

Knowledge and Normativity

Clayton Littlejohn

King's College London

I. Introduction

In a standard epistemology course, students are told that Gettier's (1963) cases demonstrate that knowledge cannot be identified with or defined as justified, true belief.¹ Two thinkers might share the same beliefs, these beliefs might be equally justified, but even if both beliefs are true it's possible that only one belief constitutes knowledge. Students are then introduced to a massive literature in which philosophers struggled to find the extra conditions needed that would close the gap between knowing and merely having a justified, true belief.

According to the standard story, propositional knowledge requires justified belief and further conditions that justified beliefs might lack. If we think of the justified belief as the normatively appropriate belief, the standard story accepts the first thesis but rejects the second:

Necessity: Necessarily, if S knows that p , S's belief in p is justified.

Sufficiency: Necessarily, if S's belief in p is justified, S knows p .

According to the Necessity Thesis, propositional knowledge has a normative dimension or aspect because it requires justified belief.² If the proponents of the standard story are right in rejecting the Sufficiency Thesis, there is more to propositional knowledge than normatively appropriate belief. The conditions that would make it appropriate for Agnes to believe that it is raining in London or that it will rain again in London tomorrow can obtain even if Agnes' beliefs would only be accidentally correct if correct and even if Agnes' beliefs are mistaken. If, as most epistemologists think, Agnes' beliefs might be incorrect or only accurate as a matter of luck and still be justified or appropriately held, the extra conditions that distinguish justified belief from knowledge turn out to be normatively insignificant.

If we accept this much of the standard story, it might seem that the part of the epistemology that has to do with appropriate belief and addresses questions about what we should believe will have little if anything to do with the part of epistemology that has to do with questions about the nature and extent of knowledge.³ This chapter addresses questions that have recently come to the fore in contemporary discussions about the relationship between these two parts of epistemology. If these two parts of epistemology truly are distinct, we shouldn't have to draw on the theory of knowledge in offering a theory of justified or normatively appropriate belief. The recent discussions of knowledge-first epistemology show that it will be incredibly difficult to

¹ Those who accept the standard view often describe Gettier's criticism of the JTB view as a criticism of a traditional conception or understanding of knowledge. Dutant (2015) discusses the propriety of describing Gettier's attack as an attack on a traditional view of knowledge. It provides significant evidence that the view was not traditionally held and discusses some of the Gettier-type cases that appear prior to 1963 including some from non-Western philosophical traditions.

² See Kim's (1988) classic discussion of naturalized epistemology.

³ See Foley (2012) for an attempt to develop these two parts of epistemology separately.

maintain this separation. I shall point to some difficulties that arise for the standard story, starting with the Necessity Thesis and turning to an extended discussion of the Sufficiency Thesis.

2. Justification and Knowledge

Justification is not always understood as normatively appropriate belief, but this deontological theory serves as a good starting point for this discussion:

DJ: S's belief in p is justified iff S believes p and it is not the case that S should not believe p .⁴

Epistemic norms identify the conditions under which some thinker should or should not believe p , so DJ could be restated in terms of the beliefs that thinkers hold while conforming to epistemic norms or hold without violating any epistemic norms.

Drawing on Gettier's discussion, a proponent of the standard view might argue against the Sufficiency Thesis as follows:

The Subtraction Argument

1. If S is in a position to know p , it is permissible for S to believe p .
 2. Holding fixed the supporting reasons that S has for this belief while subtracting away any combination of truth, belief, and being unGettiered makes no difference as to whether it is permissible for S to believe p .
- C. Thus, the Sufficiency Thesis is false since it implies that S has justification to believe p only if S is in a position to know p .⁵

This argument, if sound, shows that the conditions necessary for propositional knowledge are a mix of normatively significant and insignificant conditions. (While having good reason might be normatively significant in that it is necessary and sufficient for having the right to believe, the truth of your belief might be neither necessary nor sufficient for the realization of any normative property.) The former conditions should tell us what we should believe and the latter serve only to tell us why some but not all of the things we should believe are things we can know. The argument's first premise, if suitably restricted, should appeal to proponents of JD*. The second premise might be supported by an appeal to intuitions about error cases. Consider this passage from Cohen's discussion of reliabilism:

Imagine that unbeknown to us, our cognitive processes (e.g., perception, memory, inference) are not reliable owing to the machinations of the malevolent demon. It follows on a Reliabilist view that the beliefs generated by those processes are never justified. Is this a tenable result?

⁴ Some authors have argued that justification should be understood as responsible belief. See Naylor (1988). I do *not* intend DJ to be read that way. I will not assume that a thinker that can be held responsible for her actions or attitudes should be held responsible whenever she violates a norm. We should allow for excuses and should not assume in advance that any thinker that is responsible in the regulation of her beliefs will invariably conform to the norms that govern belief.

⁵ Inspired by Fantl and McGrath's (2009: 72) subtraction argument against the knowledge norm for practical reasoning.

I maintain that it is not ... [P]art of what the hypothesis entails is that our experience is just as it would be if our cognitive processes were reliable. Thus, on the demon hypothesis, we would have every reason for holding our beliefs that we have in the actual world. It strikes me as clearly false to deny that under these circumstances our beliefs could be justified (1984: 281).⁶

What does this argument show us about the relationship between justification and knowledge? If sound, would it establish a thesis as strong as this one?

Irrelevance: The concept of knowledge plays no essential role in the theory of justified or normatively appropriate belief.

The subtraction argument would not establish that strong thesis on its own. The argument rests on the controversial assumption that when we hold fixed the supporting reasons in the pair of cases we will find that the subjects' beliefs will not differ in justificatory status in the two cases. Let's suppose for the time being that it is correct. It might be that we will not be able to identify the relevant pair of cases without identifying subjects that stand in some interesting relation to a knower. Suppose that propositional justification supervenes upon a subject's total reasons at a time, so that it is impossible to have differences in what pairs of subjects have justification to believe without any difference in their reasons. There might be two theoretical roles for knowledge to play in this account that would make the concept of knowledge indispensable in fleshing out the details of the account. First, we haven't yet said anything about what supporting reasons are. We might need to invoke the concept of knowledge here to give an account of reasons. Second, we haven't yet said anything about what makes some sets of supporting reasons sufficient. We might need to invoke the concept of knowledge in giving an account of sufficient support. We will look at recent discussions of the nature of reasons and of the aim of belief to assess the status of the Irrelevance Thesis. We shall see that there are interesting ways to challenge the Irrelevance Thesis without questioning the standard story and without challenging the Subtraction Argument. It shouldn't surprise readers to learn that the Subtraction Argument is itself controversial. We shall also consider challenges to this argument and look at some recent defenses of the Sufficiency Thesis. We'll return to these issues in the next sections of the chapter.

Do the considerations that underwrite the Subtraction Argument tell us anything about the Necessity Thesis? It does seem that the first premise is stated in such a way that it presupposes the Necessity Thesis, but it's fair to ask for some reason to think that a subject's being in a position to know ensures that she's permitted to believe. It might seem that DJ lends some support to the Necessity Thesis. Suppose Agnes believes that it is raining in London. Amy wonders whether Agnes should believe this. If I assure Amy that Agnes knows that it is raining in London, could Amy accept this and then insist that Agnes shouldn't believe that it is raining in London? If not, do we now have some reason to accept the Necessity Thesis?

Perhaps not. Agnes is a dog. Amy is a mature, adult human. If Amy knew that Agnes was a dog, it would be strange for her to think that Agnes shouldn't believe what

⁶ Cohen's target is the kind of reliabilist view defended in Goldman (1979), so this intuition pump is stronger than the one needed for the job.

she believes. Do dogs have the rational capacities they would need to be answerable for their actions or attitudes? If not, it seems that Agnes wouldn't have responsibilities that she should meet and it might be a mistake to say that she should not do or believe certain things. If this is right, it would be a mistake for Amy to say that Agnes should not believe that it is raining in London, but it would equally be a mistake for Amy to say that Agnes' beliefs are justified or unjustified just as it would be a mistake for Amy to say that Agnes' anger wasn't justified or that she has a duty not to sleep on the sofa. Some animals might be exempt from normative appraisal in such a way that they don't have duties or responsibilities and cannot have justified or unjustified attitudes. Such creatures, however, might know that things are so. Even if Agnes doesn't know that it is raining in London, she might know that it is raining when she is in London suffering through it on a long walk.⁷ (If you think it helps, try to imagine that Agnes is a fish, a gerbil, a cat, an infant, a toddler, an undergraduate, etc. and see if there is some set of mental capacities typical of these kinds of creatures where it seems plausible to say that Agnes knows that it is raining and implausible to say that she has justified beliefs about the weather.)

If some creatures can have propositional knowledge without justified belief, we have our first challenge to the standard story. The story would be mistaken if it tried to characterize propositional knowledge as a special case of normatively appropriate belief. The objection to the standard view might require only a small revision to DJ:

DJ*: S's belief in p is justified iff S believes p , S can be held accountable for her attitudes, and it is not the case that S should not believe p .

Because this emendation is minor, it might seem that this challenge to the standard story won't be terribly significant. This point might prove to be significant later on.

If there is a kernel of truth in the Necessity Thesis, it might be this. When we're thinking about mature, adult humans (and other creatures, if there are any, that can be held accountable for their actions and attitudes), the thinker's beliefs couldn't fail to be justified if they constitute knowledge. The conditions that ensure that this thinker knows p would ensure that she violated no epistemic norms by virtue of believing p . The case of animals that are exempt from rational criticism is interesting because it suggests that knowledge might be non-normative in its nature but have a normative upshot in that its presence ensures that the right thinkers could be in a good position to believe what they ought to believe. We will discuss the Necessity Thesis further in §5.

3. Reasons, Justification, and Knowledge

The Subtraction Argument might appeal to those who accept this supervenience thesis:

Evidentialism: Propositional justification supervenes upon a subject's evidence (i.e., if two thinkers have the very same evidence, they will have justification to believe the very same propositions).

⁷ Maria Alvarez persuaded me to abandon the Necessity Thesis in discussing non-human animal knowledge. For further critical discussion of the Necessity Thesis, see Audi (1997), Kornblith (2008), Littlejohn (2015), Marcus (2012), Schellenberg (forthcoming), and Sylvan (MS).

This thesis, if true, would only support the Irrelevance Thesis if we didn't need the concept of knowledge to fill out the details of the view. In this section, we'll look at the relationship between knowledge and reasons. In the next, we'll look at the relationship between knowledge and rational support.

If you look at Gettier's original examples, they involve cases in which a subject's evidence supports a false belief and, according to Gettier, provide the kind of support that would justify the false belief. Gettier doesn't tell us what the subject's evidence is or what has to happen for the subject to possess this evidence, but questions about the ontology of epistemic reasons and the conditions that have to be met to possess them have recently come to the fore. Thanks in large part to Williamson's (2000) work, there has been a great deal of discussion recently about his identification of evidence and knowledge:

E=K: S's evidence includes p iff S knows p .⁸

If we combine E=K with Evidentialism, we get a quick refutation of the Irrelevance Thesis. The concept of knowledge would play an important role in the theory of justification because a subject's evidence is just her knowledge. Propositional justification would supervene upon propositional knowledge if it supervened upon evidence.

E=K is deeply controversial. According to E=K, a subject's evidence or a subject's reasons should be identified with the objects of her knowledge and knowledge is taken to be necessary and sufficient for the possession of a reason or piece of evidence. Critics have leveled a number of objections against this view, including the following:

(i) The subject's evidence or reasons should be identified with the subject's states of mind. It should be possible for a subject's belief to be based on her evidence and the basing relation holds between mental states and events.⁹

(ii) The subject's evidence or reasons should be identified with the objects of our attitudes, not the attitudes themselves, but the contents of these attitudes will constitute evidence even if these attitudes are inaccurate. Thus, we do not need knowledge to possess evidence because belief or justified belief is sufficient for the possession of evidence.¹⁰

(iii) The subject's evidence or reasons can be provided by experience or perception and doesn't require that the

⁸ See also Unger (1975), Hornsby (2008), and Hyman (1999) for discussion.

⁹ This statist conception of reasons is inspired by Davidson's (1963) seminal discussion of causes and reasons for action. See Gibbons (2013), McCain (2014), and Turri (2009) for versions of this objection and Alvarez (2010), Dancy (1999), and Littlejohn (2012) for responses.

¹⁰ See Hofmann (2014), Schroeder (2011), and Mitova (2015) for discussion of the idea that we can possess evidence by virtue of what we believe even if our beliefs do not constitute knowledge. See Fantl and McGrath (2009) for a critical discussion of the truth-requirement on evidence.

subject believes or knows that the target proposition is true.¹¹

(iv) Gettier cases show that a belief might just fail to constitute knowledge and still provide us with reasons or evidence.¹²

The success of these objections is still very much up for discussion. The critics of E=K need to address two powerful lines of argument. First, against (i), Dancy (2000) notes that it should be possible in principle to not just do or believe what there is good reason to do but to do or believe things for good reasons. If, as he suggests, good reasons are the things that figure in reasoning and seem to count in favor of doing what we do, they would be the objects of our attitudes, not the attitudes themselves. Thus, it seems that reasons should be propositionally specified using that-clauses and not propositional attitudes or mental events. Second, Unger (1975) observed long ago that when we attribute reasons to a subject in specifying her reasons for thinking, feeling, or doing things, these ascriptions appear to entail correlative knowledge ascriptions. If Unger was right about the linguistic considerations, proponents of E=K might not have to worry too much about (ii)-(iv).¹³

Those sympathetic to E=K will often say that reasons of all kinds are either facts or true propositions. To possess or have some reason is to stand in a relation to a reason (i.e., a fact or true proposition) such that you can be guided by it in thinking, feeling, and doing what you do. Some critics might raise one final worry about E=K, one that cannot be put to rest by appeal to the linguistic considerations:

(v) E=K implies that we have too much evidence or too many reasons in that the reach or scope of our knowledge is potentially quite great but the reasons or evidence we possess consists of things that we have a special kind of access to.¹⁴

This objection might or might not be connected to the familiar point that the normatively significant conditions have to be able to guide or direct us in a way that external things might not.

One way to respond to such worries is to think about what knowledge is supposed to be. According to Hyman (1999), knowledge is an ability, the ability to be rationally guided by reasons that are facts. If the idea behind (v) is that the objects of knowledge cannot guide you in what you think, feel, or do because, say, you have to be acquainted with reasons or evidence and the acquaintance relation never involves anything external to the mind, it looks as if those who press (v) will either need to contest Hyman's claim about the nature of knowledge, challenge our non-skeptical

¹¹ See Brueckner (2005) and McDowell (1994). For critical discussion of the operative assumptions about the nature of perceptual experience, see Brewer (2011) and Travis (2013).

¹² See Hughes (2014) and Locke (2015) for discussion. See Hyman (1999) for a defense.

¹³ For a state of the art discussion of the linguistic evidence, see Hawthorne and Magidor (forthcoming).

¹⁴ We find versions of this objection in Fumerton (1995) and Silins (2005). This doesn't seem to be essential to Cohen's (1984) new evil demon objection, but he does characterize a subject's reasons as things common to the good case and the relevant cases of subjectively indiscernible

views about the extent of our knowledge, challenge Unger's take on the linguistic evidence, or admit that it is quite literally impossible to be upset that your neighbor ran over your cat. If you could be upset that your neighbor ran over your cat, your reason for being upset would be that your neighbor ran over your cat. That could be your reason for being upset, Unger reminds us, only if you knew that your neighbor was the one who ran the cat over. If the idea behind (v) is not that we're incapable of being rationally guided by external facts but that it's somehow inappropriate to treat some objects of knowledge as reasons for doing things, that objection might not cause difficulties for Hyman's account of knowledge as an ability, but we will see in the course of discussing norms for practical and theoretical reasoning below that the objection raises some incredibly difficult issues about the nature of knowledge. Let's put a pin in this objection for the time being.

A second strategy for responding to the kinds of objections we find in (v) is to run a kind of companions-in-guilt argument. On one way of fleshing out the details of the argument, a subject is rationally required to respond to her evidence and reasons (e.g., by updating her beliefs, adjusting her confidence, making bets and decisions, etc.) but couldn't be rationally required to respond to things spatially or temporally removed from her, in which case it's a mistake to identify the objects of this subject's knowledge with her evidence and/or reasons. If the goal is to show that, say, a subject couldn't be required to respond to some of the things that she knows because the kind of access a subject has to such things might be problematic, a defender of E=K might argue that there aren't non-trivial conditions that we invariably stand in better epistemic relations to and/or argue that the things we are more intimately connected to don't have the normative significance that proponents of this line of objection assume.¹⁵

4. Rational Support and Knowledge

In the previous section, we saw how someone who accepts E=K might challenge the Irrelevance Thesis. In this section, we'll look at a second challenge to the Irrelevance Thesis, one that has to do with the nature of rational support. We expect philosophers who accept Evidentialism (understood as it is here) to say that a belief is justified or rationally held if based on sufficient evidence. How should we understand this notion of sufficiency? Can we understand what makes the support sufficient without invoking the concept of knowledge?

One approach that we might consider is the Lockean approach.¹⁶ A Lockean could argue that the degree of belief that a thinker ought to have in a proposition should match the evidential probability of that proposition and that it is rational for a thinker to believe (outright) p iff she rationally has a sufficiently high degree of confidence in the truth of p . In stating this account, it seems we wouldn't need to invoke the concept of knowledge. This kind of approach might be appealing to philosophers who think that our epistemic aim is to believe what's true and avoid believing what's false. It captures an important aspect of rationality:

¹⁵ For helpful discussions of these issues, see Williamson's (2000) anti-luminosity argument and Gertler (2010), Littlejohn (2012), and Srinivasan (2015).

¹⁶ See Foley (2009). For a subtle version of the Lockean view that might avoid the standard objections leveled against it, see Locke (2015).

... a rational agent should be doing well by her own lights, in a particular way: roughly speaking, she should follow the epistemic rule that she rationally takes to be most truth-conducive. It would be irrational, the thought goes, to regard some epistemic rule as more truth-conducive than one's own, but not adopt it (Horowitz 2014: 43).

Lottery propositions are an interesting test case for approaches to rational support that focus on truth-conducivity or the rational means for pursuing truth and avoiding error. While it seems we should be highly confident that a ticket for an upcoming lottery is not the one that will be chosen, opinion seems to divide on two questions about full belief. First, can we know that our ticket will not win if we're going just on the odds? Second, can we justifiably believe (outright) that our ticket will not win if we're just going on the odds?

Suppose that we know *a priori* that we aren't in a position to know whether our ticket will lose. Since we do know that adopting a rule against believing in such cases would not be as truth-conducive as adopting a rule that permits or requires belief in such cases, it might seem from a certain perspective that we would be justified in believing outright that a ticket would lose. From a different perspective, however, it might seem irrational to believe what you know you cannot know. To be sure, if we assigned values to getting things right and getting things wrong and aimed to form beliefs in such a way as to maximize expected value (restricted to these values!), it would seem that rationality should permit belief in these cases. Indeed, it should permit believing conjunctions of the form: this ticket will lose and I don't know if it will. Since this strikes many as an irrational thing to think, it might give us some reason to worry about the idea that rationality and rational support should be characterized in terms of some connection to the truth and without any concern for whether our beliefs would stand in some interesting relationship to knowledge.¹⁷

Some philosophers have proposed that there is a rational requirement that forbids believing p while believing that you aren't in a position to know whether p . If such a requirement exists, cases like the lottery suggest that we do need to invoke the concept of knowledge to understand what makes rational support sufficient for full belief. Two beliefs might be equally likely on the evidence, but it might be rational to fully believe in only one case if, say, one belief is a good candidate for knowledge and the other is hopeless. This has led Bird to propose this interesting account of rational belief or judgment:

If in world w_1 S has mental states M and then forms a judgment, that judgment is justified if and only if there is some world w_2 where, with the same mental states M, S forms a corresponding judgment and that judgment yields knowledge (Bird 2007: 84).

¹⁷ For further discussion of these kinds of cases, see Adler (2002), Littlejohn (2015), Nelkin (2000), McGlynn (2011), Sutton (2007), and Williamson (2000). In my (2015), I argue that the lottery causes difficulty for the Lockean because it shows that full and partial belief are under different rational pressures. In these discussions, authors typically assume that the lottery propositions are, in Sutton's terminology, 'known unknowns'. For dissent on this point, see Sosa (2015). Sosa suggests that we can know that some specific tickets will lose when the probabilities are high enough.

One nice feature of Bird's account is that it explains an intuitive difference between the lottery and preface cases. In both cases we have propositions that are highly probable on the subject's evidence. In one version of the preface case, an author believes on good evidence each claim in her work of non-fiction and is told by a highly reliable source that her work contains one error. It seems that she could rationally believe this piece of testimony and still rationally believe each claim in the book. While it seems that the Lockean tells us a nice story about how this is possible, it also seems to imply that it should be rational to believe lottery propositions. This second claim, however, strikes some as counterintuitive and leads some authors to insist that the cases should be treated differently. Bird's account vindicates this intuition if, as many philosophers think, the entries in the book (including the preface statement) are things that the subject could know but lottery propositions are not.¹⁸

Instead of thinking of belief as aimed at just the truth, some philosophers would argue that belief aims at knowledge. Stated in a different way, they might say that beliefs are supposed to be knowledge or that a belief can only do what it is supposed to do when it constitutes knowledge.¹⁹ If we revise our view of belief and its aim accordingly, it is easy to see why a view of rationality akin to Bird's might seem attractive. If it is attractive, though, note that we have used the concept of knowledge to understand when the available rational support is adequate or sufficient and abandoned the project of understanding the sufficiency of that support in terms of some connection to the truth.

Lynch suggests that we value true belief, in part, because we value being in touch with reality:

... [I]f we didn't have a basic preference for the truth, it would be hard to explain why we find the prospect of being undetectably wrong so disturbing. Think about a modification of the experience-machine scenario we began with. Some super neuroscientists give you the choice between continuing to live normally, or having your brain hooked up to a supercomputer that will make it seem as if you are continuing to live normally ... When in the vat, you will continue to have all the same experiences you would have in the real world. Because of this, you would believe that you are reading a book, that you are hungry, and so on. In short, your beliefs and experiences will be the same, but most of your beliefs will be false (2004: 17).

Part of what's disturbing about this, he says, is that we don't just want certain experiences or appearances, we 'want certain realities behind those experiences' (2004: 139). If we see Gettier-type cases as cases in which our true beliefs fail to put us in touch with these realities, this might explain why beliefs are supposed to be knowledge and aim at something more than mere accuracy. If they aim at more than mere accuracy, we should expect that we wouldn't be able to cash out the notion of sufficient support for being in a state that aims at knowledge in terms of nothing but some relation to

¹⁸ For two very different perspectives on Makinson's (1965) preface paradox, see Christensen (2004) and Ryan (1991).

¹⁹ For arguments that belief 'aims' at the truth, see Wedgwood (2002) and Williams (1973). For arguments that the aim of belief is knowledge, see Bird (2007), Hyman (1999), Littlejohn (2013), Smithies (2012), Sutton (2007), and Williamson (2000).

truth. Beliefs are supposed to provide us with reasons that can guide our thinking, feeling, and doing and, arguably, our beliefs do this iff they constitute knowledge.²⁰

5. Knowledge Norms

We have considered two ways of challenging the Irrelevance Thesis without challenging any of the operative assumptions in the Subtraction Argument. Even if it's possible to justifiably believe what you don't know, it might be that the concept of knowledge plays an important role in our understanding of epistemic normativity because that concept plays an important role in understanding the nature of reasons and the kind of rational support necessary for rational or justified belief. In this section, we shall look at some of the ways that philosophers have challenged the operative assumptions in the Subtraction Argument.

McDowell tells us that knowledge is a standing in the space of reasons (1998: 395) and I think we can read him as saying two things in saying this. First, he thinks that it's important that knowledge is supported by reasons, that we acquire knowledge by responding appropriately to the reasons in our possession. Second, he thinks that knowledge is a standing of normative significance in that he believes that if you believe *p* without knowing *p* you believe something you shouldn't and your belief cannot be justified. On the first point, McDowell tells us that:

... [O]ne's epistemic standing ... cannot intelligibly be constituted, even in part, by matters blankly external to how it is with one subjectively. For how could such matters be other than beyond one's ken? And how could matters beyond one's ken many any difference to one's epistemic standing (1998: 390)?

As he sees it, the conditions that ensure that we know must all be present to the mind or subjectivity and the factors that play this role in ensuring that our beliefs constitute knowledge are reasons for our belief. These reasons have to ensure that we're in a position to know, for otherwise there would be a gap between believing for these reasons and knowing, a gap that makes the difference between knowledge and ignorance turn on something that is 'beyond our ken'. Such matters might make you lucky, healthy, or wealthy, but they shouldn't be the crucial factors that explain how you're 'in the know'. As for the second point, he seems to think that if we adopt the standard account of knowledge, one that rejects the Sufficiency Thesis, we will fail to accommodate the crucial internalist insight contained in the passage just quoted:

In the hybrid conception [of knowledge that allows that two subjects might both believe for adequate reasons but differ in what they know], a satisfactory standing in the space of reasons is only part of what knowledge is; truth is an extra requirement. So two subjects can be alike in respect of their satisfactoriness of their standing in the space of reasons, because only in her case is what she takes to be actually so. But if its being so is external to her operations in the space of reasons, how can it not be

²⁰ This line of argument, found in Hyman (1999), Littlejohn (2015), and Williamson (2000) provides a response to Sartwell's (1991) challenge to orthodox accounts of knowledge that distinguish knowledge from mere true belief. It also avoids Lackey's (2009) objections to credit-based accounts of the value of knowledge. For alternative accounts of the value of knowledge, see Kvanvig (2003) and Zagzebski (1996).

outside the reach of her rational powers? And if it is outside the reach of her rational powers, how can its being so be the crucial element in the intelligible conception of her knowing that it is so (1998: 403)?

McDowell embraces the Sufficiency Thesis and takes it that if a subject's reasons provide sufficient support for her beliefs, they ensure that the subject's beliefs constitute knowledge.

Critics will of course argue that this conception of knowledge is problematic because the subject's reasons could always fall short and fail to ensure that the subject's beliefs are accurate. McDowell thinks that such objections miss their mark insofar as they reflect the mistaken assumption that the reasons that we'd possess in the good and bad cases would be identical. They might be similar in certain respects and we might not be able to tell by reflecting on our reasons that we're in the bad case when we're in that case, but it is nevertheless a mistake to think that the rational support we have for our beliefs doesn't differ in the good and bad cases.

It might seem that we get some support for this idea by thinking about the arguments we considered earlier in support of E=K. Such arguments, if sound, would show that if a subject knows p and a second subject mistakenly believes p , the first subject's evidence would provide better support for her belief however similar these subjects might otherwise be.²¹ In fact, E=K might cause trouble for McDowell. If we read McDowell as saying that all propositional knowledge involves believing something for reasons that provide the kind of rational support that ensure that your beliefs would constitute knowledge, it is hard to see how to square this with E=K because it is hard to see how cases of non-inferential knowledge would be possible.²² E=K tells us that knowledge is a necessary condition for the possession of reasons or evidence. If, as seems plausible, you cannot believe p for some specific reasons if the possession of these reasons requires believing p , it's hard to see how to square E=K with McDowell's conception of knowledge. It isn't surprising, then, that McDowell offers an account of the possession of reasons according to which perception can provide us with reasons that constitute the rational basis of our perceptual beliefs.

Critics have suggested that McDowell's assumptions about reasons and perception are problematic for a variety of reasons and worried about his handling of cases of inductive inference. While it does seem that McDowell can appeal to some recent defenses of E=K to fend off some objections to his proposal, these objections have to be addressed separately. What is interesting about McDowell's position is that he seems to combine Evidentialism (as it is understood here) with his unorthodox account of justification according to which all justified beliefs must constitute knowledge. If cases of inductive inference cause difficulty for this combination of views, we could embrace the hybrid conception of knowledge that McDowell takes to be problematic or we could reject the Evidentialism. In a way, this appears to be what

²¹ Indeed, on Williamson's (2000) view, this is trivial because p is always evidence for itself. Thus, if E=K is true and p is known, it follows that the evidential probability of p on your total evidence is 1. See Brown (2013) for criticism of this view of evidence and knowledge.

²² For arguments that we should not assume that whenever a subject acquires knowledge she does so by believing something for a reason, see Anscombe (1962) and McGinn (2012).

Williamson has done. Like McDowell, Williamson thinks that our evidence includes facts that have to do with things in the external world and thinks that the possibility of knowledge of the external world requires the possession of this evidence. Unlike McDowell, however, it is not part of Williamson's conception of knowledge that each case of knowledge involves believing things on the basis of independently possessed reasons that would ensure that your beliefs are justified.

Why, then, would Williamson embrace the Sufficiency Thesis? He does so because, like McDowell, he thinks that knowledge is a standing in the space of reasons in the sense that he thinks that this norm governs belief:

You should believe p only if you know p (Only Knowledge).²³

If you think that belief is governed by this norm, there is a simple and straightforward argument for the Sufficiency Thesis:

The Deontological Argument

1. S's belief in p is justified only if S believes p and it is not the case that S should not believe p . [DJ]

2. If S believes p but does not know p , she should not believe p . [Only Knowledge]

C. S's belief is justified only if S knows p .²⁴

If a thinker violates norms that govern belief, the thinker might be excused, but the deontological theory understands justified as permitted.

If we assume that JD is correct or not the likely culprit to cause trouble here, critics will naturally focus on Only Knowledge. Why, they might ask, should we think that belief is governed by such a norm? We have already seen some of the evidence. It

²³ While the idea that the fundamental norm of belief is Only Knowledge is increasingly popular, this view faces two *prima facie* difficulties. According to the Necessity Thesis, a belief is knowledge only if it is justified. According to DJ, if it is justified, it violates no norm. If justified belief requires more than knowledge, it seems that a justified belief might both satisfy and violate the fundamental epistemic norm. This is bad enough, but there is a second worry that has to do with grounding. If the Necessity Thesis is correct, Only Knowledge only applies once something or other determines whether a belief is justified. If Only Knowledge is the fundamental norm, it should determine whether a belief is justified. If we reject the Necessity Thesis and see knowledge as a relation between a thinker and a fact that involves no normative dimension or part, these problems go away. We can think of the relationship between knowledge and permission, justification, or rightness as akin to the relationship that the utilitarian thinks holds between the optimific and the right. If Agnes performs an action that is optimific, it has the properties that would make it right if she were a responsible agent. The optimific act (if performed by a responsible agent) might also imply rightness, but the property of being optimific is independent from the property of being right and can play a kind of grounding role.

²⁴ For an interesting discussion of whether knowledge should be sufficient for justified belief, see Lasonen-Aarnio (2010). For a discussion of whether knowledge ensures that the thinker conforms to epistemic norms, see Brown (2011). For defenses of the view that all justified beliefs have to be knowledge, see Littlejohn (2013), McDowell (1998), Sutton (2007), Unger (1975), and Williamson (forthcoming). Unger is a funny case because he argues that we could not rationally believe p unless we knew it and then argues that virtually nothing is known.

might be that Only Knowledge does a better job explaining our intuitions than alternative norms that have no natural or ready explanation as to why we shouldn't believe Moorean absurdities or lottery propositions or why it might be acceptable to come to believe p but not believe q when the evidence that supports q makes q more probable than p .²⁵ Philosophers sympathetic to the idea that the concept of knowledge figures in norms that govern assertion and the use of premises in practical or theoretical reasoning have observed that we often challenge the use of premises or the assertion of a claim by asking an individual whether she knows that something is true. This suggests that there is some mutual recognition that it is normatively significant whether the thinker knows that the premises in her reasoning are true or whether she knows that what she says is true.²⁶

Many epistemologists would still insist that the Sufficiency Thesis is mistaken. Some would argue that justification doesn't require conforming to all the norms that govern belief, only those that have internal or subjective application conditions.²⁷ Some would argue that the very same kinds of cases that originally led philosophers to reject the Sufficiency Thesis (e.g., cases of error, cases of accidentally true belief) should lead philosophers to reject the idea that the concept of knowledge figures in the formulation of genuine epistemic norms.²⁸

The difficulty we face in resolving the dispute at this point in the dialectic is similar to the difficulty we face in trying to resolve the internalism-externalism dispute. It seems that one camp will insist that everything of normative significance is in place if we're internally similar to knowers. Another camp will insist that belief is only normatively appropriate if the internal and external conditions necessary for knowledge are satisfied. One way to try to break the deadlock is to think about what happens *after* the violation of some putative norm. If we assert something we do not know and assertion is governed by a norm similar to Only Knowledge, do speakers have special responsibilities for misleading their audience or should we say that something bad has happened and that the speaker strictly speaking did not do anything wrong? Perhaps further research into these kinds of questions will help us decide whether the arguments for internalism about justification should lead us to reject the Sufficiency Thesis or they might help us see that the Sufficiency Thesis is actually in better shape than its critics would have us believe.²⁹

References

- Adler, Jonathan. 2002. *Belief's Own Ethics*. MIT University Press.
Alvarez, Maria. 2010. *Kinds of Reasons*. Oxford University Press.
Anscombe, G.E.M. 1962. On Sensations of Position. *Analysis* 22: 55-8.

²⁵ See Williamson (2000).

²⁶ See Hawthorne and Stanley (2008) for a defense of a knowledge norm for practical reasoning. For defenses of the knowledge norm for assertion, see Benton (2011), Turri (2011), Unger (1975), and Williamson (2000). See Montminy (2013) for arguments that a common norm will govern assertion and the use of premises in practical reasoning.

²⁷ Bird (2007), Smithies (2012), and Huemer (forthcoming) defend views akin to this one.

²⁸ See Fantl and McGrath (2009), Gerken (2011), Lackey (2007), and McKinnon (2013).

²⁹ This line of research has been explored in Darley and Robinson (1998), Littlejohn (2012), and Turri (2015).

- Audi, Robert. 1997. The Place of Testimony in the Fabric of Knowledge. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34: 405-22.
- Brewer, Bill. 2011. *Perception and its Objects*. Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Jessica. 2011. Fallibilism and the Knowledge Norm for Assertion and Practical Reasoning. In J. Brown and H. Cappelen (ed.), *Assertion: New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Jessica. 2013. Infallibilism, Evidence, and Pragmatics. *Analysis* 73: 626-35.
- Brueckner, Anthony. 2005. Knowledge, Evidence, and Skepticism According to Williamson. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70: 436-43.
- Cohen, Stewart. 1984. Justification and Truth. *Philosophical Studies* 46: 279-95.
- Christensen, David. 2004. *Putting Logic in its Place*. Oxford University Press.
- Dancy, Jonathan. 1999. *Practical Reality*. Oxford University Press.
- Darley, John and Paul Robinson. 1998. Testing Competing Theories of Justification. *North Carolina Law Review* 76: 1095-143.
- Davidson, Donald. 1963. Actions, Reasons, and Causes. *Journal of Philosophy* 60: 685-700.
- Dutant, Julien. 2015. The Legend of the Justified, True Belief Analysis. *Philosophical Perspectives* 29: 95-145.
- Fantl, Jeremy and Matthew McGrath. 2009. *Knowledge in an Uncertain World*. Oxford University Press.
- Foley, Richard. 2009. Beliefs, Degrees of Belief, and the Lockean Thesis. In Franz Huber and Christoph Schmidt-Petri (ed.), *Degrees of Belief*. Springer: 37-47.
- Foley, Richard. 2012. *When is True Belief Knowledge?* Princeton University Press.
- Fumerton, Richard. 1995. *Metaepistemology and Skepticism*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gertler, Brie. 2010. *Self-Knowledge*. Routledge.
- Gettier, Edmund. 1963. Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? *Analysis* 23: 121-3.
- Gibbons, John. 2013. *The Norm of Belief*. Oxford University Press.
- Goldman, Alvin. 1979. What Is Justified Belief? In G. Pappas (ed.) *Justification and Knowledge*, D. Reidel, pp. 1-23.
- Hawthorne, John and Ofra Magidor. Forthcoming. Reflections on Reasons. . In D. Star (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*. Oxford University Press.
- Hawthorne, John and Jason Stanley. 2008. Knowledge and Action. *Journal of Philosophy* 105: 571-90.
- Hofmann, Frank. 2014. Gettier for Justification. *Episteme* 11: 305-18.
- Hornsby, Jennifer. 2008. A Disjunctive Theory of Acting for Reasons. In F. Macpherson and A. Haddock (ed.), *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Horowitz, Sophie. 2014. Immoderately Rational. *Philosophical Studies* 167: 41-56.
- Huemer, Michael. Forthcoming. Defending a Brain in a Vat. In F. Dorsch and J. Dutant (ed.), *The New Evil Demon*. Oxford University Press.
- Hughes, Nick. 2014. Is Knowledge the Ability to ϕ for the Reason that P? *Episteme* 11: 457-62.
- Kim, Jaegwon. 1988. What is 'Naturalized Epistemology'? *Philosophical Perspectives* 2: 381-405.
- Kornblith, Hilary. 2008. Knowledge Needs No Justification. In Q. Smith (ed.), *Epistemology: New Essays*. Oxford University Press.
- Kvanvig, Jonathan. 2003. *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*. Cambridge University Press.

- Lackey, Jennifer. 2007. Norms of Assertion. *Nous* 41: 594-626.
- Lackey, Jennifer. 2009. Knowledge and Credit. *Philosophical Studies* 142: 27-42.
- Lasonen-Aarnio, Maria. 2010. Unreasonable Knowledge. *Philosophical Perspectives* 25: 1-21.
- Littlejohn, Clayton. 2012. *Justification and the Truth-Connection*. Cambridge University Press.
- Littlejohn, Clayton. 2013. The Russellian Retreat. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 113: 293-320.
- Littlejohn, Clayton. 2015. Who Cares what you Accurately Believe? *Philosophical Perspectives* 29: 217-48.
- Locke, Dustin. 2014. The Decision-Theoretic Lockean Thesis. *Inquiry* 57: 28-54.
- Locke, Dustin. 2015. Knowledge, Explanation, and Motivation. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 52: 215-33.
- McCain, Kevin. 2014. *Evidentialism and Epistemic Justification*. Routledge.
- McDowell, John. 1994. *Mind and World*. Harvard University Press.
- McDowell, John. 1998. *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*. Harvard University Press.
- McGinn, Marie. 2012. Non-Inferential Knowledge. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 112: 1-28.
- McGlynn, Aidan. 2011. Believing Things Unknown. *Nous* 47: 385-407.
- McGlynn, Aidan. 2014. *Knowledge First?* Palgrave Macmillan.
- McKinnon, Rachel. 2013. The Supportive Reasons Norm of Assertion. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50: 121-35.
- Makinson, D.C. 1965. The Paradox of the Preface. *Analysis* 25: 205-7.
- Marcus, Eric. 2012. *Rational Causation*. Harvard University Press.
- Mitova, Veli. 2015. Truthy Psychologism about Evidence. *Philosophical Studies* 172: 1105-1126.
- Montminy, Martin. 2013. Why Assertion and Practical Reasoning Must be Governed by the Same Epistemic Norm. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 94: 57-68.
- Naylor, Margery. 1988. Epistemic Justification. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25: 49-58.
- Nelkin, Dana. 2000. The Lottery Paradox, Knowledge, and Rationality. *Philosophical Review* 109: 373-409.
- Ryan, Sharon. 1991. The Preface Paradox. *Philosophical Studies* 64: 293-307.
- Sartwell, Crispin. 1991. Knowledge is Merely True Belief. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 28: 157-65.
- Schellenberg, Susanna. Forthcoming. Perceptual Capacities, Knowledge, and Gettier Cases. In R. Borges, C. de Almeida, and P. Klein (ed.), *Explaining Knowledge: New Essays on the Gettier Problem*. Oxford University Press.
- Schroeder, Mark. 2011. What Does it Take to 'Have' a Reason? In A. Reisner and A. Steglich-Petersen (ed.), *Reasons for Belief*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 201-22.
- Silins, Nico. 2005. Deception and Evidence. *Philosophical Perspectives* 19: 375-404.
- Slote, Michael. 1979. Assertion and Belief. In J. Dancy (ed.), *Papers on Language and Logic*. Keele University Library.
- Smithies, Declan. 2012. The Normative Role of Knowledge. *Nous* 46: 265-88.
- Sosa, Ernest. 2015. *Judgment and Agency*. Oxford University Press.
- Srinivasan, Amia. 2015. Normativity without Cartesian Privilege. *Philosophical Issues* 25: 273-99.

- Sutton, Jonathan. 2007. *Without Justification*. MIT University Press.
- Sylvan, Kurt. MS. Knowledge as a Non-Normative Relation.
- Travis, Charles. 2013. *Perception: Essays After Frege*. Oxford University Press.
- Turri, John. 2009. The Ontology of Epistemic Reasons. *Nous* 43: 490–512.
- Turri, John. 2011. The Express Knowledge Account of Assertion. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 89: 37-45.
- Turri, John. 2015. Knowledge and the Norm of Assertion: A Simple Test. *Synthese* 192: 385-392.
- Unger, Peter. 1975. *Ignorance*. Oxford University Press.
- Wedgwood, Ralph. 2002. The Aim of Belief. *Philosophical Perspectives* 16: 267-97.
- Williams, Bernard. 1973. Deciding to Believe. In his *Problems of the Self*. Cambridge University Press.
- Williamson, Timothy. 2000. *Knowledge and its Limits*. Oxford University Press.
- Zagzebski, Linda. 1996. *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*. Cambridge University Press.