

Knowledge Requires Belief – and It Doesn't? On Belief as such and Belief Necessary for Knowledge

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Abstract

Does *knowledge* entail *belief*? This paper argues that the answer depends on how one interprets 'belief'. There are two different notions of belief: *belief as such* and *belief for knowledge*. They often differ in their degrees of conviction such that one but not both might be present in a particular case. The core of the paper is dedicated to a defence of this overlooked distinction. The first two sections present the distinction. Section 3 presents two cases which are supposed to back up the claim that there is an important distinction here while section 4 offers some explanations concerning the structure of these cases. Section 5 adds further considerations in support of the core thesis, and section 6 discusses objections. The distinction is important as such but also has interesting implications concerning the much discussed 'entailment thesis' according to which *knowledge* entails *belief*. It is argued here that even if *knowledge* entails *belief-for-knowledge*, it does not entail *belief-as-such*. This constitutes an interesting middle position and compromise in the philosophical debate about the entailment thesis. One further implication of this paper is that the discussion about the entailment thesis needs to take degrees of conviction seriously. Still another implication is that epistemic contextualists can deal very well with the relevant phenomena.

Keywords: Knowledge; Belief; Entailment Thesis.

1. A Picture

Some apples are good enough to be eaten just like that. Let us say that these apples pass a (vague) quality threshold Q. Other apples fall short of Q but can still be used for baking apple cakes. Should we say that they pass another, lower quality threshold L (also passed by the first sort of apples)? One problem with that is that how good apples need to be for a good apple cake also depends on the quality of the other ingredients: If the raisins and the dough are superb, then one can still make a good apple cake with apples that would spoil

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the cake if the raisins and the dough were less spectacular. There seems to be a variable minimum quality threshold for apple cake apples which is at least partly being fixed by the quality of the other ingredients (we can assume that the same is true for the other ingredients). L is variable and can diverge from Q (perhaps Q is also variable; presumably this would be for reasons different from the ones why L is variable).

Now compare apples and cakes with belief and knowledge and consider the following claims.

Some of the states we ordinarily call 'beliefs' are strong enough to qualify as beliefs as such, that is, as something we would call 'belief' in the context of an ordinary belief attribution where no other doxastic or epistemic state (like knowledge) is attributed. Let us say that these beliefs pass a (vague) degree-of-conviction threshold T_B (typically if not always < 1 but still pretty high) for 'belief as such'. Other beliefs aren't that strong but still strong enough for knowledge: Knowledge that p requires a strong enough belief that p .² Should we say that the latter sort of beliefs passes a 'belief-for-knowledge threshold' T_K lower than T_B (see section 2 for generalization)? One problem with that is that how strong a belief needs to be for knowledge also depends on some of the other necessary conditions of knowledge. If Rumpole's evidence that Dee did the deed is excellent, then he can still know this even if his degree of conviction that Dee did the deed is quite low, - so low that with lesser evidence he would not count as knowing. There is a variable minimum strength of conviction required for knowledge where the minimum is at least partly fixed by the properties of other necessary conditions of knowledge (and similar for these conditions; the truth-condition is different here insofar as truth does not admit of degrees).

Are there then two kinds of states, both covered by the general term 'belief': beliefs as such and beliefs for knowledge, as one can call them for lack of more elegant terms? No, I don't mean to claim that beliefs as such and beliefs for knowledge are qualitatively distinct and ontologically diverse kinds of state. Rather not: They just differ as to the degree of conviction required for belief or knowledge. We can say the following in the way of explication:

2 I am assuming here that knowledge requires some kind of doxastic state or belief or, put differently, that the relevant type of state required by knowledge counts as a kind of belief. I am not arguing for this assumption here because the aim of this paper is a different one.

(*Belief as such*) S has a belief-as-such that p just in case S's degree of conviction that p is above the threshold T_B (where 'S believes that p '³ is true just in case S's degree of conviction that p is above T_B);

(*Belief for knowledge*) S has a belief-for-knowledge that p just in case S's degree of conviction that p is above the threshold T_K (where 'S knows that p ' is true only if S's degree of conviction that p is above T_K).

It is important to keep in mind that these two terms are technical terms (with their meanings fixed or at least circumscribed by the remarks above). The main points of this paper could also be expressed in a different way and just by talking about degrees of conviction which is the basic notion here: The degree required for true knowledge ascriptions can diverge from the degree of conviction required for true 'belief' ascription. However, this would be a bit cumbersome and it is for reasons of simplicity of exposition alone that I choose to use the terms 'beliefs as such' and 'beliefs for knowledge'. But it is important to keep in mind that no deep and substantial distinction between types of mental states is assumed here. Also for the sake of simplicity, I will continue on occasion to use unqualified expressions like 'belief', namely when it is obvious from the context what I have in mind or when the difference doesn't matter.

Threshold T_K is variable and can diverge from threshold T_B in different ways. I find it plausible to assume that T_B is variable, too, though for different reasons. For instance, the degree of conviction necessary (and perhaps also sufficient) for counting as 'believing' some set of religious doctrines seems higher when one is considered for acceptance into the inner circle of some sect than when one is being asked about one's beliefs for the purposes of some consumers' survey. I will therefore assume variability of T_B in what follows, too, but not present any detailed argument for this claim because it is not essential to the argument of this paper; if the reader has doubts about the variability of T_B they can just drop this claim without loss of substance here.

3 - where the thought that S believes that p , or the utterance of 'S believes that p ' happens in a situation where attribution or denial of knowledge is not relevant or in focus. - When discussing the doxastic requirements for S's knowledge or lack thereof, one would use 'S believes that p ' in a different sense. - In ordinary life, instances of 'S believes that p ' are always (or almost always) used to refer to belief as such, not to belief for knowledge. It seems that the latter is meant only (or mostly) when the requirements for knowledge are being discussed - which typically happens in very special philosophical contexts. There does not seem much of a risk of confusion at all in ordinary contexts but in philosophical contexts one has to be very careful with the use of one's words. But this is typical of philosophy in general and not just here. Thanks to a referee here.

2. The Main Claim

Is the above picture correct? There are two claims to be considered here. First, there is a denial of the claim that the following scheme is valid:

Belief as such that p requires a degree of conviction that p above the (vague) threshold T_B ; knowledge that p requires a degree of conviction that p above the (vague) threshold T_K ; $T_B = T_K$.

More precisely, and generalizing in a very plausible way from the special case and example in section 1 above, the first claim to be considered says that the following scheme is valid:

(1) Belief as such that p requires a degree of conviction that p above some (vague) variable threshold T_B ; knowledge that p requires a degree of conviction that p above some (vague) variable threshold T_K ; and for some of the cases $T_K < T_B$, for some other cases $T_B < T_K$, and finally for some cases $T_B = T_K$.⁴

According to (1), the Rumpole case above would just be one out of three kinds of cases (see section 3).

We can add a second claim:

(2) The value of T_K is determined partly by the properties of other necessary conditions of knowledge (which are also variable).

Does anything speak in favour of (1) or (2)? Since (1) is the core claim here, let us focus on it. In the next section, I will present two cases that support the core claim (see also the concluding section for some methodological remarks on the use and relevance of such cases). In section 4 I will offer an explanation why the cases differ and what might be at work in them. Section 5 adds some further considerations and section 6 discusses objections.

4 Given that T_B and T_K differ, one should also expect that different degrees of conviction also bring about different degrees of readiness to act on the belief or to employ it in inferences. I will not focus here on these additional aspects. – I will assume here that both T_B and T_K cannot go below .5; otherwise one could ascribe a belief that p in cases where the degree of conviction that not p is greater than the degree of conviction that p . And this would create problems both for the attribution of knowledge and of belief.

3. Cases

Consider Radford-style cases (see Radford 1966 and quite recently: Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel 2013; Murray, Sytsma and Livengood 2013, Rose and Schaffer 2013), that is, cases where it seems that $T_K < T_B$. A nervous pupil is examined about the structure of the DNA. The pupil answers a given question without much confidence but correctly. It is hard to imagine how he could have come up with that particular answer (assuming that he was not just making a lucky guess) without knowing it. Whether he is aware of it or not, his training, past learning and the evidence that he possesses enables him to answer the question correctly. He knows the answer even though his degree of conviction is quite low: other necessary conditions of knowledge compensate for the low degree of conviction in such a way that he still counts as knowing. At the same time, we would deny that ‘The pupil believes that so-and-so’ is true; he is too hesitant and lacking in confidence. All this is possible because the thresholds T_K and T_B come apart here such that $T_K < T_B$ and the pupil’s degree of conviction is $> T_K$ but $< T_B$. What we have here is a case where ‘S knows that p ’ is true while ‘S believes (as such) that p ’ is false. Radford believed that this shows that knowledge does not require belief. But that is not quite right. It just shows that knowledge can require a degree of conviction lower than the one required by belief as such. Put paradoxically: Knowledge requires belief but it can be true that someone has knowledge and false that she has the corresponding belief. All this, if correct, also shows that neglecting degrees of conviction (or ‘belief’) or focusing exclusively on full or outright belief can stand in the way of an adequate picture (much of the debate on knowledge and belief is, unfortunately, restricted to matters of full or outright belief). A further advantage of the view proposed here is that it offers a middle position and a good compromise in the philosophical debate between defenders and deniers of the entailment thesis (that *knowledge* entails *belief*)⁵: It is very plausible, given one interpretation (taking ‘belief’ as ‘belief for knowledge’), but it does not hold, given another interpretation (taking ‘belief’ as ‘belief as such’). In other words, even if

5 See for the last few decades: Radford 1966 or Mannison 1976; influential proponents of the entailment thesis are Lehrer 1968 and Armstrong 1969 (see Annis 1969 for a critique of Lehrer and Radford 1970 for a critique of Armstrong). See also the exchange between Sorensen 1982, White 1983 and Sorensen 1984. Farkas 2015 (esp. sec.4-6) uses the extended-mind-hypothesis to suggest that there might be cases of knowledge without belief. See also the recent Tebben forthcoming. – The recent experimental research on the entailment thesis (see Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel 2013, Murray, Sytsma and Livengood 2013, and Rose and Schaffer 2013, Beebe 2013) is very interesting and promising.

(Entailment-Strong) If S knows that p , then S has a belief as such as well as a belief for knowledge that p

is not correct, the weaker schema

(Entailment-Weak) If S knows that p , then S has a belief for knowledge that p

can still be correct.⁶

There are also cases where $T_B < T_K$. Anderson 2012, 388-9 offers the following example. Jones has placed a huge bet on the racehorse Papa Clem. Jones misses the race itself but appears on the scene just after its end and receives very good and true initial evidence that Papa Clem has lost the race. Jones comes to accept, reluctantly, that Papa Clem has lost (he 'believed' in the horse very much and badly wants it to win); his degree of conviction is not high and his attitude is unstable (any further, new evidence that Papa Clem has won after all, would change his mind immediately and he would either suspend judgment or assume that Papa Clem has won after all). But still, at this moment we would say that Jones believes that Papa Clem has lost. However, according to Anderson, we would not say that Jones knows that Papa Clem has lost, and the reason is that the degree of conviction is too low for knowledge (while all the other conditions for knowledge can be assumed to be met without compensating for the low degree of conviction): 'My own intuition about this example is that he does not have knowledge. ...The only thing keeping Jones from knowing that Papa Clem lost, I submit, is that although his degree of conviction in the proposition is sufficiently high that his attitude toward it counts as belief, it is not sufficiently high to meet the demands of knowledge. Knowledge, I conclude, requires a higher degree of conviction than does mere belief.' (Anderson 2012, 389). This would then be a case where 'S knows that p ' is false while 'S believes that p ' is true, and for interesting reasons: T_K and T_B differ such that $T_K > T_B$ and the subject's degree of conviction or belief is $> T_B$ but $< T_K$.⁷

6 As mentioned above, it is not the aim of this paper to argue for (Entailment-Weak). However, given the distinction proposed here, it is very plausible that (Entailment-Strong) is incorrect and we have an explanation how it can be incorrect. - That knowledge requires the degree of conviction which is required for knowledge might sound uninformative but this is only apparent. (Entailment-Weak) says that knowledge requires a certain type of belief, a degree of conviction above a certain threshold (T_K). It is only for lack of a better word that we call this type of belief 'belief for knowledge'. The restricted entailment thesis is still a substantial, non-trivial claim. - I take it that there is no bad circularity in (Entailment-Weak): 'belief for knowledge' is a just a technical term and no reductive definition of knowledge is intended here.

7 According to Anderson 2012, 388-390 knowledge always requires a higher degree of conviction than belief simpliciter (belief as such). Or: Always $T_K > T_B$. See also Foley 2012, 145, fn.2 on this. I do not

Anderson's example needs and deserves to be improved and made a bit more convincing. Here is one way to do it. Let us focus on the element of instability (see above). Assume that Jones arrives on the scene at 9:20am, very confident that Papa Clem has won. Between 9:20am and 9:22am he receives a lot of evidence to the contrary. At 9:22am he comes to believe, though not very strongly, that Papa Clem has lost. He walks around in despair but at 9:24am he notices his betting companion Smith at a distance who has also, as Jones knows, bet a lot of money on Papa Clem. But Smith doesn't really look disappointed at all to Jones. This gives Jones new hope. He begins to walk over to Smith and at 9:25am he suspends judgment about the outcome of the race. We can imagine easily how Jones could go back and forth between believing, disbelieving and believing the negation for a while. What is Jones' epistemic situation at 9:22am? It seems very plausible to say that then he does believe but does not know that Papa Clem has lost. His degree of conviction is sufficient for belief as such but not for knowledge (for more on this and for some explanation how this is possible see sections 4 and 5).

The example above about the exam suggested that there are cases where the subject knows some proposition p but does not believe (as such) that p . Here, the degree of conviction is $> T_K$ but $< T_B$ (for variable standards T_K and T_B). And now we have seen that there are cases like the last one where the subject believes that p but does not know that p – which is not that surprising as such but we have added an interesting additional reason why this might be so. Thus, sometimes, the degree of conviction is $> T_B$ but $< T_K$ (for variable standards T_B and T_K). Finally, there are also cases where $T_B = T_K$ or where at least any differences between T_B and T_K are small enough to be negligible. These cases are considered by many or even most contemporary philosophers to be the standard cases and even the only possible cases. However, if the other two cases are possible and not just weird exceptions, then one might wonder in addition how the apparent 'standard' case is even possible: Wouldn't the case where $T_B = T_K$ rather look like an interesting coincidence? And the case where $T_B \neq T_K$ rather like the normal case to be expected? Not quite: There might be differences between T_B and T_K but they can easily be small enough to be negligible. One interesting and important point remains, however: The case where T_B and T_K at least

see why this should always be the case and I cannot identify arguments in Anderson 2012 or Foley 2012 showing that it is never true that $T_K < T_B$ (or $T_K = T_B$). The above case of the nervous pupil and the remarks below speak against this claim.

roughly coincide is not the only case and not even a standard case – if the two cases above are pointing in the right direction.⁸

4. Explanations

So, what is going on in the above two cases? And how is it possible in general that T_B and T_K diverge? Why should one believe that they do?

In the case of the nervous pupil we can easily imagine how a sympathetic bystander might encourage the pupil by saying ‘C’mon, you know it!’ or something else like that. And it seems very plausible to say that the pupil knows the answer: Even though the level of conviction is quite low this deficiency is only due to momentary nervousness and more than compensated for by the pupil’s excellent training, preparation, learning history and past track record concerning this type of questions. In contrast, in the case of belief as such, there are, of course, no such compensating factors. We are just facing a very unconfident pupil and that is all there is to consider. His nervousness drags him down (even if it is only momentary). Hence, it seems true to say that the pupil ‘doesn’t believe what he is saying’ (‘doesn’t believe what he knows’).

The reverse case (where $T_K > T_B$ rather than $T_B > T_K$) is perhaps a bit harder to imagine (against what Anderson or Foley suggest; see fn.6); that is why I had to modify and strengthen the original case (see above). Still, it might be harder to imagine because (positively) compensating factors cannot explain why there is still belief even though no knowledge here (like in Radford-type cases). But perhaps there are ‘negatively compensating factors’ at work here which could explain why the relevant belief still doesn’t amount to knowledge? What, for instance, could be going on in a case like Anderson’s Papa Clem-case? Given our addition to Anderson’s story, one can argue that cases of knowledge and knowledge attributions are or can be (in cases like this one) temporally more complex

8 It does not seem necessary here to describe cases where T_B and T_K coincide (strictly or roughly). - Some cases presented against entailment theses in general seem to be explicable with reference to the distinction between dispositional and occurrent belief: for instance the cases, presented by Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel 2013, of the absentminded driver, the prejudiced professor or the freaked out movie watcher (see also Murray, Sytsma and Livengood 2013, sec.3 and 5.4, and Rose and Schaffer 2013, esp. sec.3.1 on this point). Sometimes a subject simply is in two minds about something, like in the case of the self-deceived husband (Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel 2013) or the case of the geocentrist (Murray, Sytsma and Livengood 2013, sec.4). Murray, Sytsma and Livengood 2013, sec.4 present other cases against entailment theses that are problematic for different reasons: The ‘cognition’ of God, dogs or cash registers constitute weird borderline cases at best; intuitions about what to say in such cases are not very trustworthy because of that. All these types of cases can be put aside here.

than cases of belief as such and the corresponding belief attributions. Suppose we ask questions about Jones' epistemic situation at 9:22am. Suppose further that he has a certain level of conviction c at that moment in time. This might be sufficient for belief as such. However and in contrast to that, one can argue that knowledge requires (at least in this case) a more temporally extended minimal level of conviction. If we assume that Jones suspends judgment at 9:25am, convinces himself that Papa Clem won at 9:26am, and moves on to suspension of judgment again at 9:28am and to a degree of conviction c at 9:29am, then there is too much instability of belief at a low level of conviction (close to T_K) in the immediate temporal vicinity⁹ of 9:22am to allow for knowledge at 9:22am.¹⁰ Insofar as low degrees of conviction have a higher chance than high degrees of conviction to fall below the threshold (T_B or T_K), the low degree of conviction c at 9:22am poses a serious threat to the stability of conviction (stability above T_K) and is thus not compatible with (the temporally more stable) knowledge (and belief for knowledge) though it is compatible with belief as such. Belief as such at t only requires a certain degree of conviction at t ¹¹ while belief for knowledge (and knowledge) may require a higher degree of conviction because it requires stability of belief above T_K in the immediate temporal vicinity. Lacking positively compensating factors, the degree of conviction is too low for knowledge in the Papa Clem-case, even if it is not too low for belief as such.¹²

5. Generalization and Further Considerations

I have just presented two cases. The explanations of what is or might be going on in these cases are not meant to give a complete picture even about these cases; there might be

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- 9 What counts as the immediate temporal vicinity of a moment in time plausibly varies with context.
- 10 Can one know for just a second that Ulan Bator has more than 1 million inhabitants? And never know it before or after? This strikes me as impossible; the stability requirement of knowledge explains this. - Jones 1971 suggests that the stability of knowledge requires a corresponding stability of belief – without suggesting that there are two notions of belief in play here. See also Radford 1972 in reply to Jones. Also see Le Morvan 2016 according to which knowledge requires 'doxastic security'. Cohen 1966, 11-12 suggests briefly that there are both 'long-term' and 'short-term' criteria for knowledge as well as for belief and that attributions can vary and diverge if different criteria are being used. Veber 2014 argues that there is a difference between doxastic knowledge which requires belief and subdoxastic knowledge which does not require belief; if one does not take this as a metaphysical distinction between qualitatively distinct states of mind, then Veber's view amounts to a version of Radford's thesis. If, however, one interprets belief-talk in terms of degrees of conviction, as I do, then it is much more plausible to locate the crucial difference in the notion of belief rather than of knowledge.
- 11 Which degree is required is itself contextually variable; see below.
- 12 One should keep in mind that a strength in one factor of knowledge can only compensate within certain (presumable contextually variable) limits for the weaknesses of other factors of knowledge. – I don't deny that there can be other kinds of cases where belief as such needs to be more stable and belief for knowledge can be less stable. Above I am simply focusing on cases like the Papa Clem-case.

other, additional explanations. Different factors can be relevant in different cases: The case of the nervous pupil lacked the temporal complexity of the Papa Clem-case while the latter lacked the importance of compensating factors in the former case. And, as one can easily imagine, there will be other kinds of cases; and in some of these other cases still other factors will be at work.

It is also not my intention here to give a complete picture of all the factors determining T_B or T_K (plus a series of cases illustrating each of these factors). Rather, the cases above and the explanations offered are meant to illustrate and make plausible the central claim here, namely that T_B and especially T_K are variable and can and often do diverge in different ways. Hence, knowledge requires belief for knowledge but not belief as such. It can thus happen that someone knows that p even if it is false to say that they believe that p (with 'believe' in the sense of 'belief as such').

All this can be supported by more 'theoretical' considerations. A belief attribution of the form 'S believes that p ' is true just in case S has a 'full' or 'outright' belief (as such) that p . And a knowledge attribution of the form 'S knows that p ' is also only true if S has a full or outright belief (for knowledge) that p . If we were to assume that full or outright belief requires a maximal degree of conviction of 1, then we would end up with scepticism not just about knowledge but also about belief (as such as well as for knowledge): Never or almost never do human subjects have a maximal degree of conviction in anything, and never or almost never are they entitled to such a maximal degree of conviction. To require a maximal degree for knowledge or belief seems very hard to defend anyway. What is plausible is that outright or full belief that p requires a high enough degree of conviction that p , that is, a degree of conviction above a relevant threshold.

But what determines this threshold? And should we expect that it is the same threshold for belief attributions and for knowledge attributions? Take the latter question first. Given that different sets of factors are relevant in these two kinds of attributions, we should not be surprised to see that T_B and T_K often diverge (the cases above are examples). We are interested in different things when we ask whether someone knows a given proposition and when we ask whether that subject believes it. One interest that we might have when we ask whether a given subject knows a given proposition is to figure out whether the subject is a reliable informant on the relevant topic (see, e.g., Craig 1990); this interest might easily be lacking when we ask what the subject believes about the relevant question. This difference in interests behind the questions *Does S know that p?* and *Does S believe that*

p? goes some way towards explaining how the truth conditions for belief-for-knowledge ascriptions and belief-as-such ascriptions might vary. It is not that the two questions have nothing to do with each other or that there is not a huge overlap and proximity here. But the questions are still different in such a way that, say, 'Does Mary believe it's raining?' has different meaning when we ask it to find out whether Mary meets a particular requirement of knowledge or when we ask it to find out what Mary holds true concerning the weather. One cannot just assume that belief as such is not different from belief for knowledge – and the above cases suggest that they are not.

To get back to the first of the two questions above: What determines the threshold (T_B or T_K)? According to a traditional view of knowledge and belief, there is just one invariant threshold. Sceptics hold that it is more strict while non-sceptics hold that it is less strict. But why should one think that there is a particular value which is the minimal value for the degree of conviction required by belief or knowledge? One might be tempted to say that everything above a degree of conviction of .5 is sufficient for outright belief (as such or for knowledge). Perhaps there are cases where this is plausible but there are also cases where just a tiny bit more than .5 is not sufficient. Suppose I consider the outcome of an election taking place tomorrow and my degree of conviction that A will win is .48 whereas my degree of conviction that B will win is .52. It seems incorrect to say that I 'believe' B will win because such a relatively low level of conviction that B will win is not sufficient for belief that B will win. Perhaps a degree of .75 will be sufficient. But then there seem to be still other cases where even that level is not sufficient. If you are confident to degree .83 that a certain choice will have very good consequences and confident to degree .17 that that choice will have very bad consequences for you and for lots of other people, then you might still not count as believing that the choice will have very good consequences. Only some higher degree might be sufficient. If one considers such cases, then it becomes particularly implausible to assume that there is just one value (be it an interval or not: nothing requires the assumption here that there are precise numbers expressing degrees of conviction) that invariantly determines the thresholds T_B or T_K . This point has been convincingly argued, e.g., recently by Stephen Grimm (see his 2011 and 2015, sec.1-2; also see Brown 2014).

All this does not entail contextualism about 'knowledge' (see, e.g., Cohen 1988, DeRose 1995) according to which the truth conditions or the meaning of knowledge attributing and denying sentences can vary with the context of the speaker. But contextualists do not have a hard time at all explaining and making sense of the above. First of all, it is hard to imagine

how anyone could be a contextualist about 'knowledge' without being a contextualist about some necessary condition of knowledge, be it justification, reliability or something else, like belief.¹³ Second, even if one is not a contextualist about 'belief as such' one can be a contextualist about 'belief for knowledge'. If one is, then one can explain in principle how T_B and T_K can take on different values in different contexts and in such a way that the above kinds of cases become possible. This might also indirectly vindicate the side claim (2) above. If one is, in addition, a contextualist about 'belief as such' and holds that the truth conditions of sentences of the form 'S believes that p ' vary with the context of the speaker (see also Bach 2005), then it is even easier to see how the truth conditions for both types of sentences could vary in such a way that an utterance of 'S knows that p ' is true (false) while an utterance by the same speaker in the same situation of 'S believes that p ' is false (true). It is not surprising at all, given contextualism, but rather to be expected that T_B and T_K often diverge. Contextualism can also explain how the thresholds get fixed. It is not my intention here to make a more systematic case for contextualism (and against some non-classical alternatives, like subject-sensitive invariantism or relativism which can also make claims to the same kind of theoretical advantage).¹⁴

6. Objections

But doesn't what I am saying here also entail that ordinary speakers are systematically mistaken about belief and knowledge? Doesn't the divergence remain largely unnoticed? I don't see why one should think it is largely unnoticed; I don't think it is. However, one could reply to this that what I am proposing here would license certain 'abominable conjunctions' (see DeRose 1995, 27-29), like

'Mary knows that it's raining but she doesn't believe it'

while ordinary speakers usually don't produce such abominations. Hence, the possible divergence of knowledge and belief must go largely unnoticed. However, the fact that people rarely say things like that can easily be explained by the lack of occasion: When do we have reason to attribute or deny knowledge and belief as such at the same time?

13 More precisely, one cannot be a contextualist about 'knowledge' without being a contextualist about some necessary condition for the truth of an attribution (in a given context) of 'knowledge', be it the truth of the attribution (in that context) of 'justification', 'reliability' or something else, like 'belief'. – By the way, I am not claiming that the context-sensitivity of some necessary condition of knowledge entails that knowledge itself is context-sensitive.

14 For the sake of simplicity, I am dropping meta-linguistic talk here whenever I can; this should, however, not be taken as an implicit rejection of contextualism.

Furthermore, if the abomination-objection works against the divergence of knowledge and belief as such then it also works, say, against the ambiguity of 'bank'. But nobody objects to the latter by pointing out that it would license abominable conjunctions like

'Frank is cashing a cheque at the bank right now but he's not at the bank [of the river] any more'.

Does the fact that people don't say abominable things like that suggest that the ambiguity must be largely unnoticed? This objection against the ambiguity of 'bank' is very weak and it shows, given the relevant parallels with the objection against the divergence of knowledge and belief above, how weak the latter is.

That knowledge attributions and belief attributions can diverge in the way described here could alternatively be explained as a pragmatic instead of a semantic phenomenon. According to this explanation, in a case of divergence one of the two attributions is not true but only appears to be true because it has a true implicature (see Grice 1989). However, it is hard to imagine concretely how this could work (see also Murray, Sytsma and Livengood 2013, sec.5.1): What would a possible example look like? Apart from that, one would have to attribute systematic blindness or error to ordinary speakers (and thinkers) who are not aware of the semantics-pragmatics distinction – which is a disadvantage. Not better is an alternative explanation according to which ordinary speakers are just confused, and that there are certain psychological mechanisms which explain the divergence. Again, it is not easy to imagine what such a psychological error theory could look like in detail. It just is very compelling (lacking convincing and strong counter-arguments) to say that the phenomenon is a semantic one concerning the potentially diverging truth conditions of attributions of belief as such and belief for knowledge.

Finally, one could object that there is a telling linguistic asymmetry between the apple example at the beginning and the case of belief and knowledge. While 'good' can be easily expanded into 'good enough', 'good enough for baking', 'good enough for straight bites into it', etc., 'belief' cannot be expanded like that at all: There are no expressions like 'believes enough for knowledge'. Doesn't this suggest and indicate that while we mean different things by 'good' or 'good enough' when we talk about baking and when we talk about taking a bite off the apple, we don't mean different things when we use the term 'belief'? To be sure, 'good' is an adjective and 'to believe' is a verb which offers a syntactic explanation of the asymmetry without suggesting that it indicates a deeper asymmetry of things. More

importantly, the point that some alleged distinctions are not marked at the syntactic surface of a natural language (any natural language?) does not show that the difference doesn't exist and not even that people don't acknowledge the difference. The difference between full belief and degrees of belief, for instance, has no direct expression in ordinary English but that does not mean that the distinction is spurious. What matters is whether there are arguments supporting the claim that there is such a difference (whether these arguments are based on considerations of cases or on more 'theoretical' considerations).¹⁵

7. Conclusion

I have presented two kinds of cases above in support of my main claims, a Radford-type of case and an Anderson-type of case. Is there disagreement about these cases? It is fair to assume that not everyone will agree with my 'intuitions' concerning these cases; perhaps even quite a number of people would disagree with me. What does this mean for the overall argument of this paper? First of all, I want to put some but not too much argumentative weight on these cases and the judgments about them. A large role is played by more 'theoretical' considerations. We can, I think, attribute knowledge in Radford-type cases because the subject has acquired and adequately processed the relevant information in the past; this can be sufficient for knowledge even if the strength of the subject's true belief is quite weak. Apart from that, one can add that the standards for knowledge can vary between different situations¹⁶, and that what matters in exam situations like Radford's, in contrast to other situations, is mainly to get the answers right. In Anderson-type cases a core argument for saying that the subject is in the relevant belief-state but lacks knowledge has it that knowledge, in such cases, requires a certain temporal stability while the relevant belief-state doesn't. These more theoretical considerations (see section 4) as well as the remarks about the threshold problem (in section 5) support my main claims without being dependent on judgments about the two particular cases or kinds of cases.

But still, doesn't disagreement about the cases –which do after all have some argumentative weight here – weaken the overall argument? Let us assume, for the sake of the argument, that there is such disagreement. Lacking evidence that my own judgment about these cases is deviant, the fact of such disagreement should make us somewhat

15 Thanks to a referee here who pressed me on this point.

16 - whether one adheres to contextualism (see above) or to subject-sensitive invariantism (see Hawthorne 2004, Stanley 2005 and Fantl & McGrath 2009).

cautious with the corresponding arguments from cases (and justifies putting more weight on more theoretical considerations; see above). - Some might hope that experimental epistemology will shed light on the dispute about the cases. We will have to wait and see about this. - Here I only want to add that one has reason to expect that denials of knowledge in Radford-cases are typically more hesitant than in cases of uncontroversial lack of knowledge (e.g., when the subject acquired their true belief by reading tea leaves). Similarly, denials of belief or attributions of knowledge in Anderson-cases are also typically more hesitant than in uncontroversial cases of denials of belief (e.g., when the subject has never thought about the topic) or of attributions of knowledge (e.g., when the subject has done everything that could be expected to support their true belief). To be sure, one can argue that this cuts both ways: that my judgments about the above two cases are also more hesitant than my judgments about more 'straightforward' cases. This kind of hesitancy might be due to people's awareness of complex contextual factors (see above). In any case, what all this suggests is, again, that more theoretical considerations should play a major role here.¹⁷

To recapitulate, the upshot of all this is that there is a difference between belief as such and belief as required for knowledge; there can be one without the other.¹⁸ The entailment thesis – that *knowledge* entails *belief* – so popular in contemporary epistemology can be accepted in one sense ('belief' interpreted as 'belief for knowledge') and rejected in another sense ('belief' interpreted as 'belief as such').¹⁹ The debate about the entailment thesis is going to be confusing if the crucial difference between two ways of using 'belief' is not taken into account. Using this distinction helps one think in a different way about a traditional philosophical question. Furthermore, a graded account of belief seems necessary here. And finally, contextualism about 'knowledge', 'belief for knowledge', 'belief

17 Thanks to a referee I feel urged to make my methodological views explicit here.

18 Murray, Sytsma and Livengood 2013, sec.3 criticize Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel 2013 for neglecting (in their experimental approach) within-subject questions concerning knowledge and belief. The problem goes even further: If one asks within-subject questions the difference between the two kinds of belief becomes more apparent than if one doesn't. See also Rose and Schaffer 2013, sec.2, esp. 2.3 for this kind of worry.

19 See also Nelson 1982 who argues that the entailment thesis is true if 'believe' is taken as based on its use in the third person where it refers (like 'knowledge') to a state of assenting to a proposition; the entailment thesis is false if 'believe' is taken as based on its use in the first person where it refers (unlike 'knowledge') to a state involving uncertainty. Though I agree with Nelson that one needs to distinguish between two notions of belief, his argument and claim differs very much from the ones offered above.

as such' or all of them seems very helpful, too. – So, there is a sense after all in which one can say that knowledge requires belief and that it doesn't.²⁰

20 Assume some distinction between one type of belief and another type of belief or between belief and a closely related, belief-like state; assume further that one can be present while the other is lacking. One can then argue for the relevant divergence between knowledge and belief ascriptions by arguing that while belief requires a particular one of the pair, knowledge requires one or the other (alternatively: that knowledge requires a particular one of the pair while belief requires one or the other). For instance, if belief requires avowed belief and knowledge behavioural belief (see, e.g., Rey 1988, 272-277; Fingarette 1969, 70, 88), then there can be knowledge without belief (in the sense of *avowed belief*). If belief requires belief but knowledge only alief (see Gendler 2008) or only acceptance (see Cohen 1992), the same thing can happen. Similar strategies can be pursued exploiting the difference between manifest and latent (merely dispositional) belief (see Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel 2013 as well as the response in Murray, Sytsma and Livengood 2013, sec.3 and 5.4, and Rose and Schaffer 2013, esp. sec.3.1). The 'conviction account' defended in Murray, Sytsma and Livengood 2013, sec.6 has it that belief but not knowledge requires assent. I have my doubts that any of these alternative ways to argue for the possibility of knowledge without belief can succeed but I cannot go into that here.

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