On synchronic dogmatism

Rodrigo Borges[1]

Abstract Saul Kripke (Philosophical troubles, 2011) argued that the requirement that knowledge eliminate all possibilities of error leads to dogmatism (i.e., the view that, if one knows that p, then one may rationally decide now to disregard any future evidence against p one may encounter). According to this view, the dogmatism puzzle arises because of a requirement on knowledge that is too strong. The paper argues that dogmatism can be avoided even if we hold on to the strong requirement on knowledge. I show how the argument for dogmatism can be blocked and I argue that the only other approach to the puzzle in the literature is mistaken.

1 Introduction

The goal of this paper is to show that an argument recently articulated in support of dogmatism does not work.

The argument I will consider originated from a lecture Saul Kripke delivered at Cambridge University to the Moral Science Club in 1972. Even though Gilbert Harman[1] discussed a version of Kripke's argument in the seventies, it was only recently that Kripke himself published his argument in the first volume of his collected papers.[2] My focus will be on Kripke's published argument.

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[1] Harman (1973).
[2] Kripke (2011).

✉ Rodrigo Borges
  epistemen@gmail.com

1 Rutgers Department of Philosophy, Rutgers University, 106 Somerset St., 5th floor, New Brunswick, NJ, USA

Kripke's intent was to show that the view according to which knowledge requires the elimination of all possibilities incompatible with what one knows leads to the absurd result that, if one knows that p, then one is rationally entitled to discount any evidence against p. My criticism of Kripke's argument will not challenge this assumption about knowledge. I will show that the argument for dogmatism fails *even if* we accept that view of knowledge. Before I present my own solution to the dogmatism puzzle, I will distinguish synchronic from diachronic dogmatism and argue that the most recent alleged approach to synchronic dogmatism does not work.

2 Dogmatism: synchronic and diachronic

The argument for dogmatism Kripke considers is an attempt to show that the view of knowledge which requires the elimination of all possibilities of error leads to the absurdity of dogmatism.[3]

Before we look at the argument for synchronic dogmatism, I will distinguish different forms of dogmatism. This will clarify the version of the argument I am interested in.

First, we may distinguish a *synchronic* version of dogmatism from a *diachronic* one. We may be interested both in what attitude one should take *now* towards evidence against what one knows and what attitude one should take *in the future* towards this evidence, if one were to encounter it. As we will see in the next section, Kripke's argument is an argument for the first, *synchronic*, form of dogmatism.

Second, we can give either a *descriptive* or a *normative* interpretation of both synchronic and diachronic dogmatism. One may interpret the dogmatist to be *describing* the attitudes she takes towards evidence against what she knows. On the other hand, one may interpret the dogmatist to be *prescribing* what attitude anyone should take towards evidence against what one knows. In this paper, I will be concerned with the normative or prescriptive formulation of synchronic dogmatism.

Why focus on this normative interpretation of synchronic dogmatism? Because it is worse, epistemically speaking, for one to be a synchronic dogmatist than it is for one to be a diachronic dogmatist. In order to illustrate this point, let me briefly discuss Harman's proposed solution to diachronic dogmatism.

Against diachronic dogmatism (the view that one should reject any future evidence against what one knows), Harman argues that as soon as an agent acquires evidence against what she knows, she loses her knowledge that evidence against what she knows is misleading. That is, the agent may know at t_0 that any future evidence against what she knows is misleading, but as soon as she actually acquires the evidence against what she knows, she loses her knowledge of the "misleadingness" of counterevidence.[4]

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[3] Kripke (2011, p. 43) has the views of knowledge defended by Malcolm (1952) and Hintikka (1962) in mind here. In particular, Kripke considers a long passage from Malcolm (1952, pp. 185–186) in which Malcolm takes himself to know that there is an ink-bottle in front of him and wonders how he should respond to counterevidence suggesting he does not. Malcolm says his knowledge that there is an ink-bottle in front of him exemplifies a strong sense of "know," a sense that denotes the kind of knowledge the knower might properly hold on to when faced with counterevidence.

[4] cf. Harman (1973, p. 149). Throughout, "x is counterevidence to y" should be understood as synonymous with "x is evidence against y."

Harman's solution emphasizes the defeasible character of knowledge. However, his reply does not go far enough. There is still something wrong with his suggestion that someone could know *now* that any future evidence against her knowledge that p is misleading just by knowing that p.[5] Intuitively, one cannot know that future evidence against p is misleading simply because one knows that p. We can substantiate this point: if "misleading evidence against p" means something like "evidence against something true," then the claim that future evidence against p is *misleading* is entailed by the claim that p is true; but this entailment has to be recognized in order for it to rationalize the discounting of evidence against p—simply knowing that p is not enough. (I will come back to this point below as it is at the heart of my reply to dogmatism.)[6]

So, to say that the agent loses knowledge of the misleadingness of future counterevidence once she acquires that counterevidence fails to get at the heart of the dogmatist problem. At the heart of the problem lies the seemingly repugnant idea that one may *now* rationally decide to discount any counterevidence to what one knows. In short, *synchronic* dogmatism is at the heart of the dogmatism puzzle. For this reason, synchronic dogmatism is the focus of this essay.[7]

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[5] Sharon and Spectre (2010) make a similar point.

[6] Referee #3 raised two excellent objections to this argument. First, according to the referee the assumption that the entailment must be recognized before it can justify the discounting of counterevidence requires argument, for the truth of p may be sufficient for warranting the belief that evidence against p is misleading. The referee is right that an argument is needed here, and I offer one in Sect. 3 (roughly, there being a reason, r, to ϕ is not enough to justify one's ϕ-ing—r needs to be one's reason for ϕ-ing in order for ϕ-ing to be justified for one). On the other hand, it is not the case that an argument is needed *because the truth of p is sufficient to warrant the belief that evidence against p is misleading*. Consider: I wonder if the number of stars is even or odd; I flip a coin and on that basis arrive at the true belief that the number of stars is odd. I doubt anyone would say that the truth of this unjustified belief is sufficient to warrant me in disregarding rebutting evidence as misleading (e.g., rebutting evidence coming from astronomy). What's more, Harman and Kripke were sensitive to the issue of unjustified or luckily acquired true belief and couched the problem in terms of *knowledge* rather than *truth*, and these are the versions of the argument I am interested in here. As I showed in footnote 3, for Kripke (and for Harman who followed him in this respect), the dogmatist paradox arises for certain analyses of *knowledge* (such as Hintikka's) that take knowledge to exclude the possibility of error. (Kripke's paper discussing the argument for dogmatism is, after all, called "Two Paradoxes of *Knowledge*.") Second, the referee claims that Harman *did* take the relevant entailment to be recognized. In support of this point the reviewer quotes the passage where Harman (1973, p. 148) introduces the paradox: "If I know that h is true, I know that any evidence against h is evidence against something that is true; so I know that such evidence is misleading. But I should disregard evidence that I know is misleading. So, once I know that h is true, I am in a position simply to disregard any future evidence even though I do know a great many different things." But in this passage Harman does not say that he is aware of or knows the relevant entailment—he simply states that his knowledge of the misleadingness of evidence is entailed by his knowledge that h. However, he does think this is enough to give him knowledge of the misleadingness of evidence against h. Harman is appealing to the following version of knowledge closure: If S knows that p and p entails q, then S knows that q. But, this version of closure is compatible with S coming to know the entailed proposition on the basis of something other than her knowledge of the entailment. In this sense, Harman's presentation of the problem is importantly different from Kripke's. Kripke presents his argument with a version of knowledge closure that appeals explicitly to the subject's knowledge of the relevant entailment: "If A knows that p and A knows that p entails q, and, on the basis of such knowledge, A concludes that q, then A knows that q" [Kripke (2011, p. 43). See footnote 12 below as well].

[7] From now on "dogmatism" will refer to *synchronic dogmatism*. As Kripke (2011, p. 49) makes clear, he is interested in this version of the puzzle.

What is more, I will take my discussion of synchronic dogmatism to shed light on what evidence is. In Sect. 3 I argue that dogmatism presents us with a puzzle only if we fail to appreciate the the fact that knowing that p is a *reason* to treat counterevidence to p as misleading evidence only if one knows this reason. That is, a necessary (but not sufficient) condition on one rationally treating counterevidence to what one knows as misleading is that one knows that one knows.

Finally, I should say something about what the dogmatist means here by "disregard." According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "to disregard x" means, roughly, "to pay no attention to x." That cannot be exactly what the dogmatist means, however, for one is not always in a position to avoid paying attention to counterevidence to what one knows; we answer phone calls, turn on televisions, and listen to what other people say. Our attention is grabbed by our information-rich environment; we are usually not capable of disengaging our attention at will. Thus, the dogmatist must mean something else by the claim that we may disregard future counterevidence against what we know. One must "disregard" counterevidence even if it grabs one's attention. Thus, according to the dogmatist, it is rational for me to disregard counterevidence to my knowledge, even when I attend to it.[8]

So, according to the form of dogmatism we are interested in, S may rationally ignore counterevidence e against p, because S knows that e is evidence for something false (i.e., ¬p) and knowing that e is evidence for ¬p is a good enough reason not to let e lower one's credence in p.[9]

3 The argument for synchronic dogmatism

I have argued that synchronic dogmatism is at the heart of dogmatism. It is now time to present the argument for synchronic dogmatism and my take on it. In his discussion of dogmatism, Kripke says that the argument for dogmatism tries to "prove" the following principle:[10]

(d) If I know something now, I should, as a rational agent, adopt a resolution [now] not to allow any future evidence to overthrow it.

(d) might seem initially plausible. For example, one might think that we can appeal to something like (d) in order to rationally disregard counterevidence produced by car salesperson, politicians, and so on. Since I have recently consulted the Kelley Blue Book value for the used car I want to buy and thus know what its fair price is, it seems that I should, as a rational agent, adopt a resolution *now* not to allow any future evidence to overthrow this knowledge of mine, no matter how persuasive the car salesperson I encounter are. So, one might think that (d) does sometimes rationalize the discounting of evidence. I think even this more cautious endorsement of (d) is wrong, and I will explain why below in Sect. 3. For now, I will only highlight the fact that (d) seems to be false in some circumstances.

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[8] Kripke (2011, p. 44) makes similar distinctions.

[9] I am in debt to referee #3 for discussion on issues in this section.

[10] Kripke (2011, p. 43).

For instance, (d) yields the following implausible result. Since I now know that my bike is in my backyard, chained to a chain-link fence, it follows from (d) that I should, as a rational agent, adopt a resolution now not to allow any future evidence to overthrow this knowledge. According to (d), it is now rational for me to form the intention to disregard any evidence that seems to indicate that my bike is not in my backyard. So, according to (d), I should now form the intention to disregard (in the sense of "disregard" characterized above) what my neighbor says if she calls me and says she drove by my backyard and saw no bike chained to the fence. Similarly, according to (d) I should now form the intention to disregard what my wife says if she calls me to say that she cannot see my bike through the window in the back of our house. According to (d), I should also now form the intention to disregard a phone call from the police saying that they found my bike (with my phone number and address on it) at the outskirts of town. These are clearly ridiculous results. I am not entitled now to close my mind in that way. The question is: what is the problem; what explains this bad result?

Kripke thinks that scenarios such as the ones we just described cause trouble to the view that knowledge eliminates all possibilities of error. The overly strong requirement on knowledge explains the absurdity of the epistemic advice the dogmatist gives in those scenarios. I do not think that this is what explains the absurdity of the advice. I will argue that this absurdity is independent from that requirement on knowledge. But, first, consider the argument in support of (d) Kripke discusses[11]:

1. S knows that p. [assumption]
2. If p is true, then any evidence against p is misleading (where "misleading" is to mean "leads to a false conclusion"). [assumption]
3. S knows that 2 is the case. [assumption]
4. S knows that any evidence against p is misleading. [from 1, 2, 3, by knowledge closure][12]
5. If S knows that taking an action T leads to consequence C, and S wishes above all else to avoid C (i.e., that is the only relevant issue), then S should resolve now not to take action of type T. [assumption]
6. If S knows that accepting any evidence against p has, as a consequence, a false belief and S wishes, above all else, to avoid acquiring a false belief, then S should resolve now not to accept any evidence against p. [from 5 by instantiation]
7. S knows that accepting any evidence against p has, as a consequence, a false belief. [from 4]

Thus,

8. S should resolve now not to be influenced by any evidence against p. [from 6, 7 by *modus ponens*]

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[11] For the most part I follow Kripke's formulation of the steps in the argument. See Kripke (2011, pp. 43–44).

[12] Kripke offers the following gloss of closure: "If A knows that p and A knows that p entails q, and, on the basis of such knowledge, A concludes that q, then A knows that q" (cf. Kripke 2011, p. 43). Like Kripke, I am assuming that the subject arrives at 4 on the basis of her knowledge of 1–3; thereby satisfying the antecedent of closure. I come back to the role of closure in the dogmatist's argument below.

Clearly, 2 and 5 are the crucial premises in this argument. Kripke does not consider any argument in support of premise 2. He also seems to assume that an intuitive, non-explicitly articulated sense of "rational" is all the dogmatist needs by way of support for premise 5. In Sect. 4 I will argue that, all things considered, premises 2 and 5 make problematic assumptions about evidence and should not be accepted. Before I turn to my reply to this argument, I will discuss, in the next section, why the only existing detailed approach to synchronic dogmatism I know of fails. If I am right and the proposed diagnosis is mistaken, then the account I offer in Sect. 2 is the only solution in the literature about this problem.

3.1 A failed response to synchronic dogmatism

According to Assaf Sharon and Levi Spectre[13] (henceforth, "Sharon and Spectre") the dogmatist puzzle is "instructive regarding formal features of knowledge, in particular the closure of knowledge under entailment."[14] Let us look at why they posit that. We will see that this is the wrong assessment of this puzzle. As we saw above, this is not the lesson Kripke draws from the argument for dogmatism. He thinks that dogmatism is an undesirable consequence of the view of knowledge which requires the elimination of all possibilities of error.

Sharon and Spectre argue that the dogmatist cannot rationally infer premise 4 from 1, 2 and 3 in Kripke's argument because of a knowledge closure failure. If they are right, synchronic dogmatism would be avoided. Their "solution" is mistaken, however. The argument for synchronic dogmatism does not involve knowledge closure failure. Rather, it involves the failure of a much less plausible, but different, principle about the transmissibility of positive epistemic status. Consider, first, the following popular formulation of the closure principle for knowledge Sharon and Spectre think step 4 in the dogmatist's argument appeals to[15]:

(SPC) □(∀p)(∀q)(If S knows that p, competently deduces q from p, and thereby comes to believe q, while retaining knowledge of p throughout, then S knows q).

The literature on the validity of SPC is large, and I will not revisit it here.[16] Suffice it to say that most epistemologists think that something like SPC enjoys strong intuitive support.[17] Now, consider a closely related principle that deals with the transmissibility of positive epistemic status:

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[13] Sharon and Spectre (2010).

[14] Sharon and Spectre (2010, p. 320).

[15] Sharon and Spectre (2010, p. 309).

[16] But see, among others, Dretske (1970, 2005), Klein (1995), Nozick (1981), Hawthorne (2004, 2005), and de Almeida (2011).

[17] See Hawthorne (2005) for some of the costs of denying SPC. Also, even if knowledge-closure is not valid (i.e., even if it has some false instances), it does not follow that all instantiations of the principle are false. Hence, knowledge-closure deniers owe us a story about what makes some instantiations of the principle true and others false. Nozick (1981) tells us that the true instantiations preserve tracking while the false ones do not. For a recent, alternative story, see de Almeida (2011).

(TES) $\Box(\forall p)(\forall q)$(If e is a source of positive epistemic status for S's belief that p, and p entails q, then e is a source of positive epistemic status for S's belief that q).[18]

While TES excludes the possibility that the entailing reason is *itself* a source of positive epistemic status for the entailed proposition, SPC is compatible with this possibility. So, if, in a case C, e is a good enough source of positive epistemic status for the belief that p, S deduces q from p, and e is not a good enough source of positive epistemic status for the belief that q, then TES is false in C. SPC is not necessarily false in C, however. In order to show that SPC is false in C, it also has to be true, in C, that p is not a good enough source of positive epistemic status for the belief that q.[19]

I will now show that Sharon and Spectre ignore the distinction between TES and SPC and that this leads them to believe that the dogmatist argument features a failure of SPC. I will claim, on behalf of the dogmatist, that those arguments feature, at most, a failure of TES. But, since we already knew TES was false[20] and the dogmatist can use SPC instead, Sharon and Spectre's case against dogmatism fails.

Mistaking TES for SPC is not something new. The mistake of taking counterexamples to TES to be counterexamples to SPC is a topic in the literature about global skepticism. I will briefly summarize the dialectic between SPC-deniers and the defenders of this principle who say deniers conflate SPC and TES. Later, I extend the lesson of this dialectic to Sharon and Spectre's approach to the dogmatism paradox.

SPC-deniers—most prominently, Fred Dretske and Robert Nozick—argue that even though we know we have hands, we cannot know via competent deduction the denial of the skeptical hypothesis it obviously entails—i.e., that we are not handless brains-in-vats duped by evil scientists into thinking we have hands.[21]

A few philosophers[22] who think that this reply to skepticism concedes too much to the skeptic have argued that the cases SPC-deniers wield on behalf of their position warrant, at most, the conclusion that TES is false. Consider one such case.[23]

Fred knows there is a cookie jar full of cookies in front of him on the basis of normal visual perception. He also knows that there being a cookie jar full of cookies in front of him entails the denial of the skeptical hypothesis that those things inside the jar are cookie-like papier-mâché fakes.

SPC-deniers say this case exemplifies the failure of SPC: even though Fred knows there is a cookie jar full of cookies in front of him, he cannot know via competent deduction the denial of the skeptical hypothesis this proposition obviously entails.

The friends of SPC we are considering reply by saying that this case does not show the failure of SPC. Instead, it shows the failure of TES: normal visual perception is a source of positive epistemic status for Fred's belief that there is a cookie jar full

[18] Klein (1995), for reasons that will become clear below, calls TES the "mistaken target." de Almeida (2011) calls it "evidential closure."

[19] cf. Klein (1995).

[20] cf. Klein (1995), Wright (2002).

[21] cf. Dretske (1970, 2005), Nozick (1981).

[22] cf. Klein (1981, 1995), Wright (2002), de Almeida (2011).

[23] The case is adapted from Dretske (2005, pp. 14–15).

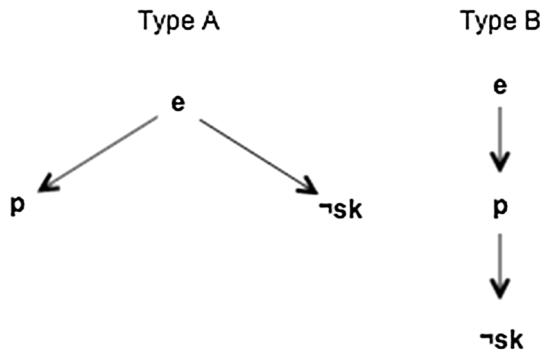Type A   Type B

Fig. 1 Two types of evidential chains

of cookies in front of him, but normal visual perception is *not* a source of positive epistemic status for the denial of the skeptical hypothesis it obviously entails.

The idea here is that examples SPC-deniers wield against SPC are, in reality, counterexamples to the transitivity of the "x is a source of positive epistemic status for y" relation. I tend to agree with this defense of SPC. Also, SPC-deniers seem to hold the minority position in epistemology.[24]

Of course, showing that the cases SPC-deniers wield against that principle in reality refute TES is not the same as showing that those cases do not refute SPC as well - maybe those cases show that *both* principles are false.[25] Fortunately, there is a simple argument which I think shows that TES being false in those cases is at least compatible with SPC being true in the same cases.

When I introduced TES above I said that SPC is compatible with the possibility that the knowledge of the entailing proposition is itself an epistemic source capable of generating knowledge of the entailed proposition, while TES is not compatible with this possibility for it requires that whatever is an adequate basis for one's knowledge of the entailing proposition also be an adequate basis for the knowledge of the entailed proposition. Figure 1 represents the two different evidential chains.[26]

In order for Fred to know that the things inside the jar are not cookie-like papier-mâché fakes (¬sk), TES requires that Fred's normal visual perception (e) be a source of positive epistemic status for *both* his belief in the first proposition *and* for his belief that there is a cookie jar full of cookies in front of him (p). TES assumes that the evidential chains between these states is of type A. Thus, since e is not a source of positive epistemic status capable of yielding knowledge of ¬sk on its own, TES is not satisfied and Fred does not know that ¬sk.

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[24] But see de Almeida (2011) for purported counterexamples to SPC that take into account the distinction between TES and SPC. deAlmeida is careful enough to rest his case against SPC on examples that do not feature a failure of TES. I am not completely convinced that the cases he discusses show that SPC is false, but, even if he is right, my case against Sharon and Spectre still stands, for it does not claim that SPC is true but, rather, that their diagnostic of the dogmatism paradox as a problem for SPC is less than conclusive because it can be plausibly seen as a problem for TES instead.

[25] Thanks to referee #3 for prompting me to be more explicit about this.

[26] The arrows represent the "x is a source of positive epistemic status for y" relation.

Friends of SPC can deliver the result that Fred knows ¬sk by saying that Fred's evidential chain is of type B. Fred knows that ¬sk in virtue of his knowledge that p being a source of positive epistemic status. Sure, Fred's knowledge that p is based on e, but the point is that, once Fred knows that p, that is all he needs to come to know that ¬sk via competent deduction.

The lesson of this summary is that Fred's case, and others like it, show (at most) that TES is false, not that SPC is.[27] Those cases are compatible with my knowledge of the entailing reason *itself* being a good enough source of positive epistemic status to ground knowledge of the entailed proposition. TES is the mistaken target of Dretske and others who try to undermine SPC.

Sharon and Spectre neglect this debate and end up making a similar mistake. They look at two instances of the general argument for dogmatism I gave above and claim that one can resist the dogmatic conclusion if one rejects SPC. Consider one of the examples they discuss:[28]

1. My car is in the parking lot.
2. If Doug reports he saw a car just like mine towed from the parking lot, then his report is misleading evidence (i.e. evidence for something false).
3. Doug has reported that a car just like mine was towed from the parking lot.
4. Doug's report is misleading evidence.

According to Sharon and Spectre,[29] the dogmatist cannot rationally infer 4 and thereby come to know it because of the following "closure" failure: my evidence (e) "I just parked the car in the school lot" warrants my belief in (1) "My car is in the parking lot;" 1 entails (2) "Doug's report that my car is not in the parking lot is misleading," but e fails to warrant 2.

The dogmatist can reply to Sharon and Spectre in the following way: "You are right that I could not rationally infer 4 from 1 to 3 *if* e were the only reason to accept 2. The problem is that I know 1 and I can deduce 2 from 1. So, I can come to know 2 by deducing it from something else I know, 1."[30] The point of the dogmatist reply is that there is more than one evidential path to 2. One evidential path, the one Sharon and Spectre think does not rationalize the dogmatist's belief in 2, requires that e be a good enough source of positive epistemic status to accept *both* 1 and 2. The other evidential path, the one Sharon and Spectre neglect, requires e to be a good enough source of positive epistemic status for 1 and 1 itself to be a good enough source of

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[27] Speaking of ravens, SPC, and TES, it seems that the Raven Paradox introduced by Carl Hempel also provides an example in which TES fails while SPC holds. Assume: (e) a list of the positive instances of Ravens that are black; (p) All Ravens are black; (q) All non-black things are non-Ravens. It seems that e is a source of positive epistemic status for p, p is a source of positive epistemic status for q, but e does not seem to be a source of positive epistemic status for q. This amounts to a failure of TES. Plausibly, SPC still holds here, however, for p is (intuitively) itself a source of positive epistemic status for q. I am grateful to reviewer #3 for giving me the opportunity to expand on the differences between TES and SPC. Thanks also to Peter Klein for discussion here.

[28] This example is originally from Sorensen (1998).

[29] Sharon and Spectre (2010, p. 320).

[30] This objection to Sharon and Spectre's interpretation of the dogmatist's argument is structurally analogous to Peter Klein's defense of closure from zebra-in-the-zoo style of counterexamples. See Klein (1995). See also Huemer (2000) for discussion of Klein's strategy.

positive epistemic status for 2. So, it is not the case that we can reject the dogmatist conclusion for the reason Sharon and Spectre say we should.[31]

4 Dogmatism depuzzled

The argument for synchronic dogmatism is fallacious. It is fallacious because it employs a mistaken account of how counterevidence and evidential defeat work.[32] In particular, I will now show that two premises in the argument for dogmatism are false. First, remember premise 2:

(2) If p is true, then any evidence against p is misleading (where "misleading" is to mean "leads to a false conclusion").

This premise needs some tidying up before we can evaluate its plausibility. The evidence against p can undermine one's knowledge that p in at least two importantly different ways.

Suppose I know there is a tree in front of me in virtue of my reliable vision. Suppose also that a friend I know to be generally reliable tells me that I took a drug that generates tree illusions 95 % of the time. I did not take such a drug, however. In this case, (e) that my friend told me that I took the drug, is evidence against (p) "There is a tree in front of me," without it being necessarily evidence in favor of (¬p) "It is not the case that there is a tree in front of me." This shows that one's knowledge is sometimes undermined by new evidence which indicates the unreliability of one's knowledge source. In such cases, evidence that undercuts one's warrant for p is not necessarily evidence which supports ¬p, but, rather, evidence which supports suspension of judgment as to whether p.

John Pollock[33] called this type of counterevidence "undercutting evidence" and contrasted it with what he called "rebutting evidence"—i.e., counterevidence to p that *is* evidence for ¬p. For example, (e*) "the tree-like thing in front of me is made of styrofoam" would count as rebutting evidence against "there is a tree in front of me." *Undercutting evidence* defeats knowledge in virtue of undermining the evidential connection between one's evidence and one's knowledge. *Rebutting evidence*, on the other hand, undermines knowledge in virtue of it being evidence for the negation of what one knows.

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[31] Even if I am wrong about all of this, Sharon and Spectre's reply to dogmatism does not generalize to include cases of dogmatism that do not explicitly rely on TES or SPC. For example, their strategy does not apply to a case discussed by Hawthorne (2004, p. 181) where a subject is offered a "dogmatist pill" capable of causing her to disregard all counterevidence to what she knows. In contrast to their view, the view I defend in the next section can account for cases such as Hawthorne's. I have benefited from discussion with referees #1 and #3 here.

[32] As I show in Borges (2013), the same considerations I will present below apply to the diachronic version of the puzzle as well. The idea is that if it is not rational for me to be dogmatic about my knowledge that p *now*, when I have no knowledge of counterevidence against p, how could it be rational for me to be dogmatic about my knowledge that p *later*, when I am presented with counterevidence for p?

[33] Pollock and Cruz (1999, pp. 196–197).

Once we take the distinction between rebutting and undercutting defeaters into account, it becomes clear that the dogmatist is concerned with rebutting evidence. Let's rewrite 2 with that in mind:

(2*) If p is true, then any *rebutting evidence* against p is misleading (where "misleading" is to mean "leads to a false conclusion").

There is a problem with 2*, however. Even though rebutting evidence against p supports the conclusion that ¬p, it does not always "lead to a false conclusion," if we take this expression to mean (like premises 6 and 7 in the dogmatist argument do) "leads to the formation of a false belief." This is the case whenever the agent has the epistemic resources needed to neutralize the undermining effect of rebutting evidence and she competently uses those resources. For example, suppose that S arrives at the belief (p) that all ravens are black in virtue of seeing thousands of black ravens and researching many reputable ornithological sources.[34] Suppose further that one day a trustworthy friend tells S that (e) Mr. Parks, an administrator for the local office of recreation, said that there are green ravens in the region. (The friend, we may suppose, is speaking truly, i.e., Mr. Parks did say that there are green ravens around.) E is rebutting evidence against p, for it does confirm (even if ever so slightly) the claim that some ravens are green, the denial of the claim S knows. If the dogmatist is right, then S should not accept e, for it suggests something false (i.e., that not all ravens are black).

Suppose, however, that before hearing about Mr. Parks' assertion, S not only knew that all ravens are black, but she also knew (q) that there are many common crackles around, that common crackles are green, raven-like birds commonly mistaken for green ravens, and that (r) Mr. Parks does not know the difference between ravens and common crackles. Moreover, S knows that q is the case in virtue of her ornithological knowledge, and she knows that r is the case in virtue of her many interactions with Mr. Parks. It should be clear that, in these circumstances, S can accept *both* "All ravens are black" and "Mr. Parks, an administrator for the local office of recreation, said that there are green ravens in the region," by deploying her knowledge of common crackles and of Mr. Parks (i.e., by deploying her knowledge of q and r). And, most importantly, S can do that while knowing full well that the proposition about what Mr. Parks said is misleading evidence against her knowledge about ravens.[35]

The upshot is that the subject in this case instantiates premises 1 through 4 in the dogmatist argument. Now, assume further that S knows steps 5 and 6 in the dogmatist argument. Does it follow from all that that S knows that accepting e has, as a consequence, a false belief (i.e., does step 7 follow from 1–6 in the raven situation)? Not at all. By assumption, S knows e, she knows that e is misleading evidence against "All

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ravens are black," *and* she knows the latter proposition. In short, S does not *know* that accepting e has, as a consequence, a false belief, because *it is false* that accepting e has, as a consequence, for S, a false belief. And, without step 7 the conclusion of the dogmatist argument is blocked.[36]

If this is correct, then the raven example offers a model in which the dogmatist's argument is *unsound*: the example shows that step 7 is false even though steps 1 through 6 are true.

In a generous comment to a previous draft of this paper, referee #3 suggested that, even if this argument against premise 2 is on the right track, the dogmatist argument will still go through if we substitute "leads to a false conclusion" with "supports something false" in premise 2 (with the relevant revisions to the other premises). According to referee #3, the dogmatist argument thus modified would still go through because all the dogmatist argument needs in order to warrant disregarding misleading evidence is that one knows that incorporating that evidence will not improve one's epistemic state. But, since new evidence might improve one's epistemic state with respect to one proposition but not with respect to a different proposition, I assume that what referee #3 is suggesting is that disregarding misleading evidence is warranted whenever one's epistemic state with respect to a particular known proposition would not be improved if one were to accept misleading evidence against this proposition. So, the idea is that the subject in the raven example would be warranted in rejecting "Mr. Parks, an administrator for the local office of recreation, said that there are green ravens in the region," because she knows this is misleading evidence against her knowledge that all ravens are black and, therefore, she knows that it could not improve her epistemic state with respect to the latter proposition.

The problem with this suggestion is that it does not mesh well with the dogmatist's motivation for dogmatism. The point of the argument for dogmatism is to prevent existing knowledge from being undermined. *That* is why the dogmatist wants to disregard misleading evidence. She is motivated by loss aversion—she does not want to lose the knowledge she already has. The policy of disregarding evidence that does not *improve* one's epistemic state would, on the other hand, require one to disregard evidence that does not lead to a loss of knowledge. Thus, it overlooks what motivates dogmatism in the first place. The suggestion also does not sit well with the dogmatist's conception of knowledge according to which, if one knows that p, then one's evidence eliminates all possibilities in which ¬p is the case.[37] According to this view of knowledge, once one knows that p, *nothing* can improve one's epistemic state with respect to p. But, since nothing can improve the dogmatist's epistemic state with respect to p, the policy we are considering would entail that the dogmatist ought to disregard evidence *for* p,

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[36] Although Kripke (2011, p. 44) seems to appreciate at least one of the points I am making here (i.e., that misleading evidence might lead to suspension of judgment rather than to a false belief), the argument suffers from problems that are deeper than the ones emerging from Kripke's casual presentation. The dogmatism puzzle emerges, to a great extent, because of the naive view of evidence the argument conceals. As I will argue below, this naive view neglects the fact that r justifies one in ϕ-ing only if one knows r. The genius of Kripke was to highlight the epistemological damage caused by a naive view of evidence if we couple this view with an infallibilist account of knowledge such as Hintikka's. I thank referee #1 for prompting me to address this issue here.

[37] See footnote 3.

for it can't improve her epistemic state with respect to p. However, I don't see why the dogmatist would want to say that.

The argument has other problems too. Remember premise 5 in the dogmatist's argument:

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

What does it mean for an agent to "resolve" not to take a certain type of action? Perhaps the most natural interpretation is that for S to resolve to proceed in some way w, S should *form the intention to proceed in way w*. So, according to 5, rational agents should form the intention not to proceed in a way w if they know that proceeding in this way will lead to a consequence they want, above all else, to avoid. If I want, above all else, not to be harmed in my sleep, and I know that nothing that might come through my cabin door during the night has my best interest in mind, I should *now* form the intention to bolt the door before I go to sleep.[38] Similarly, suppose that, after running many experiments to find out whether p, Liz comes to know that p. Since Liz wants to avoid, above all else, forming a false belief about whether p, premise 5 would then entail that Liz should form the intention *now* not to read any journal articles, conduct any more experiments, or otherwise collect any evidence that might bear on whether p, for proceeding in those ways would only lead her away from the truth about whether p.[39][40]

There are problems with premise 5.[41]

First, the mere fact that I know that p cannot justify me in taking counterevidence against p to be misleading evidence against p. That I know that p must be *my reason* for disregarding counterevidence against p, if such disregarding is to be rational. A plausible suggestion is that r is my reason to φ only if *I know that r*.[42] If I know that p and this knowledge is what justifies me in disregarding evidence e against p, then I disregard e rationally only if I know that I know that p. To think that one

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can *rationally* discount or ignore counterevidence to what one knows as misleading evidence even if one does not know that one knows is analogous to thinking that one can *rationally* ignore what a corrupt police officer tells us to do, even though we do not know we are legally obligated to ignore it. Practical and theoretical rationality are clearly connected to responsibility. It is at least a necessary condition on rational ϕ-ing that ϕ-ing is compatible with what one believes one has most reason to do. The fact that S knows that p, and, the fact that there is a law which states that S may not ϕ make it the case, respectively, that counterevidence to p is misleading and that orders to ϕ are inappropriate calls to action. But this does not entail that S can *rationally* (i.e., responsibly) disregard counterevidence against p or disobey orders to ϕ; we ignore counterevidence and disobey orders rationally only when the reason for doing either is *our reason* for doing those things. It is not enough that *there is* such a reason "out there," as it were; I need to be aware of it in order for my ignoring or disobeying to be rational. Consequently, S ignores or disregards counterevidence against p *rationally* only if she at least knows that she knows p. Otherwise she cannot rationally take counterevidence against p to be *misleading* evidence against p. In other words, knowing that one knows is at least necessary for rational discounting of counterevidence as misleading evidence.

The upshot is that the dogmatist's normative claim that one should form the intention to disregard counterevidence is false. At most, one should form the intention to disregard counterevidence to p *only if one knows that one knows that p*.[43]

But is second order knowledge sufficient for rational disregarding of first-order counterevidence?

First of all, remember that we are supposing, with Kripke, that knowledge requires the elimination of all possibilities of error. In this picture, evidence for believing that p is good enough to base knowledge that p only when it entails that p. One knows that p on the basis of evidence e iff it is not (epistemically) possible that (e&¬p). Thus, according to the dogmatist's view, evidence is good enough to base knowledge when p has epistemic probability 1 on one's total evidence (since epistemic probabilities distribute over epistemic possibilities, if the epistemic probability were less than 1, then ¬p would be epistemically possible). So, in order for S to know that she knows that p, (1) "S knows that p" must be true; (2) S must believe "S knows that p;" and, (3) "S knows that p" must have probability 1 on S's total evidence. Notice that S is not required to believe (or to know) that she satisfies conditions (1)–(3) in order to know that she knows that p—those conditions just need to be satisfied in order for her to know that she knows that p.[44] Hence, knowledge of knowledge is clearly possible. Now, I ask again: is knowing that I know that p a good enough reason to make disregarding

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[43] Referee #3 raised the following challenge. I am thankful for the opportunity to discuss it here. The claim that knowledge of p is not sufficient to warrant disregarding of misleading evidence is mistaken: p and SPC are sufficient to warrant one in taking counterevidence against p to be misleading. However, despite its initial plausibility this is not correct. As I emphasized in footnote 6, not only did Kripke and Harman explicitly state the dogmatist argument using the premise that one knows that p, it is easy to cook-up cases where truth is clearly not sufficient to warrant disregarding of counterevidence. I gave one such example in footnote 6. Also, the motivation for the dogmatist position is a desire to prevent the loss of *knowledge*, not the loss of true belief.

[44] A comment from referee #1 helped me improve this passage significantly.

counterevidence to p rational for me? Not always. At a minimum, there are cases in which it is far from clear that having second-order knowledge about one's knowledge constitutes a good enough reason to rationally disregard misleading evidence. To see that, consider, first, a case in which it seems plausible to think that second-order knowledge gives the subject a good enough reason to ignore misleading evidence.[45]

Liz is watching the news on TV. The news anchor comes on. He has breaking news: Air Force One has crashed, and no one knows yet if the President survived the crash or not. The anchor says they have double-checked the information with a reliable but anonymous source from the Pentagon. Liz believes the report. Moreover, what the report says is true and, we may suppose, it being reported by that trustworthy TV network raises the probability of what is reported to 1 for Liz. Now, suppose Liz thinks about whether she can trust the report, and, after deliberating about how likely what was reported is on her evidence, she believes (truly) that she knows that Air Force One has crashed. Since Liz's second-order belief satisfies conditions (1)-(3) above, she knows that she knows that Air Force One has crashed. Now, suppose Liz runs into her thoughtful and reliable neighbor, Rob, who has not heard the news about the crash, but argues, on general grounds that, since plane crashes are statistically improbable events and Air Force One is very well maintained, Liz should not believe the President's plane crashed. It is plausible to think that, if Liz is able to marshal her second-order reasons for believing she knows the plane crashed in response to Rob's challenge, she can rationally discount or neutralize the counterevidence Rob offered her and keep her knowledge that Air Force One crashed. I take this to be a clear case in which second-order knowledge secures first-order knowledge in the face of counterevidence by rationalizing the treatment of such evidence as misleading evidence. It is important to note that the appeal to second-order knowledge also dissipates the charge of dogmatism on Liz's part. Her reaction to Rob's challenge is clearly non-dogmatic. That seems true even if she had anticipated Rob's challenge and formed the intention to ignore the counterevidence as misleading on the basis of her second-order knowledge. No dogmatism here. So far so good.

Liz's second-order knowledge does not shield her from *all* counterevidence, however. If this case is modified a bit, it becomes a lot less clear that Liz's second-order knowledge is sufficient to rationalize her discounting counterevidence. Suppose that, sometime after Liz hears the report about the crash the network reports they have made a mistake and that the President's plane has not crashed. (The plane *did* crash, and this is just part of a misinformation campaign to prevent politic and economic turmoil that is certain to ensue after the President's sudden death.) In this modified case one can argue (plausibly) that Liz's second-order knowledge that she knows the plane crashed does not constitute a good enough reason for her to rationally disregard the counterevidence with which she has now been presented. In fact, since she believes she knows the plane crashed in part *because* she believes the network is a reliable informant, it seems that she should reconsider her views on the crash, given that this reliable informant is now taking back something it reported earlier. I take it that cases

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[45] The case I am about to present is a modified version of the Assassination Case discussed in Harman (1973, pp. 143–144).

such as this strongly suggest that knowledge of knowledge is not always a sufficient reason for an agent to disregard counterevidence rationally.

At this point one might raise the following objection [46]: I do not need to know that I know that p in order to run the dogmatist argument; I just need to know *that p*. Since I know p, I can properly form the intention to disregard counterevidence against p.

This is a mistake. The dogmatist argument has no chance of engaging me if I am unsure or in doubt as to whether I do in fact know that p or not. If I am unsure about whether I know that p or not, then how can I even form the intention to protect my *knowledge* that p? What is more, even if I form this intention, this is an appropriate (rational) intention for me to form only if the reason I have for forming it is (epistemically) good enough. But, if this is right, then I properly (rationally) form the intention to disregard counterevidence against p only if I know that I know that p.

Contrary to what the dogmatist's (d) suggests, the fact that S knows that p is not a good enough reason for S to ignore counterevidence against p. "S knows that p" is a good enough reason for S to ignore counterevidence against p only if "S knows that p" is S's reason for thinking counterevidence against p is *misleading* evidence (how else can S know that counterevidence to p is misleading evidence against p?), and this requires that S knows "S knows that p". And even then, there are no guarantees that our first-order knowledge can rationally withstand the effect of counterevidence.

This brings me to the second problem with premise 5. Even if I know that I know that p, it might not be rational for me to discount counterevidence against p, because counterevidence against p might well include truths I value more than I value p. Here, it matters whether counterevidence for what we know is constituted by false or true propositions, because dogmatism tells us we should "ignore" or "disregard" counterevidence for what we know. If ignoring/disregarding p entails believing ¬p, then, whenever counterevidence to what the dogmatist knows is constituted by true propositions, disregarding that evidence will entail that the dogmatist believes something false. If ignoring/disregarding p does not entail believing ¬p, but only not forming the belief that p, then the dogmatist does not believe something false when he disregards false counterevidence, but he still misses out on truths that are potentially more important, by his own lights, than what he knows.

In sum, the dogmatist's argument for synchronic dogmatism fails. We have put forward a counterexample to the argument's validity, and we have also challenged the truth of premise 5. Synchronic dogmatism has been depuzzled.

5 Conclusion

The argument for synchronic dogmatism fails on multiple counts. The argument has a false premise, and it fails to recognize that counterevidence for what we know might be constituted by false or true propositions and that this makes an epistemic difference. And, finally, in order to rationally disregard evidence against what one knows, one needs at least to know that one knows. For all I know, evidence against p is evidence *for* something true, namely ¬p!

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[46] Thanks to John Hawthorne and Peter Klein for pressing this point in conversation.

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