



Introduction to the special issue ‘knowledge and justification: new perspectives’

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Since the publication of Edmund Gettier’s ‘Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?’ the philosophical discussion about knowledge and justification has focused primarily on how being justified relates to knowing, and why having a gettiered belief is incompatible with knowing. In contrast with this tradition, a new perspective—a ‘post-Gettier approach’—to those notions has emerged in the last 20 years or so. This special issue deals with knowledge and justification, from this new perspective. In what follows I briefly characterize some of the main trends in traditional, gettieristic epistemology. I also describe the papers in this special issue and highlight the sense in which they belong in a new perspective.

It is virtually impossible to exaggerate the influence ‘Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?’ has had on the way philosophers think about knowledge and justification.¹ Perhaps part of what explains Gettier’s enduring influence is the fact that he seems to have set the framework in which questions about knowledge and justification were subsequently addressed. For example, to many, Gettier proved that the concepts *knowledge* and *justified true belief* are not identical. Consequently, many (if not most) philosophers offering a theory of knowledge after Gettier focused on finding the missing component, *x*, such that the concept *justified true belief* + *x* would prove to be identical to *knowledge*. Metaphysically, knowledge after Gettier is itself usually seen as a type of true belief, rather than a mental state in its own right.

After Gettier, the discussion surrounding the nature of justification was also influenced by the way ‘Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?’ partially characterized this concept. Epistemologists of all stripes were (and most still are) happy to accept that justification (i) is fallible and (ii) transmissible through known entailment. In his paper, Gettier proposed (but did not defend) both (i) and (ii).² After Gettier, philosophers also took the type and degree of justification Smith has in the original Gettier cases to

¹ For a comprehensive perspective on the impact of Gettier’s paper on the philosophical discussion about knowledge and justification, see, among many others, Shope (1981) and Borges et al. (2017).

² See, for instance, Cohen (1988) and Klein (1995) for a discussion of fallibilism and justification-closure, respectively.

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be necessary for knowledge, but insufficient to rule out the type of *epistemic luck* that is incompatible with knowledge. In fact, many took epistemic luck to be the reason why knowledge is absent in those cases.³

In other words, Gettier provided a framework within which philosophers argued about knowledge and justification. Ironically, Gettier's iconoclastic challenge to the 'traditional' account of knowledge became itself an item of philosophical orthodoxy.

However, in the last twenty or so years things have started to change. Some prominent philosophers have begun to challenge the assumptions of this orthodoxy and explore new logical spaces. For example, Fred Dretske and Linda Zagzebski have both argued that the type of justification required for knowledge is *infallible*, explicitly rejecting Gettier's claim that knowledge is compatible with fallible justification.⁴ Their work helped usher in new forms of infallibilism. The new millennium saw Timothy Williamson's influential book *Knowledge and Its Limits* (2000) not only argue for infallibilism but also challenge the central assumption of Gettier's paper—the claim that *knowledge* is an analyzable concept. Williamson has also challenged the metaphysical claim that knowledge is a type of true belief, by arguing that knowledge is a mental state in its own right. Because the views of Dretske, Zagzebski, Williamson, and others distanced themselves from the gettieristic framework in these and in many other ways, it seems reasonable to say that their work helped herald a new perspective (or, if you prefer, a new *set* of perspectives) on knowledge and justification. Their work and the work of many others contrasts sharply with the 'old' perspective on those concepts, where a perspective is 'old' in this sense if it is characterized by an acceptance of the chief assumptions in Gettier's paper.

This distinction between 'new' and 'old' perspectives on knowledge and justification is, of course, schematic and somewhat artificial.⁵ The distinction is also not intended to imply that the issues within the gettieristic framework are no longer of interest to philosophers discussing knowledge and justification.⁶ Rather, my point is simply that in the last 20 years or so philosophers began to conduct inquiry into those concepts in ways that either directly contradicted some of Gettier's key presuppositions, or simply ignored those presuppositions altogether.⁷ That some philosophers did that does not mean that some philosophers didn't. Quite the opposite, many find reason to reject some of the more radical theses in this new perspective (e.g., Williamson's claim that knowledge is a mental state in its own right). That being said, although the distinction between new and old perspectives on knowledge and justification has limitations, it still reflects a real shift in philosophical focus—or so I claim. The con-

³ For example, Unger (1968) and Klein (1971).

⁴ See Dretske (1981), Zagzebski (1994), and, more recently, Dretske (2017) and Zagzebski (1999).

⁵ But see Kvanvig (2011) for a similar distinction.

⁶ I also do not mean to imply that there are no hard cases—i.e., theories of knowledge and justification that do not fit neatly in one side or another of this distinction. A very prominent case in point is Ernest Sosa's highly sophisticated approach to epistemology (e.g., as in Sosa (2007)). As far as I can tell, Sosa works within the gettieristic framework, but his treatment of knowledge and justification is original and creative enough for me to hesitate trying to fit his approach into one of the perspectives I described.

⁷ Also, challenges to the gettieristic orthodoxy seem to be gaining rather than losing steam, viz., the recent upsurge in interest in knowledge-first epistemology.

tributions to this special issue reflect this shift and most of them approach knowledge and justification from a new, post-Gettier perspective.

I now briefly present the contributions to this special issue, and highlight the ways in which they represent new perspectives on knowledge and justification. The eighteen outstanding contributions collected here investigate knowledge and justification in relation to inference, action, ability, self-evaluation, intellectual humility, epistemic paradoxes, hope, implicit bias, perception, dogmatism, and much else.

Samuel Elgin's 'Merely Partial Definition and The Analysis of Knowledge' discusses important issues within the new perspective on knowledge. While the old perspective (Elgin calls it 'traditionalism') holds that *knowledge* has a complete, uniquely identifying analysis, knowledge-first epistemology's new perspective holds that *knowledge* is primitive or unanalyzable. Elgin, however, argues that both alternatives fail to exhaust the space of possibilities. According to him, *knowledge* is best seen as having a merely partial analysis: a real definition that distinguishes it from some, but not all other things. If Elgin is right about this (and he makes a strong case for his thesis), his view is immune to the problems threatening new and old perspectives on *knowledge* alike.

In 'Conceptual Engineering, Truth, and Efficacy' Jennifer Nado challenges one of the old perspective's central methodological dogmas: that our primary philosophical goal is the production of a successful analysis of particular concepts (*knowledge* or *justification* in the case of epistemology). Challenges to this dogma coming from experimental philosophy and from the paradox of analysis lead Nado to propose a form of *conceptual engineering*: instead of analyzing epistemic concepts, we ought to recommend revisions to our pre-theoretic concepts. Nado engages critically with views similar to hers before she settles on her own version of (functional) conceptual engineering—radical functionalism. This view provides exciting new answers to important questions every conceptual engineer must wrestle with. What exactly counts as a case of successful conceptual engineering? What sorts of revisions are permitted, and what sorts are too revisionary? And so on. According to radical functionalism, an instance of conceptual engineering is successful if the central functions of the pre-theoretic concept are preserved by the conceptual engineers' theoretical approach. In keeping with its radical nature, radical functionalism holds that even revisions that 'change the subject' are permitted.

The philosophical use of empirical data one finds in psychology is another trend characterizing some of the work within the new perspective in epistemology. In 'Accessibility, Implicit Bias, and Epistemic Justification' Josefa Toribio discusses whether empirical evidence from psychology shows that a form of internalism about justification, accessibilism, is problematic. According to accessibilism, one is justified in believing that *p* only if one is at least in a position to access whatever factor justifies one in believing that *p*. But the fact that empirical research in psychology suggests that some of our biases are implicit (i.e., not accessible through introspection) creates an obstacle for accessibilism, for whether one's belief that *p* is (in part) the result of bias is itself a factor relevant to its justification. Toribio explores the suggestion that we have access to the content of our implicit biases, and that this takes care of the problem they pose for accessibilism. She discusses two ways in which the accessibilist might try to develop this suggestion and meet the challenge posed by implicit biases. Toribio

argues convincingly that neither strategy ultimately works. She concludes by drawing general lessons about the role of implicit bias plays in accessibilist justification.

A cornerstone of Timothy Williamson's knowledge-first epistemology is the idea that non-trivial luminous conditions do not exist. A condition *C* is luminous in Williamson's sense, if and only if, in every case in which *C* obtains, one is in a position to know that *C* obtains. The non-trivial state of knowing is not luminous in this sense. In his paper 'Luminosity in The Stream of Consciousness' David Jenkins challenges Williamson's claim that non-trivial luminous conditions do not exist. Jenkins argues that Williamson's anti-luminosity argument has not been established. Crucially, Williamson's argument does not seem to have established the non-luminosity of events (e.g., judgment) and processes (e.g., deliberation) that constitute the stream of consciousness. Intuitively, if one judges that *p*, then one must know that one judges that *p*. It is also intuitive to think that one must know one is deliberating if one in fact is. Jenkins argues, quite convincingly, that judgment and deliberation are essentially self-conscious and, hence, luminous. This unveils a limitation in Williamson's argument, argues Jenkins.

Nicholas Koziol's 'Inferring As a Way of Knowing' is another contribution that takes a knowledge-first approach to knowing. Koziol argues that an inference is an act of coming to believe something on the basis of something else you already believe, and that given the appropriate account of what it means to believe something on the basis of something else, it follows that inferring *just is* a way of knowing. Koziol articulates a disjunctive account of the basing relation according to which *S*'s belief that *q* is based on *S*'s belief that *p* only if *either* *S*'s belief that *p* rationally causes *S*'s belief that *q* *or* *S*'s belief that *p* deviantly causes *S*'s belief that *q*. According to this account of the basing relation, *x* rationally causes *y* only if *x* either actually or potentially produces knowledge, while *x* deviantly causes *y* only if *x* does not rationally cause *y* but the subject mistakenly (and perhaps blamelessly) believes that *x* rationally causes *y*. The resulting view of inference, Koziol argues, is both plausible in itself and evidence that the knowledge-first approach to knowledge is correct.

Christoph Kelp's 'Inquiry, Knowledge and Understanding' also takes a knowledge-first approach to knowledge. In his contribution, Kelp argues for a knowledge-based account of the goal of inquiry and the nature of understanding. It seems that whether one achieves the goal of successful inquiry into a certain phenomenon depends on whether one understands the phenomenon in question. Kelp explores the relationship between inquiry and understanding to conclude that knowledge is the goal of successful inquiry into specific questions, and general phenomena. This result, Kelp persuasively argues, strengthens the plausible view that truth is the goal of inquiry and understanding.

Another characteristic of Williamson's new perspective on knowledge is his insistence that knowing (rather than believing) explains rational action. Williamson and others⁸ argued that propositional knowledge, or knowledge-involving states, also explains judgments concerning expertise. In her contribution to this special issue, 'Know-How, Action, and Luck,' Carlotta Pavese presents a new argument for the claim that propositional knowledge and knowledge-involving states are uniquely positioned to explain the type of success that accompanies expertise (know-how). We value know-

⁸ For example, Stanley (2011), and Stanley and Williamson (2017).

how, says Pavese, because of its special explanatory link to success. Success that is intentional, in turn, is to be understood as the result of action that is guided by propositional knowledge or some knowledge-involving state. This view of expertise, argues Pavese, fares much better than its competitor, revisionary intellectualism. The latter view is a much less stable position, she claims. The upshot is that Pavese's view delivers an intuitive account of expertise, thus advancing knowledge-first epistemology (broadly construed).

In his contribution, 'Subject-Specific Intellectualism: Re-Examining Know How and Ability,' Kevin Wallbridge argues that views of know-how resembling Pavese's (standard intellectualist views) have a problem accounting for the fact that knowing how to ϕ does not always require ability. Walbridge proposed solution to this problem is itself a version of intellectualism about know-how he calls 'subject-specific intellectualism.' According to this view, knowing how to ϕ is a matter of knowing that w is a way for some relevant person to ϕ , while *who* the relevant person is can change from context to context. In this sense, knowing how to ϕ requires ability only when the subject and knowledge-how ascriber are one and the same.

Another contribution to the volume that explores the connections between knowledge and action is Igal Kvat's 'The Steering Thrust Phenomenon in Action-Directed-Pragmatics.' According to Kvat, his action-directed pragmatics offers a new and improved account of well-known effects of knowledge assertions and denials. He focuses on what he calls 'the phenomenon of steering thrust' (i.e., the way in which speakers steer others to action). Kvat argues that this phenomenon is non-linguistic, even though it is the result of a speaker asserting that p in a particular type of context. The type of context in which the assertion that p elicits the steering thrust effect is deliberative in nature and one in which the object of deliberation is an action. In those contexts, asserting that p amounts, pragmatically, to a push or nudge on the speaker's audience. This, Kvat argues, helps dissipate the type of epistemological puzzle present in bank-type cases. The puzzle is dissipated by a pragmatic account of those cases that avoids pragmatic encroachment. Kvat's action-directed pragmatics is a novel way of explaining the pragmatic effects of language use, and, as such, intends to be a fully general account of assertion. In that sense, Kvat's contribution is not only an instance of a new approach to *knowledge*, but it is also a new approach to the pragmatics of language.

Matthew Benton's 'Knowledge, Hope, and Fallibilism' argues that fallibilism is incompatible with linguistic data about self-ascriptions of hope ('I hope that p '). My hoping that p is compatible with it being epistemically possible (given what I know) that not- p . However, my hoping that p is intuitively *not* compatible with my knowing whether p . What is more, this last fact seems to fly in the face of fallibilism, for according to that view of knowledge my knowing whether p is compatible with the epistemic possibility that I am mistaken with respect to whether p . Benton argues quite persuasively that this result follows from a whole host of linguistic data, if one accepts a plausible principle about the rationality of hope. On the other hand, infallibilism seems to be compatible with the relevant linguistic data and this principle. This gives infallibilism a hitherto ignored advantage over fallibilism.

Some of the contributions illustrate another way in which epistemology has moved away from purely gettierist concerns. Some argue that in order to make sense of intel-

lectual virtues and vices, one must move beyond the concerns of the old perspective on knowledge and justification. For instance, according to Jonathan Kvanvig (2011:201), the old perspective unduly ignores the role theoretical virtues play in our epistemic lives. Virtue epistemology in this sense is also a new perspective on knowledge and justification, one that consciously tries to move past the more traditional perspective of the gettieristic literature. A couple of contributions to this special issue take a virtue theoretic approach to epistemological issues.

Sarah Wright's 'Epistemic Harm and Virtues of Self-Evaluation' assesses arguments for the claim that assigning inflated credibility to one person can epistemically harm another. She offers a novel interpretation of such arguments, which extends those arguments to self-evaluation. Wright draws from current psychological research on overconfidence bias to make the case that we may systematically assign too much epistemic credibility to ourselves. This, Wright claims, is an epistemic injustice we commit to ourselves and to others. In order to counteract this intellectual vice, Wright argues that we need to develop virtues of self-evaluation.

In 'Intellectual Humility and The Epistemology of Disagreement,' Duncan Pritchard argues that the intellectual virtue of humility is compatible with a non-conciliatory approach to peer disagreement. The non-conciliatory account Pritchard envisions can resist the idea, accepted by conciliatory views, that awareness of the fact that my epistemic peer disagrees with me directly weakens my epistemic justification. All parties in the peer disagreement literature often ignore this fact, even though it proves crucial to the correct adjudication of the dispute between conciliatory and non-conciliatory views. Pritchard's contribution corrects this omission in the literature.

A few papers in the special issue do not fit squarely in the new perspective approach to justification and knowledge. However, they all make new and interesting contributions to their topics. For example, Jeffrey Tolly argues, in 'Swampman: a Dilemma for Proper Functionalism,' that a dilemma recently proposed for Proper Functionalism has not been removed by subsequent critical work. 'Predictive Processing and Foundationalism about Perception,' by Harmen Ghijsen, convincingly argues that externalist forms of foundationalism have a better chance of meeting the challenge coming from predictive processing accounts of perception. According to those accounts of perception, perception is in part a top-down process involving predictions about the sensory inputs to perception. Juan Comesaña's 'Empirical justification and defeasibility,' in turn, defends his view of the role of experience in epistemic justification from the challenge that it cannot make sense of the defeasibility of that type of justification. Tolly, Ghijsen, and Comesaña all make significant contributions to their topics.

Some papers in the special issue deal with time-honored epistemological puzzles and dilemmas in new and insightful ways. For example, the dogmatist says that one should disregard future evidence against what one knows, since this evidence is evidence for something false (i.e., the negation of that which one knows). This suggestion is paradoxical because it seems to engender a pernicious type of close-mindedness. In 'Stealing Harman's Thought: Knowledge Saboteurs and Dogmatists,' Roy Sorensen argues that there are situations where it might be rational for one to ignore misleading evidence. Those are situations where one knows that one is facing a 'rationality trap' (i.e., situations that are designed to exploit the rational inclinations of rational

agents). A series of cleverly crafted vignettes helps Sorensen drive home the point that ignoring misleading evidence in those circumstances does not amount to anything like dogmatism, but that it amounts, instead, to reasonable epistemic self-preservation.

John Williams discusses new and original versions of the preface paradox in ‘Once You Think You’re Wrong, You Must Be Right: New Versions of The Preface Paradox.’ Williams argues that rationality requires from a non-idealized agent to have inconsistent beliefs while recognizing the inconsistency. He discusses a case (Modesty) that quite strongly suggests this consequence. In it the agent believes that at least one of her beliefs (excluding this) is false. Williams shows how the agent in Modesty rationally acquires an inconsistent set of beliefs that cannot be challenged in ways that the inconsistent set of beliefs of agents in similar cases can. Also, a version of Modesty, Modesty*, which says that the agent believes that at least one of her beliefs (including this) is false, ensures that the agent has an inconsistent set of beliefs—once you think you’re wrong, you must be right! Williams subtly distinguishes between explicitly contradictory beliefs and three forms of inconsistency in belief. This distinction helps us understand why Modesty, and (more tentatively) Modesty*, are not subject to the usual objections marshaled against other preface-type cases.⁹

In ‘A Different Kind of Dream-Based Skepticism,’ Michael Veber explores an often-ignored argument for dream skepticism. The usual version of dream skepticism discussed is one that assumes that dream and waking experience are not distinguishable. However, Sextus Empiricus’ dream-based argument presupposes that they *are* distinguishable. This makes Sextus’ argument potentially more persuasive than the more traditional version of the argument. Veber shows how the kinds of responses typically offered against dream-based skepticism do not apply to the version discussed by Sextus. He also makes interesting connections with peer disagreement and a Moore-style approach to skeptical problems.

In closing, I must express my gratitude to the people involved in this project in one way or another. First and foremost, I am grateful to all contributors for giving me the opportunity to showcase their excellent work in this special issue of *Synthese*. I am also grateful for the hard work of reviewers. I owe the editors of *Synthese*, Otávio Bueno, Wiebe van der Hoek and Catarina Dutilh Novaes, a huge debt of gratitude for their unwavering support for this project. Catarina was more closely involved with this special issue, and I am deeply grateful for her patience and guidance. Thanks also to FAPESP for partially supporting this project through a post-doc research fellowship. Finally, a warm thanks to Peter D. Klein and Ernest Sosa, two of my philosophical heroes, for their mentoring and guidance.

Compliance with ethical standards

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

⁹ It was with great sadness that I received the news that John passed away in the time between his paper being accepted and it being published in the special issue. I learned a great deal from him and his work.

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