**Abstract.** I aim at dissolving Kripke's dogmatism paradox by arguing that, with respect to any particular proposition  $p$  which is known by a subject  $A$ , it is not irrational for  $A$  to ignore all evidence against  $p$ . Along the way, I offer a definition of  $A$  is *dogmatic with respect to  $p$* , and make a distinction between an objective and a subjective sense of 'should' in the statement  $A$  *should ignore all the evidence against  $p$* . For the most part, I deal with Kripke's original version of the paradox, wherein the subject wishes, above all else, to avoid losing her true belief or gaining a false one; in the final section I investigate the possibility of having a paradox for a subject who values knowledge above anything else.

Kripke had discovered the dogmatism paradox by 1972. After four decades of commentaries and secondary literature, it is fortunate that the original presentation of the paradox is now available in print. Focusing on the relevant parts of Kripke's "On two paradoxes of knowledge"<sup>1</sup>, I aim at solving the paradox—and, perhaps unrealistically and immodestly, I aim at solving it without subscribing to any particular theory of knowledge.

Section 1, basically a set of quotations from Kripke (2011) together with a few short comments, represents the paradox. Section 2 offers a definition of the very concept of being dogmatic with respect to a proposition, and § 3 makes a (familiar) distinction between two senses of 'should' in the statement  $A$  *should resolve not to be influenced by any evidence against  $p$* , a distinction which may help us see that not all forms of recommending dogmatism have the same degree of weirdness. I offer my solution in § 4: a defense of the idea that it is all right for us to be dogmatic with respect to what we know, provided that, as Kripke assumes (see the quotation after (v) below), what we wish above all else is to avoid losing true beliefs or gaining false ones. Finally, in Section 5, I argue that the paradox cannot restructure itself by changing its focus from true belief to knowledge.

Labelled sentences (i)-(vi) are directly quoted from Kripke (2011), with his own numbering.

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<sup>1</sup> Kripke (2011: 43 ff). Unannotated page numbers refer to this work. Kripke's paper is, for the most part, a transcript of a talk given in 1972; appendices and some of the footnotes seem to have been added in the late 2000s. For Kripke's comments on some commentaries see his Appendix 3.

## 1. The paradox.

The starting point is a closure principle:

- (i) If  $A$  knows that  $p$  and  $A$  knows that  $p$  entails  $q$ , and, on the basis of such knowledge,  $A$  concludes that  $q$ , then  $A$  knows that  $q$ .

Next we have something which contains no reference to knowledge:

- (ii)  $p$  entails the following hypothetical: any evidence against  $p$  is misleading (where misleading is to mean *leads to a false conclusion*).

Let  $p$  be an arbitrary proposition,<sup>2</sup> and suppose that  $A$  knows that  $p$ . It is certainly not implausible to assume that our subject recognizes the truth of (ii). So let us suppose

- (iii) The subject  $A$  knows that  $p$ , and  $A$  knows (ii).

Assuming that  $A$  carries out the relevant deduction, it follows that

- (iv)  $A$  knows that any evidence against  $p$  is misleading.

Kripke notes that this already looks rather strange; but let us continue. Here is an innocent, conceptual-truth-looking claim:

- (v) If  $A$  knows that taking an action of type  $T$  leads to consequence  $C$ , and  $A$  wishes above all else to avoid  $C$  (i.e., this is the only relevant issue), then  $A$  should resolve now not to take any action of type  $T$ .

Note Kripke's parenthetical disambiguation of *A wishes above all else to avoid C*: avoiding  $C$  is not merely the strongest among  $A$ 's desires—if that were the case, it would not necessarily follow that  $A$  should decide not to do anything of type  $T$ , for it could be the case that a cluster of  $A$ 's other wishes collectively trump her wish to avoid  $C$ . Rather, Kripke is considering cases where “ $A$  knows, at a certain time, that if he does anything of a certain kind in the future, it will lead to some consequence that he thinks bad, there being *no other relevant consequences* which would override it” (44, emphasis added). However, it seems that an assumption weaker than Kripke's would do the job, viz., *all things considered, A wishes to avoid C*.

With appropriate substitutions for  $C$  and  $T$ , (v) yields:

- (vi)  $A$  should resolve not to be influenced by any evidence against  $p$ .

And what are the appropriate substitutions for  $C$  and  $T$ ? Kripke's explanation is crucial to my understanding of the paradox; so let me quote it in full and not content myself with a reference in a footnote. Here is Kripke (44):

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<sup>2</sup> In Kripke's paper, ' $p$ ' is said to stand for a *statement* (30, 43). The differences between propositions and statements are negligible for my purposes here.

Let the action of type  $T$  be accepting evidence against  $p$ —that is, doubting or denying that  $p$  on the basis of some future evidence. The consequence  $C$  is gaining a false belief—or at least losing a true one, if we merely fall into doubt—and this is something that we do not want.

Since  $(vi)$  is the very conclusion of the argument, we may assume that  $(vi)$  itself is supposed to be unacceptable. Unacceptable in what way? Kripke is slightly less than ideally explicit here; but it is fairly clear from the flavour of his discussion that what he has in mind is that it is *irrational* for  $A$  to do what  $(vi)$  says she should do. Textual evidence for such a reading comes from what he says just before presenting the  $(i)$ - $(vi)$  argument: “[T]hat if I know something now, I should, as a rational agent, adopt a resolution not to allow any future evidence to overthrow it. But this does not seem to be our attitude toward statements that we know—nor does it seem to be a rational attitude” (43). Also in an appendix later added to the paper: “I should add [...] that sometimes the dogmatic strategy is a rational one.”

So I take this to be the real question concerning the dogmatism paradox: how could there be an apparently sound argument which prescribes dogmatism?<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Defining dogmatism.

Kripke does not offer an explicit definition of *dogmatism*—in fact, he uses ‘dogmatic’ and its cognates only once in his original discussion. Yet, already in the paper,  $(vi)$  gives us a hint that dogmatism, as Kripke understands the concept, has something to do with the subject’s *decision* about what to do with the evidence against what she believes, should she encounter such evidence. Kripke elaborates on this when, in Appendix 3 to the paper, he comments on Harman’s well-known solution to the paradox. We need not disagree with what Harman says about how disregarding evidence would affect the subject’s knowledge, he says; but, “remember that I was talking about a resolution to be made in advance” (49).<sup>4</sup>

So I think it is fair to say that, for Kripke, a subject  $S$  is **dogmatic** with respect to a proposition  $p$  iff  $S$  believes that  $p$ , and, moreover,  $S$  has resolved not to be influenced by any evidence against  $p$ . Thus, in particular, if  $S$  believes that  $p$  and

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<sup>3</sup> In what is perhaps the oldest and best known of all commentaries on the paradox, Harman (1973: 148) presents an argument with the conclusion that *I am in a position to disregard any future evidence that seems to tell against  $h$* , where  $h$  is a proposition the arguer knows. He then writes, “This is paradoxical, because I am never in a position simply to disregard any future evidence even though I know a great many different things.” A majority of published works on the paradox quote this passage in full; it is thus safe to say that, according to many commentators, the unacceptable conclusion is that the arguer says of herself that she is in a position to disregard all the future counterevidence concerning a given proposition. And why is that unacceptable? We may imagine a number of related reasons or labels: (a) it is *not all right*, or it is *absurd*, to disregard all the future counterevidence (Nozick (1981: 237), Lewis (1996: 564)), (b) one can never *know* that one is in such a position, or (c) knowledge never *breeds* dogmatism (Hawthorne (2004: 73)). In what follows, I will directly deal with (a).

<sup>4</sup> Also on page 48 (italics in the original): “one should remember that my point is about a resolution *made in advance* to ignore certain types of evidence.”

she has resolved to ignore all evidence against  $p$ , then  $S$  is dogmatic with respect to  $p$ .<sup>5</sup>

Taking a hint from Lasonen-Aarino (2013: 3), one might cautiously add that the dogmatic subject is one who has resolved not to be influenced by any piece of evidence against  $p$  *as it bears on  $p$*  (not as it bears on other propositions). However, in the present enquiry we may sidestep this nicety by assuming that we are talking about the subject's attitude towards a single proposition.<sup>6</sup> Also, in a more thorough investigation, it would be wise to define dogmatism with respect to a proposition *relative to a mode of presentation*, so that, for instance, the subject might be dogmatic with respect to the axiom of choice but not with respect to the principle of well-ordering. But I think the definition I just gave serves my purposes here.

(A closely related concept is that of open-mindedness. Surely we would not say of a subject that she is open-minded with respect to  $p$  simply by virtue of her not believing that  $p$  (or worse: by virtue of not having entertained  $p$  at all); hence open-mindedness is not simply the complement of dogmatism as defined above. The essence of  $S$ 's open-mindedness with respect to a proposition  $p$  is, I think, her readiness to consider all the (available) evidence for  $p$ , as well as all the evidence against it, if  $S$  has not yet come to believe either  $p$  or not- $p$  and  $p$  is of some importance for  $S$ , *and*  $S$ 's readiness to consider all the (available) evidence against  $p$  if she does believe that  $p$ .)

Note that, insofar as the definition is concerned and in the absence of further argument,  $S$ 's dogmatism with respect to  $p$  seems to be independent of her *knowledge* that  $p$ —though at the end of the day our preferred epistemology might tell us that dogmatism with respect to  $p$  may lead to the destruction of the subject's knowledge that  $p$ .<sup>7</sup>

The subject's dogmatism with respect to a proposition need not be a result of his psychological certainty of the believed proposition. Thus consider the case of Bill, who has to jump out of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor of a burning building to save his own life. He has somehow formed the not-so-firm belief that he has the nerve to jump off. As he also thinks that a necessary condition for his success is to sustain this belief, he tries not to lose it. In particular, he decides not to consider any evidence against the belief—not estimating the height of the building, not thinking of his acute acrophobia, etc. Bill is thus dogmatic with respect to a proposition, but he is not absolutely certain about it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ignoring counterevidence is just one way of going for not being influenced by it. (For Kripke's brief discussion of different ways (or "strategies") of maintaining a dogmatic attitude see his 44 and 48n27). One might think of yet another way of not being influenced by a piece of evidence, not mentioned by Kripke: looking at the counterevidence with a firm prior intention to refute it.

<sup>6</sup> This idealization makes my topic more manageable. For instance, while talking about the legitimacy of the subject's dogmatism with respect to a proposition known by her, we may forget about the effect of dogmatism with respect to  $p$  on the subject's epistemic relation to *other* propositions.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Lewis (1996) argues that some evidence against  $p$  are not properly ignorable, so that ignoring them would destroy the subject's knowledge that  $p$ . See Lewis (1996: 564 f) which is specifically about the dogmatism paradox.

<sup>8</sup> Or consider Charles's attitude towards the proposition  $p$  that his wife is not unfaithful to him. For his own peace of mind, Charles tries not to think of  $p$  at all; if he cannot take his mind off it, he will then try to form the belief that  $p$ , and ignore all the counterevidence. Neither Bill nor Charles need be considered irrational—there are more to rationality than purely epistemic considerations. However, insofar as we deal with the paradox of dogmatism, we deal with

Regarding dogmatism with respect to a given proposition, it is essential that the subject *has made a choice* not to be influenced by any counterevidence: *S* is not dogmatic if it just *happens* that she ignores all the counterevidence. To make this point more emphatically, we may use the term **de jure dogmatic** for what I have simply called **dogmatic**, and call *S* **de facto dogmatic** with respect to *p* iff *S* believes that *p* and, whether or not it is a matter of a prior resolution, no evidence against *p* will ever influence *S*.<sup>9</sup> Now it seems to me that it is only de jure dogmatism which might be considered as a sin against rationality, and it is only systematic de jure dogmatism (with respect to a significantly large class of propositions) which is, or may be, a vice in the realm of rationality. A de facto dogmatic agent might be careless or irresponsible; but she is not ipso facto guilty. To be considered as a crime, disregarding the evidence should be premeditated.

### 3. What the subject might not know.

Note one thing the conclusion of the (i)-(vi) argument does *not* say: (vi) does not say that *A* knows that she should resolve to disregard all evidence against *p*—it just says that *A* should so resolve. It is as if someone located at an Archimedean point judges, after going through (i)-(vi), that *A* should be dogmatic with respect to *p*. Taken at face value, Kripke's paradoxical argument does not show that the subject herself knows that she should opt for a dogmatic attitude. To wit, it is only in an **objective**, not **subjective**, sense of 'should' that (vi) says that *A* should be dogmatic with respect to *p*.

Although the terminology is transparent and the distinction intuitive enough, let me give two examples of different senses of 'should'.<sup>10</sup> Suppose that Bernadette is gravely ill, that she knows this fact, and that she wishes above all else to be healed. Suppose that there is a cup of panacea in front of her. It seems obvious that there is a sense of 'should'—the *objective* sense—that Bernadette should take the cup. Equally obviously, however, there need not be a *subjective* sense in which she should take the cup: she might not have the slightest idea about the curative effect of taking it.<sup>11</sup>

To give an example of a different flavour, consider Danielle who is driving from work to home. She should keep her seat belt fastened, and this is a subjective 'should': for all she knows, there could be a collision or a sudden stop, and she knows that in a typical accident a fastened seat belt reduces the risk of injury. But now suppose that, as a matter of fact, there will be no accident this

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epistemic issues only.

<sup>9</sup> The terminology, with its Latin qualifiers, is chosen with an eye to the preface of Kripke's classic, *Naming and Necessity* (1980: 21n21).

<sup>10</sup> The distinction is of course standard in ethics and epistemology. Feldman (1988) argues that it works differently in the two disciplines.

<sup>11</sup> For the obtaining of the situation *Bernadette should take the cup* in the subjective sense of 'should', it seems to suffice that Bernadette knows that she should take the cup in the objective sense (see Veber (2004: 560)). It is debatable whether this condition can be replaced by Bernadette's having a belief that she should take the cup, or is it necessary that she has "good reasons" for such a belief (see Feldman (1988: 407 ff) for corresponding issues in ethics and epistemology). Bernadette's case is indisputable, however, for we are considering a case where Bernadette does not even believe—let alone believe justifiedly—that drinking the contents will heal her.

evening. Then it is *not* the case that, objectively, Danielle should fasten her seat belt. (Allow me to set aside issues like Danielle's peace of mind when the belt is fastened, and the likelihood of her being fined by the police for not having her seat belt fastened; let us assume that "the only relevant issue" for Daniel is to avoid accident-caused injury.) Of course, it is safe to say that on a typical day a typical driver does not know that she will not have an accident—hence the practical uselessness of talking about the objective sense of 'should' in such cases.

The upshot of both examples is the familiar point that for a given subject at a given time and for a given action  $X$ , the statements *Should*<sub>objective</sub> ( $X$ ) and *not-Should*<sub>subjective</sub> ( $X$ ) need not be incompatible.

Back to the (i)-(vi) argument, suppose  $A$  knows that  $p$ —so that, in particular,  $p$  is true. It follows from (ii) that any evidence against  $p$  is misleading. Let us assume, like Kripke (44), that gaining a false belief or losing a true one is what  $A$  wishes above all else to avoid. It follows from (v) that, as a matter of fact,  $A$  should resolve not to be influenced by any evidence against  $p$ . For all we are told by (i)-(vi), this is like the case of Bernadette and panacea: objectively speaking,  $A$  should be dogmatic with respect to  $p$ . However, and again like Bernadette's case,  $A$  may not be aware of the obtaining of this objective 'should'-situation:  $A$  herself may not be able to reach the conclusion, "I should resolve now to disregard all the evidence against  $p$ ". As presented by Kripke, the (i)-(vi) argument does not endorse a subjective dogmatism. Now here is a conjecture with empirical content:

**Mitigating the repugnancy of dogmatism.** Encountered with a statement of the form  $A$  *should be dogmatic with respect to  $p$* , most of us will find the statement less bizarre, or less disgusting, if we are told that only an objective sense of 'should' is meant.

While reading a work of fiction containing the above-described situation involving Bernadette, we assent to the statement, made by the omniscient third-person narrator, that Bernadette should<sub>objective</sub> take the cup which, unbeknownst to Bernadette herself, contains panacea; why balk at the idea that, as a matter of objective normative fact, of which the subject is probably unaware,  $A$  should resolve not to be influenced by any evidence against  $p$ ?

But this is not the end of the paradox. Although (vi) is not the statement of a subjective requirement of dogmatism, such a requirement, viz.,

(vi\*)  $A$  knows that she should resolve not to be influenced by any evidence against  $p$ ,

would follow from a straightforward readjustment of (v):

(v\*) If  $A$  knows that taking an action of type  $T$  leads to consequence  $C$ , and  $A$  wishes above all else to avoid  $C$ , then  $A$  knows that she should resolve now not to take any action of type  $T$ ,

so that, with truly little ado, Kripke's argument could be transformed into an argument for the conclusion that  $A$  should be dogmatic with respect to  $p$ , in the subjective sense of 'should'.

Now a number of philosophers have argued that (iv), which is needed to derive (vi\*) from (v\*), does not follow from (iii) unless the KK principle holds, a principle according to which whenever a subject knows that *p* she also knows that she knows that *p*.<sup>12</sup> However, important as the question of indispensability of KK to the dogmatism paradox may be, we need not take a stand on it here. True, the KK principle is not warmly embraced by everyone;<sup>13</sup> yet this does not solve the dogmatism paradox even if we think that KK is needed for the validity of the paradoxical argument, for, as noted by Sorensen (1988: 437), the critics of KK do not, or do not have to, unanimously deny that there are *some* cases where the subject has second-order knowledge, and we can run the asterisked version of the (i)-(vi) argument at least for such cases. Thus questioning the KK principle as the (alleged) hidden premise of the dogmatism paradox would not help us solving the paradox if we think dogmatism is *never* a rational attitude.

Let me summarize this section. I mentioned a familiar distinction between two senses of 'should': an objective (or as-a-matter-of-fact) sense, and a subjective (or perspectival, or information-relative) one. I argued that it is only in the objective sense of 'should' that Kripke's original paradox (the (i)-(vi) argument) culminates in the conclusion that the subject should be dogmatic with respect to what she knows. If *Y* denotes *A*'s resolution not to be influenced by any evidence against *p*, then the announcement of Should<sub>objective</sub> (*Y*) sounds much less implausible than Should<sub>subjective</sub> (*Y*). But this is cold comfort, for there is an obvious re-presentation of the argument (the (i)-(v\*)-(vi\*) argument), which seems to lead to a subjective requirement of dogmatism. Against *this* version of the paradox, one may still quibble: arguably, it needs the controversial KK principle. This objection however, sound as it may be, does not completely defuse the paradox, for it is hard to deny that there are *some* cases of propositions *p* and subjects *A* such that *A* knows that she knows that *p*, and with respect to any such *p* the new argument would say that *A* knows that she should be dogmatic.

Now let me leave this trend of thought for a couple of pages and have a fresh look at the paradox.

#### 4. Dogmatism: is it invariably irrational?

In (i)-(vi) we seem to have a valid argument with reasonable premises whose conclusion says that the subject should be dogmatic with respect to what she knows. The literature on the paradox contains dozens of works which try to either question the truth of one of the premises, or else attack the validity of the argument.<sup>14</sup> My strategy, however, is to bite the bullet and argue that there might

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Sorell (1981: 558). Sorell then moves on to present a similar paradox not depending on KK. See also Baumann (2013: 6 f) for a brief discussion of why one might think that while first-order knowledge of a proposition does not licence dogmatism with respect to it, second-order knowledge may.

<sup>13</sup> The most widely discussed recent case against KK is Williamson's anti-luminosity argument in Chapter 5 of his (2000). On the other hand, in his solution to the surprise examination paradox, Kripke, who is silent about the possible connections of the dogmatism paradox to KK, argues that the principle is "true enough for all practical purposes" (34).

<sup>14</sup> The closure principle ((i), or its variants) is probably the most easily noticeable suspect among the premises; for a recent diagnosis along this line see Sharon and Spectre (2010). For an attack on the validity of the (i)-(vi) argument (or some variants thereof), see Nozick (1981: 236-239) and

be nothing wrong with a person's dogmatic attitude towards what she knows. And if the fact that  $p$  is known by you makes it the case that, objectively speaking, you should be dogmatic with respect to  $p$ , then if you know about your knowing that  $p$ , it is all right to say that you know that you should be dogmatic with respect to  $p$ . Let me explain.

Is dogmatism an irrational attitude? Quite naturally, the answer depends on what the facts are, re rationality and epistemology. Arguably, *if* the highest epistemic duty of a rational agent is not to lose knowledge and if, moreover, one loses knowledge by not properly investigating all the available counterevidence, *then* one must avoid dogmatism. The more one's knowledge is sensitive to one's attitude towards evidence the more one should avoid dogmatism, given that one should aim at sustaining knowledge.

However, independently of the real effect of dogmatism on *knowledge*, it seems to me that while talking about dogmatism and open-mindedness, it is first and foremost *true belief*, not knowledge, that we are worried about. At least so it seems to be the case when we look at what some old masters of the modern era have said about certain related issues. I will give just one quote—here is John Stuart Mill's number-one argument in defense of the freedom of thought and expression (1859: 60):

First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility.

Of course Mill has much to say about cultivating individuality via practicing the freedom of thought and discussion; but here the main concern is *truth*—we should listen to what others say, lest it is very likely that we miss some true propositions. And open-mindedness begins at home: to minimize the risk of getting things wrong, in general I must not ignore the evidence available to myself against what I myself believe.

Whatever the point of avoiding dogmatism might be in the views of Mill et al., we may recall that Kripke's subject wishes above all else to avoid "gaining a false belief—or at least losing a true one" (44), wherein there is no mention of knowledge. But if what we wish above all else is to avoid gaining a false belief or losing a true one, then of course one should be dogmatic if one's belief has already hit the target. If all evidence against  $p$  is in fact misleading (i.e., "*leads to a false conclusion*"), then, as a matter of fact, the subject should avoid them. This is what she should do, whether or not she knows it.<sup>15</sup>

While discussing the dogmatism paradox, philosophers typically take it for granted that dogmatism is irrational or outright absurd, and do not pause to explain why—the irrationality of dogmatism is perhaps something of a dogma

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Sorensen (1988). Alternatively, one may go sceptic and deny that anyone knows anything at all, hence denying (iii); according to Unger (1975), this is the way to go. That I am offering my own solution need not be construed as my disagreement with all of these authors—I think the paradoxicality of Kripke's (i)-(vi) fails on several grounds. Yet, while presenting my solution, I will talk *as if* the (i)-(vi) argument is sound.

<sup>15</sup> In the next section, I will examine if there could be a version of the paradox wherein the subject wishes above all else to avoid losing not her true belief, but, more particularly, her knowledge. For the nonce, let us deal with true belief, like the original Kripke.



by itself.<sup>16</sup> However, a misunderstanding is lurking here. If we are looking for a *strategy* to deal with our beliefs, then dogmatism is not always the wisest choice, for it ignores the fact that a good number of our beliefs are false. That much is obvious.<sup>17</sup> But what about a *particular* true proposition *p* believed by the subject? Would it be rationally obligatory for the subject to stick to the strategy of open-mindedness and go through all available evidence against *p*? If the rationale for examining all the (available) counterevidence is to avoid falsehood, then it is hard to see what would be the point of adhering to the strategy in a case where the goal is already achieved. In the setting of the dogmatism paradox, the subject is assumed to know that *p*, hence having a true belief that *p*; to insist that she should nonetheless keep an open mind with respect to *p* would be, to use Smart's felicitous expression in a different context (1956: 349), an instance of superstitious rule-worship.

Here is an analogy (which might be isomorphic to the case of Danielle and her seat belt of the previous section). The goal of the security check in an airport, let us assume, is to prevent harm to the passengers, the crew, and the aircraft of each departing flight. A popular strategy to achieve this goal is to have the passengers screened by X-ray machines or some such devices. Now if, as a matter of fact, passenger B.J. Orcutt carries no weapons or explosive material, then, as a matter of fact, it is all right not to subject him to the screening. Moreover, if the security guard knows that Orcutt carries nothing harmful, then the guard knows that it is all right to waive the security check for him. Admittedly, it does not happen very often that the security guard *knows* that Orcutt is clean without actually screening him; but this does not affect the moral of the story: (knowledge of) the proposition that Orcutt carries nothing harmful, implies (knowledge of) the proposition that there is no need to screen Orcutt. To deny this is either to say that there are important things other than the immunity of this particular flight to terrorist attacks, or to attach some intrinsic importance to adhering to a policy.

Of course one may think of undesirable consequences of dogmatism, despite the truth of what one is dogmatic about: perhaps dogmatism makes us less amiable, less tolerant to others' tastes; perhaps it propels the society towards a less open one—and these may be considered bad for reasons *other than* missing the truth of the proposition with respect to which one is dogmatic.<sup>18</sup> These might

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<sup>16</sup> Thus here is how Lewis concludes his description of the paradox (1996: 564): “Whenever we know [...] we should not heed any evidence tending to suggest that we are wrong. But this is absurd”, period. The one exception I know is Unger (1975), for an evaluation of whose argument against dogmatism I refer to Section 2 of Douven and Olders (2008). Ideas similar to some of what I express in this paragraph are discussed by Douven and Olders, at pages 245-248, where they also discuss some possible advantages of being dogmatic with respect to what one knows.

<sup>17</sup> Note, however, that the implausibility of dogmatism as an all-purpose strategy for reducing the number of false beliefs is not known a priori and is contingent upon our specific cognitive powers. Thus imagine a species whose cognitive powers work in a way that they always form a true belief about an issue when they look at it for the very first time. Then, at least insofar as their most important goal is to avoid losing true beliefs, it is not unwise for the members of this species to close their minds with respect to every issue immediately after forming a belief about it. Again, they themselves might be unaware of this fact.

<sup>18</sup> One such reason is offered by Veber (2004: 567 f). Concerning a principle he formulates as “For any subject *S*: if a piece of evidence is known by *S* to be misleading then *S* is in a position to disregard it”, which is basically the conclusion of Kripke's (*i*)-(vi), Veber's worry is that adopting it will put us at risk of misapplying it to the evidence we mistakenly think of as misleading.

give us good reasons for erring on the side of caution and avoid dogmatism in all cases. But, insofar as we are dealing with issues epistemological (and remember that the dogmatism paradox is an *epistemic* paradox), such worries are irrelevant.

This, then, is my solution to—or, rather, dissolution of—the dogmatism paradox as originally presented by Kripke. Before proceeding to the final section where I deal with another version of the paradox, let me say a few words about the rôle played by knowledge in the paradox and in my analysis of it.

In previous pages I argued that there is nothing wrong with the conclusion of Kripke's (i)-(vi) argument. Now it can hardly escape attention that my solution to the objective version of the paradox actually produces a stronger form of the (i)-(vi) argument, namely: *If  $p$  is true and  $A$  believes that  $p$ , then  $A$  should<sub>objective</sub> resolve not to be influenced by any evidence against  $p$ .* Therefore, if what I have said so far is correct, one can equally soundly get the conclusion that  $A$  should be dogmatic with respect to  $p$ , in an objective sense of 'should', even if premise (iii) is weakened to ' $p$  is true and  $A$  believes that  $p$ '. Moreover, premise (i) is idle.

I think this result is welcome. For the objective version of the paradox, what we need is that the subject truly believes that  $p$ ; it then follows that she should be dogmatic with respect to  $p$ . Knowledge steps in only when we look for the conclusion that the subject should<sub>subjective</sub> be dogmatic with respect to  $p$ . Unlike the objective reading, for the subjective reading I am aware of no way of running the paradoxical argument without using the original forms of (i) and (iii).

## 5. Can the paradox make a “knowledgey” comeback?

Suppose Zahra believes that Noam Chomsky is a linguist. This is a belief with true content. What would go wrong if Zahra decides not to be influenced by any counterevidence? Nothing, I have argued, if the only relevant issue for her is to avoid losing her true belief or gaining a false one. Next, suppose Zahra *knows* that Chomsky is a linguist. What would be wrong with Zahra's dogmatic attitude in this case? If we are not to appeal (rather dogmatically!) to the doctrine that dogmatism is irrational, we might offer the following reason for the inappropriateness of dogmatism: if Zahra encounters a piece of evidence against her belief that Chomsky is a linguist and ignores it, she may lose her knowledge that Chomsky is a linguist. But why should she care about *that*?

Knowledge may or may not be more valuable than mere true belief, and a subject for whom the only relevant issue is to avoid losing her true belief may or may not be rationally less praiseworthy than she for whom the only relevant issue is to avoid losing her knowledge. In this paper, however, we need not decide the celebrated Meno question concerning the value of knowledge. In the

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(Veber's actual wording is more pessimistic: he says, at page 567, that adopting the principle “will result in our disregarding evidence which we merely think we know.”) I admit that there risk Veber is worried about is a real one. However, note that in the case of the dogmatism paradox, it is assumed that any evidence against  $p$  is in fact misleading and that the subject in fact knows this. (Cf. Kripke, 48: “Moreover, one might distinguish between first and third person formulations of the problem, and in the latter case, whether it is a subject who really knows or merely *thinks* he or she knows. Here I am discussing a subject who genuinely knows that  $p$ .”) Also remember that for the sake of simplicity, I have assumed that we are dealing with a single proposition (see my footnote 6 and the accompanying text).

original presentation of the paradox, Kripke—who is *not* evaluating what the subject wants—does not tell us about the subject's fear of losing knowledge; rather, the subject is assumed to wish, above all else, to avoid gaining a false belief or losing a true one (44). Nevertheless, perhaps Kripke could have instead formulated his argument for a subject who wishes, above all else, to avoid losing *knowledge*? In fact, in an appendix to the original paper, Kripke commentlessly switches from the true-belief talk to the knowledge talk (49n28, my italics):

I am assuming that we are dealing with a subject who wishes *to avoid losing knowledge*. Sometimes there are people who “don't want to know” or do wish to lose knowledge that they have, sometimes for arguably good reasons. They are not in question here.<sup>19</sup>

Thus one might think that there is a modification of the (i)-(vi) argument for a subject who wishes, above all else, to avoid losing knowledge. (More on this below.) Now if we presume the following epistemological thesis:

(θ) If *A* is dogmatic with respect to *p* then *A* does not know that *p*.<sup>20</sup>

it may appear that we get a genuine paradox: we seem to have a sound argument whose conclusion says that the subject should be dogmatic with respect to *p* in order not to lose her knowledge that *p*; but, according to our epistemological presumption, knowledge cannot coexist with dogmatism. My solution to the original paradox would not be applicable in this case, for the new argument has no recourse to the irrationality of dogmatism to make things look paradoxical.

A closer look, however, will show that changing the focus from true belief to knowledge will lead to no unexplainable weirdness. In what follows, I will stay neutral with regard to (θ); my goal is to show that even if we take the dogmatism-excludes-knowledge thesis for granted, no paradox will emerge.

We might think of keeping the main body of the (i)-(vi) argument as in the original, with two changes. First, we include the epistemological thesis (θ) as a premise. Second, instead of substituting *C* of (v) with our familiar *gaining a false belief or losing a true one* (call that old substitute *c*), we now take *C* to be *losing knowledge* (call this new substitute *c+*).

In order to get the dogmatism-prescribing conclusion (vi), let us look at

(ii) *p* entails the following hypothetical: any evidence against *p* is

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<sup>19</sup> Also on page 49, italics mine: “Just because the subject wishes *to avoid a loss of knowledge* such as Harman describes, so for that reason she or he makes the resolution.” Kripke does not justify, or even flag, his shift from true belief to knowledge.

<sup>20</sup> To a bona fide internalist ear, it may sound like a category mistake to say that *dogmatism* destroys (or cannot coexist with) knowledge: according to my definition (§ 2), for *A* to be dogmatic with respect to *p* is for her to have made a certain resolution; but it would be weird to say that a prior *resolution* kills knowledge. If one has such a worry about the wording of (θ), one may read it as saying that she who is dogmatic with respect to *p* may lose her knowledge that *p* (given that she had such a knowledge in the first place) if she encounters a piece of evidence against *p* and, acting in accordance with her resolution, she does not properly examine the counterevidence. This seems to be close to what Lewis (1996) has in mind about the effect of dogmatism on knowledge. (For Kripke's brief comment on Lewis, see the very last footnote of his Appendix 3.)

misleading (where misleading is to mean *leads to a false conclusion*).

Could leading to a false conclusion operate against *A*'s wish to avoid  $c+$ ? Yes, but only if it can deprive *A* of her knowledge that *p*. That could happen in the following manner: the misleadingness of a piece of evidence against *p* means that it leads to the specific false belief that not-*p*, and it is not implausible to assume that by the time *A* starts to believe that not-*p*, our reflective subject would have lost her belief that *p* and would have thereby lost her knowledge that *p*.<sup>21</sup> So, concerning the action

$t_1$ : accepting evidence against *p*

(which is Kripke's substitute for *T* of (*v*); see his page 44), it follows from (*v*) that *A* should resolve not to take it. Hence

(*vi*) *A* should resolve not to be influenced by any evidence against *p*.

So far, so good (for the purpose of obtaining a paradox).

Note that despite the fact that we now have a new *C*, in the new argument we get the dogmatic advice (*vi*) in the exact same way we got it in the original argument wherein *A* had no special concern about losing knowledge as such. This insensitivity to the change of *C* may cause a feeling of uneasiness; but let us move on and see if we can get anything paradoxical. Consider the following action:

$t_2$ : resolving not to be influenced by any evidence against *p*,

which is what the subject is now supposed to do. It follows from ( $\theta$ ) that taking  $t_2$  leads to losing knowledge. Therefore, by (*v*), *A* should resolve not to take  $t_2$ .<sup>22</sup> So we have

(*vii*) *A* should resolve not to resolve not to be influenced by any evidence against *p*.

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<sup>21</sup> Kripke explicitly names the false belief which results from misleading counterevidence: "If *p* is true [...] any evidence against it is misleading, that is, leads to the false conclusion that not-*p*" (43).

The process of losing knowledge might be more complex than what is suggested in the text. Let *p* be the proposition that London is pretty. Suppose *p* is in fact true, and suppose *A* knows that *p*. What if *A* goes through something similar to what Pierre experiences in Kripke's puzzle about belief (1979)? In such a case, it is not crystal clear that *A* would necessarily lose her belief that *p*; losing her knowledge would then perhaps seem to require a loss of justification. But let us ignore such cases for the sake of simplicity. (The problem is more acute here than in the case of mere true belief in the original paradox, for there we have a disjunctive *C*: *gaining a false belief or losing a true one*; but, as there is no obvious disjunctive candidate for *C* in the knowledge case, we have to stick to *losing knowledge*.)

<sup>22</sup> We may note that (*v*) requires the subject's *knowledge* that taking an action of type *T* leads to *C*, so that here the subject needs to know that the epistemological thesis holds. For the sake of discussion, we have taken ( $\theta$ ) for granted; however, the epistemological thesis does not sound as a conceptual truth, like the way (*ii*) does. But let us not bother about this—we may assume that our subject is an epistemologist who knows ( $\theta$ ).

Now it may appear that in (vi) and (vii) we have, in one and the same sense of 'should', a pair of the form *Should (X)* and *Should (not-X)*, which is a truly undesirable pair to get, a pragmatic contradiction. However, we do not have that pair. What we have is this: *A should X* and *A should resolve not to X*.

Odd and unusual as it may be to assert both *A should X* and *A should resolve not to X*, reaching at such a pair is not getting struck by a contradiction, not even by a pragmatic one. This is perhaps clearer in the case of the objective reading of 'should'—arguably, such a pair obtains in the biblical story of *Akedah*: Abraham should decide to kill Isaac, but he should not kill him. I think one can also imagine a situation wherein both components of the pair obtain with a subjective understanding of 'should', and this might be of some intrinsic philosophical interest. Yet, instead of arguing for that, perhaps it is more instructive to conclude with a comment on the very choice of *c+* as the consequence the subject wishes above all else to avoid.

It sounds unnatural, to a philosophically trained ear at least, to talk about the subject's fear of losing her knowledge *simpliciter*—one loses a particular piece of knowledge via losing either the belief itself or the justification for it.<sup>23</sup> In the context of the dogmatism paradox, we may safely assume that the subject does not forget about *p*,<sup>24</sup> so that what is really at issue is losing her justification for *p*. In fact, this is the way ( $\theta$ ) works: to return to the case of Zahra, we may imagine that she is **superdogmatic** with respect to the proposition that Chomsky is a linguist, in the sense that she is dogmatic with respect to it and she keeps ritually telling herself that Chomsky is a linguist, so that she will not lose the belief. Hence if her knowledge is going to be destroyed *because of* her dogmatism, that would be by virtue of the effect of dogmatism on justification.

So let us assume that *A* wishes, above all else, to avoid losing justification for her belief that *p*, so that we should now substitute *C* of (v) by *losing the justification for p* (call this substitute *c<sub>j+</sub>*). Premise ( $\theta$ ) implies that the subject should avoid dogmatism, a conclusion which hardly surprises anyone. To get a paradox, we need something which tells us that the subject should be dogmatic with respect to *p*. However, now that we have replaced *c+* by *c<sub>j+</sub>*, premise (ii) does not do anything, and we should look for something which is of some consequence to losing-knowledge-via-losing-justification. And it is hard to think of anything.<sup>25</sup>

I think it is not implausible to quine the possibility of a knowledge version of the paradoxical argument which is basically like the one given by Kripke.

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<sup>23</sup> Here I am setting aside probable consequences of a minority view concerning the conceptual or metaphysical priority of knowledge over belief and justification. It is fair to say that Kripke (or at least Kripke of the 1970s) does not subscribe to the theory of knowledge developed by Williamson (2000).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Kripke's discussion of the surprise exam paradox in the first part of the paper under consideration, where he assumes that *A*'s memory is "good enough not to forget any significant detail" (35).

<sup>25</sup> Note, by the way, that in the original presentation of the argument Kripke made it explicit that his (ii) makes no reference to knowledge (43). I think this confirms the conjecture that what he had in mind in 1972 was really *c*, despite his later (in Appendix 3) saying that it was *c+*.

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