Knowledge from a social perspective

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KNOWLEDGE FROM A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The main thesis of this work is that to know is to grasp the truth by means of certain truth-conducive procedures which are socially-designed for the pooling of information and which we acquire through enculturation. The category of knowledge is the product of our social nature and its constitutive norms are regulative rules of our pervasive testimonial practice which are responsibly developed through time by the epistemic community for the promotion of truth. The account of knowledge derived from these inherently social norms is reliabilist, responsibilist and social. The particular combination of reliabilism and responsibilism fostered by the socio-historical nature of the norms resolves various standard issues within the theory of knowledge. The account also provides an epistemology that is truly social.

After the first preliminary chapter sets up the project to be undertaken and method to be employed, the second chapter introduces a practical explication of the concept of knowledge which rests on the testimonial practice and from which a plausible hypothesis about the nature of knowledge is derived. Given this explication and hypothesis, we consider the nature of this practice in some detail. The next three chapters explore some refinements and consequences of the account promoted by those considerations. The third chapter notes that a fallibilist approach to knowledge that allows us to halt both infallibilism-based and closure-based scepticisms is motivated, as well as a classical invariantist approach. The fourth chapter exploits the aforesaid responsibilism to handle some worries associated with reliabilism. It also considers more general issues, such as the Gettier and value problems. The final chapter closes by adverting to the kind of wide-ranging social epistemology offered.
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Introduction

The main thesis of this work is that to know is to grasp the truth by means of certain socially-designed truth-conducive procedures that are in place for the pooling of information and we acquire through enculturation. The category of knowledge is the product of our social nature and its constitutive norms are certain regulative rules of our pervasive testimonial practice which are responsibly developed through time by the epistemic community for the promotion of truth.

The project is to explain what knowledge is. And, following Edward Craig, the founding methodological presupposition behind our explanation is that knowledge is “something that we delineate by operating with a concept which we create in answer to certain needs” (1990:3). So, we undertake this project by providing a plausible practical explication of the concept of knowledge, which rests on a conceptual need generated by our fundamental testimonial practice. This explication, in turn, allows us to put forward a plausible hypothesis about the nature of knowledge: to repeat, to know is to grasp the truth by means of certain socially-designed truth-conducive regulatory rules of testimony.

Given this, it is important to consider in some detail the nature of the testimonial practice. The virtues of Competence, Sincerity and Acceptance that regulate testimonial exchanges are introduced and the suggestion made is that we understand these virtues as set of procedural rules. We investigate their nature, since some of these regulatory rules are, given our hypothesis, the constitutive norms of knowledge. The account of knowledge derived from these inherently social norms is reliabilist, responsibilist and social. In fact, due to the socio-historical nature of the norms, our account promotes a particular combination of reliabilism and responsibilism that allows us handle various standard issues within the theory of knowledge, as well as an epistemology that is social through and through. The resulting more wide-ranging social epistemology is more in the spirit of a truly social epistemology which anyway doesn’t deny key tenets of traditional epistemology; hence avoiding excesses and deficits of some social and individualist epistemologies, respectively. And this thorough social epistemology and fruitful combination of reliabilism and responsibilism are achieved because from the beginning, in line with Jonathan Kvanvig’s recommendation that “we should never begin to think that the deepest epistemological questions concern the isolated intellect” (1992:177), we consider knowledge from a social perspective.
This work then offers an account of knowledge which posits a fundamental socio-historical component of the norms of knowledge and which is developed by taking into account the “realities of social interaction” (1992:178) that are sometimes neglected in mainstream epistemology since the focus is on the socially isolated subject. Moreover, it aims to show that such a social account has much to offer by way of answering some core questions about knowledge and so that one can make progress in epistemology if one starts from a social perspective.

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter One sets the terrain by specifying what our question is and how we go about answering it. Indeed, we put forward a specific approach to work out what knowledge is, including some desiderata an account will ideally capture. Along the way we put aside the Knowledge-First and Natural-Kind approaches to knowledge. I hope readers of other persuasions can bear with me, since the idea is to vindicate the adopted approach by producing an account that is plausible and has much explanatory power.

Chapter Two introduces the foregoing practical explication of the concept of knowledge and plausible hypothesis about the nature of knowledge. But, since the purpose of the concept of knowledge depends on a conceptual need generated by testimony, first we need to make clear what this practice consist of. We shall, in particular, spend some time considering the nature of its regulatory rules since they give us, given our hypothesis, the constitutive norms of knowledge. The following three chapters are mostly concerned with these norms.

Chapter Three explores some refinements and consequences of the norms. In particular, a fallibilist approach to knowledge that allows us to halt both infallibilism-based and closure-based scepticsisms is motivated. Another important consequence is that the norms promote a classical invariantist approach, since they can’t be understood as embracing some sort of sensitivity to the loosely-described practical interests of individuals. Moreover, shifty approaches, such as epistemic contextualism and subject-sensitive invariantism, are criticised on the basis of failing to fully capture the transmissibility of knowledge. We also call our attention to refinements concerning the way the norms promote the truth and the broadly functionalist understanding of knowledge embraced.

Chapter Four examines the responsibilism fostered by our norms and exploits it to handle some worries that generic reliabilism faces, such as the problems of defeating evidence and of strange and fleeting processes. We also consider more general issues, such as the Gettier and value problems, which again the nature of our norms does much to resolve them but which some competing accounts fail to handle. As well as considering different Gettier-type cases,
we examine some problematic intuitive cases which exploit the hypothesised but plausible function of knowledge. The main concern is the denial of knowledge to infants and animals, but there is much we can do to alleviate the worry. So, by the end of this chapter, we are in a position to appreciate the many benefits of our account, which far outweigh its costs, and the advantages it has over some major competitors.

Chapter Five closes by pointing out the role meliorative epistemology is given by our account and the kind of social epistemology that it promotes. Epistemic internalism and individualism are considered. We end up, I suggest, with an account of knowledge that is both noticeably fruitful and plausible, hence placing it as a strong competitor itself.

Now, given the ambitious nature of this project, which is partly the result of the methodological approach adopted, and the usual reason of space limitation of course, it is important to note that this work falls short of comprehensive cases against competing accounts and approaches and that the project isn’t intended to be an exhaustive discussion of all interesting and disputable issues in the theory of knowledge, although it sheds light on many. Moreover, it would be useful to note, given the customary post-Gettier practice, that the account isn’t presented as a theory of knowledge which can be refuted by a single counter-example. The terminological decision to use ‘account,’ rather than ‘theory,’ is to discourage the idea that we are doing something common to post-Gettier practice, namely setting up a theory merely on the basis of intuitions.

Finally, we shall be concerned exclusively with propositional knowledge—knowing that such-and-such, where the that-clause picks out a proposition (something that is either true or false). And we shall speak of a subject, S, knowing that p, where p stands for some proposition. There are other types of knowledge, such as ability knowledge—knowing how to do things; but we shan’t be concerned with their nature or connection to propositional knowledge.
Chapter One

What is Knowledge?

1.1 Narrow Epistemology and its Projects

1.2 Goals of Philosophical Theory and Philosophical Method

1.3 Intuitive Judgements, Generalism and Particularism

1.4 The Role of Intuitive Judgements in Epistemological Inquiry

1.5 Four Central Desiderata

1.5.1 Factivity

1.5.2 Non-Accidentality

1.5.3 Value

1.5.4 Transmissibility

1.6 Explanatory Power

1.7 Analysis and Practical explication
This work is an investigation into the nature of knowledge. It attempts to provide a plausible answer to the ancient question “What is knowledge?” and, as anyone familiar with the “theory of knowledge” literature is aware, there is no simple and short answer to this question. Ours is no exception. But here is a preview: roughly, to know is to grasp the truth by means of certain truth-conducive procedures that are socially-designed for the pooling of information. These procedures, which are mainly passively inherited by social training, regulate testimony and, as the constitutive norms of knowledge, introduce a pervasive social element into its nature.

This preliminary chapter sets up the project to be undertaken and method to be employed in some detail. In particular, I want to distance myself, in a way to be explained, from the both the aim of providing necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge and the counter-example method assumed in much post-Gettier literature. So, after locating our project within the epistemological terrain, we provide a broader aim and a more comprehensive method. Furthermore, a set of desiderata for accounts of knowledge that helps us evaluate their success is individuated.

1.1 Narrow Epistemology and its Projects

Before we explain our particular project, we should make a useful distinction between narrow and broad epistemology (DePaul 2001:173, Kvanvig 2005:286-7). Narrow epistemology focuses on knowledge, while broad epistemology is concerned with other epistemic goods as well, such as epistemic rationality, understanding and wisdom. The paramount concern of narrow epistemology is knowledge, and this work shares it. So, I don’t have much to say about the nature of those other goods. But, this has nothing to do with them not being interesting or valuable. On the contrary, I take it that knowledge is only one of many intellectually interesting and valuable epistemic goods. And, I welcome the fact that the overwhelming preoccupation with narrow epistemology, or “theory of knowledge,” that dominated post-Gettier epistemology is changing, since some epistemic goods don’t seem to be subsumable to knowledge (DePaul 2001, Kvanvig 2005, Pritchard 2010a). So, it should be clear then that I don’t take knowledge to be the encompassing epistemic good that is sometimes taken to be. Knowledge isn’t the only cognitive success of interest and value. Nevertheless, our concern is with narrow epistemology. And, this concern is further restricted; but in order to make this clear, we need to introduce different projects of narrow epistemology.

There are three traditional projects within narrow epistemology (Stich 1990). They address three main questions: What is knowledge? Do we have knowledge? How can we obtain knowledge? These are the projects of, first, understanding what knowledge is, second, establishing whether we have knowledge, particularly in the face of scepticism, and third,
determining the methods by which we can achieve knowledge, respectively. The first project is the “explanatory project” with which much post-Gettier epistemology is concerned, and where the common target is to provide individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for knowledge. The second one is the familiar “vindicatory project” which is especially concerned with the debate between sceptics and anti-sceptics, where the former deny that we (can) have knowledge in, at least, some domain. The third one is the “regulative project” and it is perhaps the least common nowadays, although not less traditional or important than the other two, so let me say more about it.

The regulative project, as Stephen Stich says, “tries to say which ways of going about the quest for knowledge [...] are the good ones” (1990:1). That is, when engaged in this project, we try to determine legitimate ways of obtaining knowledge. And, as Stich rightly points out, many historical figures, such as Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes and John Locke, among others, have pursued this project. Moreover, he also correctly says that “those who work in this branch of epistemology are motivated, at least in part, by very practical concerns” (1990:2). This is clearly exemplified in the case of the aforementioned philosophers, who, responding to the intellectual crisis of their time, propose reforms to people’s epistemic conduct by providing knowledge-yielding procedures.

So, Bacon famously draws our attention to the biases that stand in the way of acquiring knowledge, giving us a four-fold classification of these obstacles, or “Idols,” in Novum Organum (so titled in allusion to Aristotle’s Organon) and providing us with procedures that counteract these bad intellectual habits and tendencies. Similarly, Descartes in the Rules for the Direction of the Mind provides us with a set of rules to guide us in the acquisition of scientia and to avoid prejudicia. Finally, Locke in Of the Conduct of the Understanding is interested in correcting our epistemic conduct to achieve knowledge by developing good intellectual habits through training. So, there is clearly a practical orientation within the regulative project. Indeed, as Robert Roberts and Jay Woods say: “Regulative epistemology is a response to perceived deficiencies in people’s epistemic conduct, and thus is strongly practical and social [...]. This kind of epistemology aims to change the (social) world” (2007:21).

Now, as advertised, we are trying to answer the question “What is knowledge?” and so the project that concerns us is the explanatory one. But, this doesn’t mean that we shall neglect the other two. Indeed, I think the right way to address the explanatory project is by

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1 See also Discourse on the Method, where “the true method of attaining the knowledge of everything” which is free from defects and vices of other arts and sciences is provided (AT VI:17-9).
considering the connections between all three projects.\(^2\) In particular, I want to take seriously the connection between the explanatory and the regulative projects. And, it is important to make this clear since the answer to our question is likely to look very different depending on the attitude one takes towards these three projects.\(^3\) So let me explain what our approach is.

No one would deny these three projects are related. For example, one’s answer to the vindicatory question of whether we have knowledge naturally depends on what we take knowledge to be: what exactly we are assessing to have. Nevertheless, one might think one can engage in the explanatory project while neglecting the vindicatory one. But, there is a strong presumption in favour of the possibility of knowledge. This is partly appreciated by the fact that regulative epistemologists have a clear practical concern and that their project presupposes such possibility. Indeed, given a distinction between modal scepticism, which claims that we can’t have knowledge, and actuality scepticism, which claims that we don’t in fact have knowledge, the regulative project presupposes the denial of modal scepticism. So, in a sense, regulative epistemology and modal scepticism are incompatible (but not in a strict sense, given that one could make the regulative project conditional on the success of the denial of modal scepticism).

So, given we think that knowledge is achievable (indeed, no one, commonsensically speaking, believes that we can’t have knowledge although we can disagree with respect to particular instances of knowledge),\(^4\) if we want to explain what knowledge is, we need to, minimally, explain how knowledge is possible; hence introducing a constraint on our account of knowledge. That is, our account shouldn’t rule out the possibility of human knowledge, otherwise it would seem that we are talking about something else. But, we don’t need to show immunity to all forms of scepticism: after all, although we should be able to meet the conditions for knowledge, we needn’t actually meet them.\(^5\) So, although our account, as we shall see, has many anti-sceptical consequences, it won’t provide a refutation of scepticism.

Moreover, there is an important connection between the explanatory and regulative projects that motivates us to take seriously the latter project when engaged in the former one. What I have in mind is the fact, which J.L. Austin (1970:77) and Gilbert Ryle (1949:129) brought to our attention, that when claiming to know, one is open to the question “How do you know?”. And, as Quassim Cassam rightly notices, although we can allow the knower not to have an answer

\(^2\) Not everyone agrees (Hymann 1999:434-5); but I hope to show that by doing so, we won’t be “leaving chaos behind us.”

\(^3\) See Cassam 2009a.

\(^4\) First, we believe anyone is capable, in principle, to have knowledge and, second, that it can be had in different domains (say, historical and scientific ones).

to this question, we don’t accept that there is no answer providing a way of knowing (2009a:113-4). I take it therefore that a comprehensive explanation of knowledge needs to address this issue. But, what needs explaining isn’t simply the fact that etiology matters in knowledge (Goldman 1979), but the fact that “it is something like a conceptual truth that someone who says or implies that he knows that P is exposed to the question ‘How do you know?’” (Cassam 2009a:112-3). And here an answer such as “I have a justified true belief” won’t do.

Anyway, what is important to note is that, while addressing the explanatory project, we are sensitive to the other two projects, and particularly to the regulative one. Indeed, I take it that an explanatory account of knowledge is more satisfactory if it is tied to, and thus throws light on, the other two projects. Such an account provides a more complete explanation. But, our project is mainly constructive rather than defensive, in the sense that refuting scepticism in all of its forms isn’t a central concern. To sum up then, our project, within narrow epistemology, is the explanatory one and our account of knowledge doesn’t aim to explain other epistemic goods or refute scepticism, but takes seriously the regulative project and so the significance of determining ways of knowing and explaining the possibility of knowledge.

1.2 Goals of Philosophical Theory and Philosophical Method

This constructive task of explaining knowledge requires a method of theory-building. And, in order to suggest one, we need to be aware of the philosophical goals our account is to satisfy. I take it that philosophical theory should provide understanding (Sellars 1963:1). Philosophy aims at understanding, particularly at showing how things can be made to hang together, hence the desire for a comprehensive account of knowledge. But, philosophy also aims at truth (Moore 1993:270). Understanding shouldn’t be pursued independently of truth. Indeed, philosophy reflects the desire to understand what something truly is (Aristotle Met. 980a).

These two goals allow us to appreciate why philosophy is a valuable and intellectually satisfying enterprise. It aims at two valuable goals we desire: understanding and truth. But, I take a third goal of philosophy to be the meliorative goal: aiming to improve our lives in a practical way. This is a traditionally targeted goal, and the above regulative project exemplifies this. Indeed, as David Pears (1971:2-3) says,

The question “What is knowledge?” has another characteristic which is shared by many philosophical questions. When it was first asked, it was closely connected with life, and yet, as the answer to it unrolled, the connection became more and more remote. People asked it as soon as they had enough time to reflect, and the answer, or at least the beginning of the answer, made a difference in their lives.

Philosophical inquiries aren’t meant to be mere intellectual exercises. Philosophy should also shape our world and selves. And it is this practical and meliorative aspect of a traditional way of philosophising that this goal attempts to retain and which the connection of the explanatory and regulative projects that we want to respect helps us accommodate.

In line with this as well as the other two goals, the account of knowledge here developed isn’t then descriptive but prescriptive. While a descriptive account of knowledge merely aims to capture our ordinary thought about knowledge or “epistemic folkways” (and where the only or main tribunal are our intuitions), a prescriptive account aims to improve on such folkways by correcting errors and providing a (more) consistent set of beliefs about knowledge (Goldman 1992, Kitcher 1992). A prescriptive account then allows for revision of our folkways, and it is likely that some revision is required given the unlikelihood of such folkways being free of inconsistency. Given this, we need a philosophical method of theory-construction that can expose truth and understanding as well as allowing for the possibility of revision.

The methodology adopted is a version of what John Rawls (1951, 1971) calls the process of “reflective equilibrium.” This is a procedure for adjusting and maintaining belief-systems by aiming at consistency, which enables philosophers to grasp how things hang together. So, we can appreciate how it promotes understanding. However, the procedure of systematising and bringing into balance a belief system doesn’t necessarily yield true results or justify its results. As a tool for theory-construction in philosophical inquiry, reflective equilibration rules out some bad results: namely, (significantly) inconsistent systems. So, the method reduces the possibility of error, but needn’t deliver the truth: after all, consistent fictions are possible. That is, the method, understood merely as the systematisation of beliefs, gives us, at best, possible results. The claim that reflective equilibration delivers the truth and justifies its results is an important addition to the view that, in the state of equilibrium, the different elements considered are in balance (Siegel 1992, Stich 1990).

So, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between a method of theory-construction that involves consistency and a coherence theory of justification. Reflective equilibration is, at least as here understood, not an instance of the latter. Consistency plays a central role in reflective equilibration, but we need to supplement it if we are to justify its product (if we seek truth as well as understanding). And it is important to note that not only a coherence theory of justification is compatible with reflective equilibration. A defeasible foundationalist view is

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8 Olsson (2005) claims that not even coherence gives us plausible results (where coherence consists in consistency and in the mutual support the different elements give one another; BonJour 1985).
9 See Kappel 2006a, for issues regarding the validation of some interpretations of the method.
equally open, since it would also allow for the possibility of revision that the method requires. Only if the foundationalist view takes the foundational support to be indefeasible we get an incompatibility (Rawls 1971). So, reflective equilibration then neither is nor entails a coherence theory of justification.

Anyway, in reflective equilibration, we are to bring into accordance the different elements taken into consideration (and the greater the range of types and amount of tokens of elements considered and the quality of their fit, the better). This is likely to require a considerable amount of reflection and revision by the inquirer. Now, there are different types of disequilibrium, given there can be inconsistency among different kinds of elements. Moreover, in such cases, different options as to how to solve the inconsistency are available, since we can revise different elements. And we decide what goes by considering how to achieve the most explanatory benefits at the minimum costs.\(^{10}\) That is, in reflective equilibration, the inquirer is involved in assessing theoretical benefits against costs.

But, this assessment of costs and benefits is an extremely complex process, for which there is no ready-made procedure. Indeed, there is no guarantee that every intelligent and careful inquirer following this method will agree with each other, hence making this cost-benefit assessment a source of disagreement, as well as a source of intellectual authenticity.\(^{11}\) As David Lewis (1983:x) says,

> when all is said and done, and all the tricky arguments and distinctions and counterexamples have been discovered, presumably we will still face the question which prices are worth paying, which theories are on balance credible, which are the unacceptably counterintuitive consequences and which are the acceptably counterintuitive ones. On this question we may still differ.

So, even if one agrees about the general nature of the project and method, the fantasy of philosophical agreement isn’t to be expected.

Now, equilibriums are reached only relative to a certain set of elements, so let us introduce them. Depending on the different types of elements considered, the reflective equilibration qualifies as narrow or wide (Rawls 1975, Daniels 1979). In the case of narrow equilibrations, a set of particular judgments and beliefs and a set of principles are taken into account. So, the inquirer constructs a theory by a process of mutual adjustment of the principles that make up the theory and the particular judgments and beliefs. In the case of wide equilibrations, a third type of element is introduced: background theory. We shall adopt this approach, where the stability or balance is attained by a process of mutual adjustment that also includes a set of background theories. These background theories are theories that can have consequences for

\(^{10}\) On the assumption that the conflicting elements are equally justified.

\(^{11}\) See Lewis 1986:135.
the theory under construction. And such background can be philosophical, scientific and historical. This then allows empirical work and historical reflection to complement philosophical inquiry, without substituting it. In short, in wide reflective equilibration, the inquirer also exploits the findings of other fields of inquiry, so that philosophical inquiries are informed by them.

But, background information is, of course, not all the (defeasible) “data” of philosophy. The aforementioned particular judgments and beliefs provide much of the data that philosophical inquiries, just like other fields of inquiry, begin with and are guided by, such as introspective and intuitive judgments as well as commonsense beliefs, among others. Now, given the pervasive but presently much disputed use of intuitions in epistemological inquiry, let us make clear where we stand with respect to them.

1.3 Intuitive Judgements, Generalism and Particularism

Intuitive judgements are pre-theoretical conscious states that have propositional content. They are direct, non-inferential judgements: that is, they aren’t the result of conscious inferential reasoning. But, although these immediate intuitions arise spontaneously from the individual’s perspective, they needn’t arise instantaneously. Importantly for our purposes, intuitive judgements are normally assigned an evidential role in philosophical inquiry (Bealer 1998:204, Hintikka 1999:127), even a privileged one (Kripke 1980:42).

But, before considering their epistemic status, we should differentiate between two types of intuitions: *particular* and *general intuitions*. Particular intuitions identify a particular as an F or a non-F (say, whether some instance is a case of knowledge). General intuitions identify a relation between distinct properties, F and G (say, about criteria regarding knowledge: e.g. the factivity of knowledge) and the relation between different particulars which are F’s (say, about principles concerning knowledge: e.g. the Closure principle). To illustrate the difference, consider the following “sceptical paradox” (Cohen 1988, 1999):

A. I know that I have a hand.
B. I don’t know that I’m not a brain-in-a-vat.
C. If I know that I have a hand, I know that I’m not a brain-in-a-vat.

In this case, we (putatively) have three individually plausible claims that seem jointly inconsistent, where A and B gain their plausibility because they are particular intuitions about instances of knowledge and C because it derives, given further knowledge of the

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13 I’m here ignoring the fourth intuition concerning the relation between those three intuited propositions (i.e. the intuition that A, B and C are jointly inconsistent).
entailment, from an intuitive (and unrestricted) Closure principle: If I know that $p$ and know that $p$ entails $q$, then I know that $q$.\textsuperscript{14}

Now, thought-experiments in epistemology normally concern intuitions about particular cases (particular intuitions), as opposed to intuitions about criteria or principles (general intuitions). And, indeed, some contemporary philosophers (overtly) privilege particular intuitions over general ones (Chisholm 1982, Greco 2000). However, this “particularism” about intuitions, where only particular intuitions have evidential weight or have greater evidential weight than general ones, isn’t the only approach available, or for that matter adopted.

Indeed, concerning the data for accounts of knowledge, Roderick Chisholm (1982) makes a distinction between \textit{generalism} (or methodism) and \textit{particularism}.\textsuperscript{15} According to Chisholm, some philosophers are particularists since they test their accounts against beliefs about \textit{particular cases} (for which particular intuitions can provide evidence). And, others are generalists since they test them against beliefs about \textit{criteria} (for which general intuitions can provide evidence). These two (positive) methodological approaches are the result of what Chisholm (1982:65) takes to be the two central questions:

I. \textit{What} do we know? What is the extent of our knowledge?
II. \textit{How} are we to decide \textit{whether} we know? What are the criteria of knowledge?

So, if one knows the answer to one of these questions, then one can try to work out the answer to the other. The particularist thinks she has an answer to I and attempts to work out the answer to II; while the generalist thinks she has an answer to II and attempts to work out the answer to I.

Chisholm also points out that there is a third (negative) option: scepticism about understanding knowledge. This sceptic says: “You cannot answer I until you have answered question II. And you cannot answer question II until you have answered question I. Therefore you cannot answer either question” (1982:66). But, Chisholm isn’t faced by this option and he adopts particularism: he takes it that the place to start is with the instances of knowledge. However, he is aware that some will be dissatisfied with his move:

in all of this I have presupposed the approach I have called “particularism.” The [“generalist”] and the “skeptic” will tell us that we have started in the wrong place. If now we try to reason with them, then, I am afraid, we will be back on the wheel. What few philosophers have had the courage to recognize is this: we can deal with the problem only by begging the question. […]Particularism] is only one of the three possibilities and in itself has no more to recommend it than the others do. (1982:75)

\textsuperscript{14} Refinements seem required; §3.5.1.
\textsuperscript{15} See also Sosa 1991:158, 165-7.
So, Chisholm holds that we need to “beg the question” and choose an option in order to have data for our investigation. That is, according to Chisholm, in order to answer I and II, we need to assume that we are already in possession of the answer to one of them, and he favours our already having an answer to I.\(^{16}\)

However, it isn’t clear that there are any pure generalists and particularists. After all, both general and particular intuitions normally conflict for a given individual at a given time and we take such conflicts seriously. This is clearly seen in the above sceptical paradox. The particular intuitions (A and B) conflict only because we accept the intuitive Closure principle. If one were a pure particularist, one should accept the two particular intuitions and, given that the general one creates the conflict between them, reject Closure. That is, a pure particularist won’t be faced by such conflict of intuitions. But epistemologists seem to take into account (although to different degrees) both set of intuitions. Indeed, what many epistemologists seem to do is to try to accommodate (what they take to be) the strongest particular and general intuitions. And, in line with common practice, we won’t ignore \textit{ab initio} either set of intuitions.

1.4 The Role of Intuitive Judgements in Epistemological Inquiry

The question remains, however: Are intuitions evidence for epistemological claims? As noted, it is a familiar practice in philosophy generally, and particularly in recent analytical philosophy, to appeal to intuitions as evidence in the evaluation of philosophical claims. That is, philosophers normally appeal to intuitions when addressing philosophical questions to guide their inquiries. But, although the use of intuitions as evidence is widespread, it isn’t uncontroversial. Indeed, lately, the so-called “experimental philosophers” have questioned this use of intuitions as evidence, particularly in epistemological inquiry (Weinberg, Nichols and Stich 2001, Nichols, Stich and Weinberg 2003).

Experimental philosophers have recently tested how widely some intuitions are shared. They do this by applying the methods of experimental psychology, more precisely, survey methods. The empirical evidence they present is meant to suggest that philosophical intuitions vary according to epistemically irrelevant features, such as socio-economic factors as well as cultural background. This variation then is meant to undermine the evidential role of intuitions. The data on inter/intra-cultural disagreements and on the effects of putative irrelevant considerations on intuitions is meant to cast doubt on the reliability of intuitions and show their irrelevance to philosophical inquiry, whether one opts for some kind of elitism (say, \footnote{But pointing out that we do know many things won’t help make that point; after all, not even the present sceptic is denying this.}).
taking into account only the intuitions of philosophers) or populism (say, taking into account the intuitions of the folk) about intuitions.\(^\text{17}\)

However, given the apparent lack of scientific rigour involved in these survey methods or “serious opinion polls” (Jackson 1998:36), it isn’t clear that they set the challenge they are taken to do. After all, unless we can show that such divergence isn’t due to, say, pragmatic factors, then these polls don’t show that we shouldn’t rely on intuitions, especially when “[research] has repeatedly shown that subjects rely on pragmatic cues and conversational norms to generate intelligent responses to survey questionnaires” (Cullen 2010:294).\(^\text{18}\)

Divergence \textit{per se} doesn’t entail that some intuitions are wrong, hence threatening the use of intuition to support theory. Anyway, in some cases of divergence, we might have good independent reasons for thinking that some intuitions are wrong (consider some people having racist intuitions). But, in these cases, the divergence of intuitions won’t be problematic for theory-building (given the independent reasons). Moreover, even if we have no error-theory for those intuitions that are wrong, the most reasonable option is to understand the group with those intuitions (the racists) as being unreliable judges on the matter at hand, rather than adopting a general scepticism about (ethical) intuitions. So, even if we took the experimentalist evidence to count against some intuitions (say, intuitions about Gettier-cases), it isn’t clear that it would be sufficient for the radical conclusion against the use of all sorts of (epistemic) intuitions as evidence. Indeed, experimentalist work suggests that some intuitions are reliable; namely, those involving paradigmatic cases (Liao 2008).\(^\text{19}\)

Nevertheless, apart from issues of divergence, the opponent of intuitions might draw our attention to the possibility of performance and competence errors. It certainly seems that a responsible inquirer should take the former possibility seriously, since biases and other factors can interfere with competence. But, we can avoid this problem by requiring that immediate intuitions be filtered with respect to these interfering factors once identified.\(^\text{20}\) The second possibility also needs to be taken seriously if intuitions are meant to be evidence for some external reality that we can fail to grasp, rather than our concepts (Goldman and Pust 1998, Goldman 2007). The possibility of this mismatch between the competence responsible for intuitions and reality seems straightforward if we think of the phenomena investigated as natural kinds (Kornblith 2002, 2007). After all, one might wonder, why think that, say, our concept of water has any influence on what water is? So, our intuitions, it is suggested, could

\(^{17}\) For an elitist approach that attempts to deal with this diversity, see Williamson 2011a. Below I suggest the populist approach has an important role to play in philosophy.

\(^{18}\) For more worries, see Sosa 2009.

\(^{19}\) See fn.23.

\(^{20}\) See Wright 2010.
serve as evidence for a theory about our concept of knowledge, but not for a theory of knowledge itself.

This last challenge then might seem to show that the intuitions normally appealed to in epistemological inquiry should have no evidential role to play in epistemically responsible theorising about knowledge itself. This challenge might seem particularly compelling if we think of knowledge as a natural kind, like water, where we have no say on what the phenomenon is. But, in the case of knowledge, like in cases of artefacts and social kinds, I take it that we do. I agree with Edward Craig when he says that knowledge is “something that we delineate by operating with a concept which we create in answer to certain needs” (1990:3). This doesn’t mean that knowledge isn’t a natural phenomenon, just that it isn’t a phenomenon like water. And, just like Craig, I am not sure how I would argue for this. In fact, I think this is to be taken as a plausible methodological presupposition and the best way to proceed is to assume its correctness and see where it takes us. If that is a better place than the Natural-Kind approach, then ours would have been vindicated.

This presupposition then considerably weakens the competence worry. Indeed, as long as there is no substantial reason for thinking that our intuitions are largely wrong, then I see no problem in giving them an evidential role in our inquiry (although, as we shall see, not a privileged one). And, even if some of our intuitions aren’t correct (and, minimally, it is likely that there will be tensions, if not inconsistencies, among themselves, as the above sceptical paradox suggests), I take it that we don’t have any such reasons to threaten their role as evidence.

Also, and importantly, given that we need to start somewhere (contrary to what the Cartesian might think), intuitions can be seen as providing the initial characterisation of the phenomena, and so have the role of grounding our philosophical inquiry. And, the reason this is an important role is that we should avoid philosophical views that are alien (Goldman 1992:438, Pritchard 2009a:4). If the account we provide doesn’t roughly match what is commonly thought of as knowledge, then there won’t be much interest in the explanation provided. And, this importance is increased when considering the meliorative goal of philosophy, which seems to bar such alien views and indeed motivate us to investigate ordinary human knowledge. We should take our folkways seriously because if we stray too far from what people ordinarily say and think, we might end up changing the subject (i.e. changing it from what moved us to inquire in the first place); hence talking about things that won’t be recognised as important.²¹ Indeed, folk-intuitions can be usefully thought of and employed as the lifeblood of philosophy,

as *endoxa* (Aristotle *N.E.* 1145b1ff). So, since philosophy rises from the ordinary and cannot lose touch with it, there certainly is a place for folk-intuitions to play this grounding role in our epistemological inquiry.  

Therefore, folk-intuitions have an important grounding role in the equilibration. But, as Austin, who thought that one worthwhile approach to philosophical problems consists in an examination of what we say and do in ordinary life, says: “ordinary language is not the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplemented and improved upon and superseded” (1970:185). The same can be said of intuition (and one might further suggest that those intuitions pumped from contrived and extraordinary situations don’t have the dialectical force of those based on ordinary situations).  

So, our reflective equilibration is a descriptive method insofar as it takes folk-intuitions seriously, but it doesn’t merely aim at reconstructing our folkways. In this way, the method is prescriptive, in the sense that allows for the revision of those intuitions. In fact, strict adherence to our intuitions doesn’t seem desirable, given the endoxa is likely to be messy. And it is the job of an account to sort these intuitions out. So, in a way, we could say we are hitting a middle-ground between a purely descriptive and a purely prescriptive theory (Goldman 1992). And, since an account that is merely a reflection of our intuitions and doesn’t add to our understanding of the target phenomenon is an empty theory, we could also say that we are hitting a middle-ground between an alien and an empty theory.

Anyway, this makes it clear that that we can, to a certain extent, stray from the ordinary. There is nothing sacrosanct about the ordinary; in particular, intuitions can be wrong. They can run into conflict and so they aren’t immune to criticism and possible rejection. We can’t accept all intuitions as certified facts that must be endorsed wholly and unqualifiedly by our account. And, it is the job of the philosopher when constructing a prescriptive theory to determine what has to give. And, we can expect that what will give, once all the evidence is put together, are the intuitions that aren’t correct. So, intuitions aren’t immune to revision and don’t, by default, have the power to automatically trump the theory under construction if in disagreement with it, as much post-Gettier literature assumes (Weatherson 2003). That is, they needn’t be fatal blows to an account and, in fact, it is likely that an account will have to overrule some such data.

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22 See also Lewis 1983:x, Hintikka 1999.

23 One might hold that there is no reason to think the practice under investigation and its concepts were developed to and can deal with extraordinary situations. So, the role of intuitions that go beyond the ordinary is undermined, since the practice is extended to cases in which it isn’t at home. Indeed, research suggests it is less likely that irrelevant factors will influence our intuitions when considering paradigmatic cases than when considering difficult borderline ones (Wright 2010).
So, although there is an evidential and grounding role for intuitions in epistemological theorising, an account of knowledge shouldn’t be hostage to intuitions, and some of them are likely to be abandoned. Indeed, we shouldn’t expect to capture every intuition or pass every counter-example test: we shouldn’t expect accounts to be immune to counter-intuitive results.\textsuperscript{24} In fact, experience teaches us that we always seem able to cook up some counter-example to the latest account. But, some theories generate more counter-examples than others and we prefer theories that generate fewer counter-examples. So, all else being equal, we should aim for such accounts.\textsuperscript{25}

1.5 Four Central Desiderata

Given the above, let us introduce a set of desiderata, based on widespread ordinary intuitions and related commonsensical beliefs, that we would prefer an account of knowledge to capture. In this section then I present four specific explanatory goals for any such account: pre-theoretically appealing phenomena we ideally want to accommodate and explain. Some of these desiderata are perhaps more widely recognised than others and, indeed, some might sometimes be neglected.

Now, given such neglect, it might be easier to produce an account of knowledge. In fact, we might be able to achieve a “neat” one; but an account that can accommodate and explain all the desiderata has an advantage over such neat competitors. Indeed, one important role of these specific desiderata is to avoid a one-sided diet of cases. As Sellars says, “The real danger of oversimplified models is not that they are over-simple, but that we may be satisfied with them, and fail to compare them with regions of experience other than those which suggested them” (1975:I.i.4). This then is one reason for considering the phenomenon directly, rather than through other accounts: important insights might be missed (White 1982). So, below I introduce four desiderata that are meant to pick out different \textit{prima facie} dimensions of knowledge: the factivity, non-accidentality, value and transmissibility of knowledge. Let us take them in turn.

1.5.1 Factivity

Knowledge is ordinarily thought to be factive: if one knows that $p$, $p$ is the case. Put differently, “if you know you can’t be wrong” (Austin 1970:98). Most philosophers would accept this as a desideratum; and it has been recognised as such since ancient times (Plato \textit{Rep. 477e}).\textsuperscript{26} The reason for adopting this desideratum isn’t however that most philosophers would accept it.

\textsuperscript{24} Especially perhaps when dealing with contrived and bizarre cases.
\textsuperscript{25} See also Greco 2000:15-6, Neta 2009:163-4.
\textsuperscript{26} And, as Plato noticed in \textit{Theaetetus and Republic} V-VII, we operate with a notion of objective truth.
Neither is it that ‘know’ can tolerate wh-constructions (say, “I know when/where the train arrives”); a tolerance that is understood as a mark of factivity (Vendler 1979). Instead, this desideratum gets in the list simply because it is what people commonsensically believe. Indeed, we have a strong general intuition that whatever is known is true.

So, one can firmly believe that \( p \), where \( p \) is a false proposition (say, the earth is flat), and firmly think that one knows that \( p \) too (like people did in the 15th century); but one can’t know that \( p \). In fact, people don’t normally say that one can “know falsely,” “know incorrectly,” or have “false knowledge.” And, as long as knowledge is understood as a way of connecting us to reality, then knowledge is to be understood as being factive.

1.5.2 Non-Accidentality

Knowledge is also ordinarily thought to be non-accidental: when we know, we don’t have an accidental grasp of the truth. Crudely put, knowledge is incompatible with luck or chance (such as being the result of some lucky process). Most philosophers would again accept this as a desideratum. Indeed, some have even provided analyses of knowledge that exploit this feature, such as: S knows that \( p \) iff it isn’t at all accidental that S is right that \( p \) (Unger 1968). But, unfortunately, no such account will do for our purposes. The problem is that, even if they are accurate, they are neither theoretically illuminating nor practically useful (Zagzebski 1999): they don’t satisfy the other two philosophical goals. So, as Bernard Williams says, we “offer the ‘no accident’ clause not as part of an analysis but [...] as a label for a class of conditions, the general requirements on which need to be spelled out with greater precision” (1972:7). This is exactly what an account of knowledge needs to do: provide an anti-luck account of knowledge and elucidate the vague and not illuminating “non-accidental.”

Nevertheless, although we commonsensically think that the end-result isn’t knowledge if there is a fortuitous connection to the truth, we take some forms of luck to be benign, as when one is lucky to come across evidence that \( p \) (Unger 1968). Still, our account should be in the business of dealing with Gettier-type cases since they seem to involve knowledge-threatening luck: in a sense the Gettiered subject gets things right by accident (Pritchard 2005).

1.5.3 Value

Knowledge is ordinarily thought to be valuable. Now, it seems easy to explain this phenomenon if we accept that we value truth and knowledge requires it. Knowledge then is

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27 Here is one of Gettier’s (1963) cases: Smith is justified in believing that Jones will get the job and that Jones has ten coins in his pocket. Smith then forms the justified belief that the person who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket. But Jones doesn’t get it, Smith does, who happens to have ten coins in his pocket. So, Smith has a justified true belief but, significantly, he doesn’t seem to know.
instrumentally valuable because it delivers truth. Having said that, knowledge, we think, is also meant to be more valuable than true belief, as Plato notes (*Meno* 97d). Indeed, Plato uses this fact to challenge us to explain why this is so given that true belief is just as useful as knowledge. This challenge can suggest an explanation that gives knowledge a non-instrumental kind of value (if no greater instrumental value can be given to it), which would be in line with a widespread conviction that knowledge has a special kind of value (Pritchard 2010a, Greco 2011). Indeed, the fact that “knowledge has been the focus of so much of epistemological theorising, rather than some other epistemic standing like justified true belief,” is meant to suggest this (Pritchard 2009b:19). Nevertheless, we need to make sure that our explanation of the phenomena is compatible with the apparent lack of value of, say, immoral knowledge (Baehr 2009, Fricker 2009).

These are challenges whose significance epistemologists have recently started to fully appreciate and that an account of knowledge should address (Zagzebski 1996, Williamson 2000, Kvanvig 2003). And, although “value-driven” epistemologists rightly take into account this desideratum (Riggs 2008), it is important to realise that this shouldn’t be done at the expense of others. Indeed, although this renewed interest in knowledge’s value is a step in the right direction (hence showing that “[Chisholm’s] ‘problem of the criterion’ represents only a part of the whole picture;” 2008:302), investigations of knowledge are normally carried out as if the knower were cognitively isolated from other epistemic agents. This brings us to our final desideratum.

1.5.4 Transmissibility

Knowledge is ordinarily thought to be transmissible: that is, knowledge can be communicated and shared. We take it that knowledge can be transmitted from one person to another. Indeed, we think teachers and strangers can dispense knowledge and books and flight itineraries contain it. This transmissibility introduces the two related educational ideas of teaching and learning as well as the ancient idea of expertise in a given field, which is grounded on knowledge of the subject-matter, and so of a social reservoir of knowledge: a common fund to be exploited by anyone. This desideratum then attempts to do justice to our pervasive testimonial practice, part of which consists in explaining, say, why knowing the answer closes the inquiry and why answering when not knowing leaves one open to criticism unless one qualifies one’s answer.

I take it we want to accommodate the above commonsensical social phenomena. Moreover, this desideratum allows us to push into the foreground an important kind of perspective that is often neglected when theorising about knowledge: namely, that of the inquirer, as opposed to
examiner (that is “far from typical in practice” but “which academic writings about knowledge are notably fond of;” Williams 1972:3, 1973:146). And, although nowadays neglect of our epistemic interdependence isn’t common, still this desideratum with its insights don’t normally take centre-stage in theory-construction. But, it is highly desirable to do so, since, as Jonathan Kvanvig (1992:178) says,

one is reminded here of the attempt to do ethics by beginning with “desert island” cases; even if such cases are possible, it is absurd to think that we can come to be enlightened about the nature of the moral life we share by focusing on such cases. Just so in the epistemological case: divorcing epistemological concern from the realities of social interaction generates an epistemology built on answers to questions as relevant to the life of the mind as “desert island” cases alone in ethics.

This would be in conflict with our theoretical goals of understanding and melioration. And Kvanvig’s recommendation that “we should never begin to think that the deepest epistemological questions concern the isolated intellect” (1992:177) helps us avoid a ‘Robinson Crusoe’ conception of knowledge, which neglects socialisation not only as the product of expansion through social space, but also through historical time (Fricker 2010). And, as we shall see, giving our testimonial practice centre-stage allows us to develop a (narrow) epistemology that is social through and through; in which, as David Bloor (1991:166) says, “the social component is always present and always constitutive of knowledge” without denying the core tenets of “real” epistemology (Goldman 2010).

1.6 Explanatory Power

This set of desiderata for accounts of knowledge helps us evaluate their success and allows us to adjudicate between them. But, this doesn’t mean that an account is successful only if every desideratum is captured. A given desideratum may be given up if no reflective equilibrium can be achieved and other options are more costly. So, the above list should be seen more as a wish-list than a must-do-list.

For example, with regard to the value-desideratum, Plato, in the *Meno*, briefly flirts with the idea of giving up that knowledge is more valuable than true opinion. But, after Meno wonders whether this common view is mistaken, Socrates immediately points out that he is wondering this because he isn’t aware of the explanation, which, Socrates suggests, is that knowledge is more valuable because it is “tethered” or “stable.” We don’t need to consider this view now

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28 In the “examiner situation,” “I am presented as checking on someone else’s credentials for something about which I know already” (1973:146). See also Millar 2010:98.
29 Similarly, Welbourne (1986:83) says that the answer to “What is knowledge?” is “to be found by considering the (public) business of knowledge,” as opposed to concentrating “on the individual in his particular situation.”
but just to notice that if an explanation that allows us to accommodate the desideratum is forthcoming, then such an account is preferable to one that doesn’t.

Anyway, a case could be made for abandoning a desideratum. But, some desiderata (say, factivity) are less likely to be given up than others (say, value), if based on stronger convictions. Not doing so would be, as David Lewis would say, a bigger blow to the credibility of one’s account. Preferably, though, we would want to accommodate all four desiderata. So, they have a central role to play in the equilibration; in particular, when trying to reach the most explanatory fruitful account.

Part of what this theoretical fruitfulness requires is to explain why knowledge enjoys such features. So, we don’t merely want our account to agree, say, with the factivity of knowledge, but also to explain why this is so. Moreover, we don’t merely want our account to accommodate, say, Gettier-type cases, but also to explain the content of those intuitions and even why we have them (especially when disagreeing with them). In fact, we prefer our account to, all else being equal, both accommodate and explain our general and particular intuitions (Greco 2000, Neta 2009). These are simply theoretical virtues that enhance the appeal of an account and, indeed, such explanations can have a powerful dialectical force, particularly when explaining away counter-intuitive results (which also means the explained-away intuitions are, at least, undermined as potential evidence for competing accounts).

Further explanatory power is also desirable. For example, our account should help us understand the connection between virtues, rules and consequences, or, as Guy Axtell says, “provide a comfortable home” for them (1997:15). That is, we need to accommodate the main commonsensical elements of virtue, deontological and consequentialist epistemologies, respectively. But, given the approaches’ incompatibility, one of the elements will enjoy explanatory primacy over the others (say, consequences over virtues and rules, in which case, the latter two are explained in terms of the former one; Blackburn 2001). So, an account of knowledge should adopt one approach, explain why this is so, and accommodate the commonsensical elements of the other two.

Finally, let me make clear that addressing the explanatory project involves more than investigating knowledge itself, particularly given our methodological presupposition. In fact, a comprehensive account of knowledge will also have to tackle issues concerning the concept of knowledge and knowledge attributions. As John Greco says, “it falls within the proper domain of epistemology to investigate what knowledge is, how we think about knowledge, and how the language of epistemic evaluation functions, both semantically and pragmatically” (2010:5).
So, a comprehensive account of knowledge shouldn’t merely aim to accommodate a range of phenomena but to explain it too. Indeed, our account is to be evaluated according to its theoretical fruitfulness and our methodology to be vindicated if the account achieved is as plausible and fruitful as I take it to be: “as with any methodology, this one must be judged by its fruits” (Greco 2000:21).

1.7 Analysis and Practical Explication

The above then makes it clear that the philosophical framework developed couldn’t just be armchair conceptual analysis in disguise. Although there is a place for intuitions and armchair reflection, the investigation isn’t purely a priori and not merely about concepts. Nevertheless, a question remains: Are we trying to deliver an analysis of knowledge? An analysis is taken to provide individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, in this case, for S knowing that p. Now, we need to notice that rejecting the common counter-example method doesn’t entail rejection of the usual post-Gettier analysis that accompanies it. We can use different data to achieve such an analysis. So, there is no reason, given the above, to reject an analysis of knowledge as the aim of our inquiry.

But, some think that we have good reasons for adopting a different aim. There is the suggestion that knowledge mightn’t be successfully analysed given the value-desideratum, since the closer one seems to be to provide an analysis, which will be complex and gerrymandered given the counter-example method, the less likely one is to satisfy the value-desideratum (Williamson 2000:30-1, Kvanvig 2003:116ff.).\(^{30}\) There is also the suggestion that the lack of success of copious post-Gettier attempts to provide an analysis, due to their inability to deal with counter-examples, shows that we shouldn’t be doing so. Indeed, as noted, it is likely that we will always be able to come up with counter-examples to analyses. So, we seem to, at least, have inductive grounds for rejecting such an aim (Williamson 2000:30, Lycan 2006:166, Millar 2010:99).\(^{31}\)

However, as long as these reasons are based on the problems of analyses developed by means of the counter-example method, they don’t have the force one might initially attribute to them. With regard to the first concern, since such analyses are methodologically corrupt, the fact that there is a tension between such contrived accounts and the value-desideratum needn’t worry us. With regard to the second, the data for the inductive inference depends on our accepting this method, which renders those post-Gettier analyses unsuccessful as soon as

\(^{30}\) But see DePaul 2009.
\(^{31}\) But see Cassam 2009b.
a counter-example is found. So, the above aren’t good reasons for considering a different aim to our inquiry, given the plausibility of our methodology.

Nevertheless, there is, at least, a reason for adopting a broader goal. That is simply the fact that such narrow aim can rule out explanations of the phenomenon that might in fact do a better job at capturing the above desiderata. For example, if the best available account tells us that “knowledge is to be understood as that which is yielded by perception, memory, testimony, introspection, and so on” (Cassam 2009a:117), then no analysis is available. A broader, more encompassing, aim is needed, in order to avoid that. So, our explanation won’t require an analysis as the end-product of our investigation.

Similarly, we don’t require a reductive explanation: the kind of account that is meant “to ‘decompose’ knowledge into constituent parts which can be understood independently of knowledge” (Pritchard 2010a:33). And the reason is the same: we shouldn’t rule out ab initio the possibility that some non-reductive (circular) account, such as one that elucidates knowledge by relating it to specific ways of knowing (Cassam 2009a, Millar 2010), is the one that delivers the best equilibrium.

But, some think that this kind of account that explains knowledge in terms of other things gets things back to front, partly because they think that knowledge can’t be analysed. That is, they think knowledge should be taken as primitive and, in fact, used to analyse other epistemic goods (Williamson 2000, 2011b). This kind of Knowledge-First epistemology then reverses the usual order of explanation seen, for instance, in the justified true belief account of knowledge: the idea instead is to explain justification in terms of knowledge (Bird 2007, Sutton 2007).

Now, apart from what I have said about the alleged reasons for the unanalysability of knowledge, I don’t have anything to say about this approach. And, although it is clear that I won’t be adopting it, I won’t directly argue against it. Instead, as suggested above when considering the Natural-Kind approach, the idea is to vindicate our approach by producing an account that is plausible and fruitful. Indeed, as Timothy Williamson himself would say, the most effective way to demonstrate the limitations of any approach is by developing a better alternative (2009:291, 2011b:209). Here I attempt to do so, and I leave it up to the reader to decide whether it is more successful.

Anyway, the aim of our inquiry needn’t be an explanatorily reductive analysis. And, even if one ends up with an analysis of knowledge, it won’t be a conceptual one. Still, a la Craig (1990:2), we want our account to explain why we have the concept of knowledge that we do. That is, we

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And, such constituent parts needn’t be either non-epistemic or non-normative (Neta 2009:164).

See also Goldman 1992, Pritchard 2010a:§3.5.
want to provide an account of the role the concept of knowledge plays in our lives. In other words, we want an explanation of the point of the concept: what it does for us. And this elucidation of the purpose of the concept of knowledge or “practical explication” serves better our goal of understanding. Some even go further: for example, Panayot Butchvarov tells us that an account that didn’t do so, even if not mistaken, would be “hopelessly inadequate.” And, he continues,

Now, an analysis can be both accurate and illuminating, but it is likely to be so only if it is the result of an approach which seeks such understanding: such as a practical explication concerning the purpose of the concept. An adequate account of the concept of knowledge must display its essential place in the conceptual framework through which we would most perspicuously understand ourselves, our life, and the world in which we live. (1970:26)

We shall offer, in the next chapter, a story concerning the need for the concept of knowledge. But, unlike Craig’s (1990) story, ours won’t be a “state-of-nature” story. Roughly, Craig’s story begins with the need for the concept of a good informant in a primitive state of humankind and shows how such concept, through a process of “objectivisation,” becomes our concept of knowledge, whose point is “to flag approved sources of information” (1990:11). More precisely, neither is our story a state-of-nature story, since we won’t be necessarily describing some primitive state of the human condition, nor does it rely on a process of conceptual development, since we won’t be describing how a state-of-nature concept evolves into the current concept.

But these differences might in fact be desirable since it is hard to assess the plausibility of state-of-nature and developmental stories and that a practical explication doesn’t require either kind of story (Kappel 2010a). Nevertheless, our practical explication requires a background that makes the need exploited apparent. As Klemens Kappel (2010a:72) says,

a practical explication of a certain phenomenon proceeds by stipulating first, certain facts about us, such as facts about our physical environment, our biological set-up, our social organization, and second, certain aims or interests that we typically have, or have in certain more specific circumstances. Against the background of such stipulations we can see that there is a certain need, and we can stipulate that the phenomenon to be explained fulfills that need.

Practical explications rest on claims concerning facts about our nature and circumstances. And the more controversial the claims are, the less plausible the explication is. And, the offered hypothesis about the role of the concept of knowledge, just like Craig’s own, might be rejected if not considered plausible. But, this hypothesis, if plausible, just like our general approach, should be judged ultimately on its theoretical fruits.

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35 But see Craig 2007:193.
Now, one important advantage of practical explications is that they can help us determine which intuitive judgements can be targeted to explain away. Given the role of the concept of knowledge, uses of the term that fail to satisfy this role can be either seen as instances of a different sense of ‘knowledge’ or misapplications, and so we are free to explain them away. As Ruth Weintraub says, “Functional considerations serve also to determine whether a counter-example may be rejected as an instance of a ‘secondary usage’ of a term. Such a rejection cannot always be dismissed as ad hoc. [...] So functional considerations may be invoked to assess the significance of (counter-) examples to an analysis” (1991:159).

But the most important advantage of a practical explication over an analysis that isn’t the product of said purpose-centred considerations but instead of the counter-example method is that such an analysis, as seen, is likely to be quite complex and gerrymandered (and the more successful it is at dealing with counter-examples, the more complex and gerrymandered it is likely to be), making it hard to understand why we would have a concept that referred to such a thing (Hyman 1999:436).\footnote{See also Kappel 2010a:84.} It also makes it hard to see how testimony can aim to transmit knowledge, given the difficulty involved in working out when one knows in order to inform others (Millar 2010:98). This is to be expected because such analyses are normally developed with the intention of accommodating intuitions about particular cases (especially, Gettier-type cases) by exploiting the (alleged) strengths of different analyses (say, causal and defeasibility analyses).\footnote{See Shope 1983.} These analyses aren’t developed with the intention of accommodating our needs. But a practical explication helps us correct this deficiency. Indeed, our practical explication together with our approach and not least our methodological presupposition allow us to do so by connecting us to central needs and practices, as we shall see in the next chapter.

In this chapter then, we established what our question is and put forward a specific approach to work out what knowledge is, including some desiderata an account will ideally capture. But, our answer only starts unfolding after some work concerning the nature of testimony since the need for the concept of knowledge depends on it and so does knowledge, as we shall see.
Chapter Two

The Testimonial Practice and Knowledge

2.1 Testimony and Its Regulative Virtues
2.2 Competence and Acceptance
2.3 Virtues and Rules
2.4 The Nature of the Rules
   2.4.1 Social and Historical Features
   2.4.2 Normative Features
2.5 The Concept of Knowledge
2.6 Knowledge, Factivity and Transmissibility
In this chapter we provide a plausible practical explication of the concept of knowledge: roughly, this concept allows us to pick out successful cases of competence in testimonial exchanges. This explication allows us to put forward, given our methodological presupposition, a plausible hypothesis about the nature of knowledge: roughly, to know is to grasp the truth by means of certain regulatory rules of testimony. Given this, it is important to consider in some detail the nature of the testimonial practice. Since the point or purpose of the concept of knowledge depends on a conceptual need generated by this practice, first we make clear what it consists of. Moreover, since certain regulatory rules of testimony end up being the constitutive norms of knowledge, we also spend some time considering their nature. These rules are understood as a system of largely internalised procedures that promote the goal of the practice they govern. And importantly, these procedures are developed through time by the epistemic community. So, knowledge is achieved by following a system of rules that are designed for the promotion of truth.

In this chapter then, the virtues of Competence, Sincerity and Acceptance that regulate testimonial exchanges are introduced and the suggestion made is that we understand these testimonial virtues as sets of procedural rules, which are truth-conducive and socially-designed. Once the nature of the rules is clarified and, particularly, their social and normative aspects explained, a plausible story about the purpose of the concept of knowledge is provided, which shall set us into our investigation of what knowledge is. Finally, we start considering the explanatory fruits of our approach concerning two of the above desiderata and other related phenomena. In the following three chapters, the account is further developed and more consequences are drawn, especially with respect to its norms.

2.1 Testimony and Its Regulative Virtues

Our testimonial practice seems to serve the human need for truth (Craig 1990, Williams 2002). That is, it seems that the goal of our testimonial practice is to satisfy our fundamental need for truth: a universal and inescapable need that is understood as being a part of our nature. Indeed, as Fred Dretske (1989:89) says:

Getting things right is not just a useful skill. It is a biological imperative. Behavior has to be coordinated with external conditions on which its success depends. [...] The only way to bring about this kind of coordination is to have the causal process culminating in motor output triggered by accurate and timely representations of the conditions with which output must be synchronized.

For creatures like us, truth is a good that, like water and air, we persistently require and can’t give up. This need for truth then requires as a matter of natural necessity to be satisfied.
Now, there is no denying we are social creatures. We live in stable social groups in which we form strong relationships and coalitions and, importantly, cooperate with each other. As Thomas Reid says, “man is evidently made for living in society. His social affections show this as evidently, as that the eye was made for seeing. His social operations, particularly those of testifying and promising, make it no less evident” (2010:334). The idea then is that, in a socially interdependent lifestyle, the other members of the community can be sources of truths, which would be particularly beneficial for one in those cases in which they enjoy some “positional advantage” or expertise which one doesn’t.\(^3\) That is, given our nature, our need for truth can then be more effectively addressed by the pooling of truths within the community (that is, by the gathering of truths from others), as well as using our “on-board” capacities, such as perception, memory and reason (Craig 1990:11). And, indeed, we constantly exploit each other’s “eyes and ears” in order to achieve the truth.

So, given our testimonial practice is in place to address our need for truth, for this practice to be successful, it ought to be instrumentally adequate: i.e. promote the truth. But, since we don’t always cooperate and aren’t always competent, if we are to increase the success rate of a practice that aims to satisfy a fundamental need, then we must regulate this pooling of information. The details of such regulation depend, of course, on the nature and circumstances of the community (say, when people tend to lie or withhold information and what subject-matters they tend to be inaccurate about). That is, the particular regulatory procedures adopted vary depending on specific details surrounding the community. But, we can distinguish three testimonial virtues under which the different regulatory procedures fall: the virtues of Competence and Sincerity of the speaker and the virtue of Acceptance of the hearer.\(^3\) So, felicitous testimonial exchanges are cases in which all three virtues are relevantly instantiated, where each of them picks out a set of truth-conducive dispositions that address one of the three different acts in any such exchange: namely, the attainment of the information, its communication and its acceptance.

The two testimonial virtues that the speaker is to display for felicitous testimonial exchange are Competence and Sincerity, where these are roughly the virtues concerned with the acquisition of the truth and the non-misleading communication of it. That is, these two speaker-centred testimonial virtues regulate against, crudely put, the “honest fool” and “able liar” scenarios, respectively. With regard to Competence, this virtue then regulates the relationship between the speaker and the information that \(p\) to be shared. This virtue consists

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\(^3\) One enjoys a “positional advantage” when one is better positioned, spatially and/or temporally, to find out whether \(p\) (Williams 2002:42). This positional advantage shouldn’t be confused with expertise.

\(^3\) Williams (2002:44) refers to Competence as “Accuracy” and, following him, I capitalise these terms to show that they are terms of art.
in a series of “methods of inquiry:” procedures that are concerned with the acquisition of the truth (Williams 2002:127). These “belief-policies” then concern the methods of investigation that the speaker employs to access the truth, which is what the practice aims to transmit. Consider, for example, the visual identification of objects. Here we are meant to take into account the lighting conditions, shadows, degrees of occlusion, distance to the object, duration of experience, training in such identification and general cognitive health, among other things. That is, there are conditions under which the identification of an object is reasonably taken to be unreliable and the different procedures guide us as to when we can and cannot testify given certain circumstances (more on their nature below). This virtue then helps us avoid acquiring falsehoods, and consequently transmitting them if Sincere.

With regard to Sincerity, the speaker, in instantiating it, performs a virtuous communicative act, which consists mainly in non-misleadingly telling the hearer what she believes through Competence. So, the speaker is to communicate that $p$ to the hearer only if she Competently holds that $p$. This condition on felicitous testimonial exchanges, for example, helps us deal with cases in which the speaker accidentally transmits to the hearer a truth, which is non-Competently held, perhaps when intending to deceive him. Moreover, for the communicative act to be virtuous, the speaker is to intend to transmit the truth non-misleadingly. This non-misleading condition on the exchange help us eliminate cases in which the speaker Competently holds that $p$ and tells the hearer that $p$, but the hearer, given certain maxims of communication, is misled to believe a falsehood (say, the speaker tells the hearer that his wife is faithful when he didn’t inquiry about it or tells him that someone has been opening his mail when it is her who is doing so; Millar 2010:180, Williams 2002:96).

On the other hand, the testimonial virtue the hearer is to display for felicitous testimonial exchange is Acceptance, which is roughly a set of acceptance policies for testimony. These methods of acceptance concern partly the ability to detect cases where the speaker fails to be Competent and Sincere: to pick out defeating conditions for the acceptance of the speaker’s testimony. Much of the literature on testimony focuses on this issue, particularly on the nature of the monitoring required by the hearer (Coady 1992, Fricker 1995). But, these methods are also concerned with issues regarding biases of the hearer that can interfere with the acceptance of Competent and Sincere testimony, hence helping us avoid missing out on such testimony (say, because we are prejudiced against some group to which the speaker belongs). Miranda Fricker (1998, 2007) focuses on this issue and introduces the notion of “epistemic injustice” for those cases in which Competent and Sincere testimony is neglected because of

40 Although we shall remain neutral about issues surrounding this monitoring, see fn.50 for my take on whether any (positive) evidence is required for acceptance.
some prejudice.\textsuperscript{41} But, although Fricker is interested in those cases where prejudice unduly affects the speaker’s credibility negatively, notice that an epistemic injustice of some sort is also taking place in the cases of acceptance of testimony that isn’t Competent or Sincere, perhaps even due to biases prompting credibility-excess. In these cases the injustice isn’t done to the potential testifier, but to the epistemic community since, by passing on such problematically accepted testimony, one pollutes the reservoir that the community works (through the above regulation) to keep clean.\textsuperscript{42} So we can think of this virtue of Acceptance as helping us avoid epistemic injustices, broadly understood. Less controversially, it helps us avoid the vices of credibility-deficit and -excess. In other words, we can say that this virtue regulates against the testimonial vices of gullibility and over-scrupulousness (or “intellectual paranoia”), as well as prejudiced mistrust and trust.

So, these are, briefly introduced, the testimonial virtues that regulate the practice to achieve its goal. In what follows, we focus on Competence and Acceptance. That is, we are mainly concerned with the above two epistemic acts concerning the acquisition of truth and the acceptance of testimony. And although, as we shall see, the need for the concept of knowledge is primarily linked to the virtue of Competence, it should be clear that there are important connections between the two virtues that make their concurrent study congruous. One, and perhaps more obvious, connection is that many procedures of Acceptance derive their content from procedures of Competence. That is, given that some defeating conditions involve misapplying or misexecuting procedures of Competence (as Austin calls them, “misfires”), such procedures provide the background against which the hearer evaluates the speaker’s Competence.

Another, and perhaps more important, connection is that the acceptance of testimony, given the regulated practice and the possibility of chains of testimony, is yet another virtuous way of acquiring the truth (which is exactly what Competence consist of). Indeed, assuming the felicitousness of the testimonial exchange, the testimonially accepted truth is also fit for transmission by the hearer: as a speaker, a Competent way to find out whether $p$ is by felicitously accepting testimony. And so the fact that we acquire through testimony many of the beliefs that we then transmit to others isn’t incompatible with our understanding of the regulation of the practice.

Anyway, I want to exploit a natural understanding of Acceptance to further motivate our understanding of the nature of Competence. So, below we focus mainly on these two virtues.

\textsuperscript{41} See also Jones 2002.\textsuperscript{42} Indeed, this broader epistemic injustice is also present in cases where the speaker succeeds, through no fault of the hearer, in deceiving her.
2.2 Competence and Acceptance

The basic idea is that these virtues consist in a series of procedures which allow us sensitivities to different truth-conducive (and truth-hindering) factors. So, as hearers, we develop sensitivities to different biases and counter-evidence in order to filter out only infelicitous testimony. Indeed, we go through a process of cultivation where our bare natural or “given” disposition(s) to accept testimony, or, as Reid (1997:193-4) says, the “principle of credulity” that is “implanted in our natures,” is refined. This is indeed something that philosophers, such as Reid, appreciate and that regulative epistemologists, such as Locke, work towards.

In fact, during the Modern period, for example, many procedures for the acceptance of scientific testimony were being developed by regulative epistemologists, mainly because the fall of the Textual Tradition in the 16th Century and Aristotelian Science in the 17th Century made them particularly wary of the practice. They responded to this intellectual crisis by engaging in a regulative project to remedy the deficiencies of their testimonial conduct: to increase its truth-conduciveness. According to Barbara Shapiro (2000, 2002), at that time, the procedures for the acceptance of scientific testimony, as well as historical testimony, were mainly derived, with Bacon playing a central role in this, from the courtroom: the acceptance procedures for witnesses’ testimony that the jury had to follow. For instance, jurors had to consider whether the testimony was improbable or inconsistent and whether the testifier was impartial or disinterested. Indeed, both Locke (1975:656) and Hume (1975:112-3) provide lists of standards concerning the quality of the report (say, whether it was delivered with hesitation) and the speaker (say, whether he is of doubtful character), as well as the probability of the event reported (which is particularly important in the case of extraordinary reports, such as miracles), to which the hearer is meant to be sensitive.

So, we develop and refine filtering capacities that supplement the functioning of our natural faculties or dispositions. But, although in some cases correction of our natural make-up seems to be required, in others it may not. For example, this natural credulous tendency may work

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43 By “natural disposition” I mean a disposition that we are born with and develop without learning.
44 For Reid, we aren’t “blind trusters” (always treating testimony as “innocent”): defeating conditions, to which we become sensitive, override such natural disposition (1997:195). And Locke is clear about the need for correcting such natural disposition, especially when dealing with written testimony (Conduct §24). This requirement for refinement or correction (and endorsement, as we’ll see) for “real virtue” is echoed by moral virtue theorists (Aristotle N.E., esp.VI.13, Hume Treatise, esp.III.i.2).
45 Bacon famously opposes the authority of past thinkers. For him, those who didn’t reject the ancients were guilty of both over-estimation of the stock of truths that had been handed down to them and under-estimation of their own capacities. And the Royal Society of London (of which both Bacon and Locke were members) was one of many parallel institutions in Europe that shared this anti-scholasticism and anti-traditionalism. Indeed, the society’s motto ‘Nullius in Verba’ (‘In the words of no one else’) made clear their dissatisfaction with past “teachings.” Having said that, the Royal Society relied on testimony and procedures were developed for its acceptance (see below).
just fine in promoting the truth when dealing with certain members of the community (say, the group with which one has tight bonding relationships, normally close relatives and friends). But, even if this is the case, we still need to endorse this disposition as truth-conducive in these particular conditions. So, our natural credulous disposition seems to require, given the goal of the testimonial practice, “perfecting” or “completing” by either correcting it or restricting it (viz. endorsing it in certain circumstances).

On the other hand, as speakers, we also cultivate, I want to suggest, sensitivities to different everyday “perfecting” procedures that we apply in order to promote the truth when inquiring as to whether \( p \). And, as with Acceptance, these refined capacities aren’t likely to be our natural powers \textit{per se}. Firstly, some natural dispositions, such as fallacious reasoning tendencies, aren’t truth-conducive, and so these vicious propensities need to be corrected.\(^{46}\) Secondly, some natural faculties, such as eyesight, need to be restricted to conditions in which they are truth-conducive, since they fail to be so in all circumstances. It becomes clear that some such restrictions are normally likely to be required when considering the level of sophistication of our interests and change of conditions for which Mother Nature couldn’t have catered. Nevertheless, even if we thought some natural power still did the trick (at achieving the truth) in all circumstances in which it can be employed, the disposition behind the application of such power would need to be endorsed as promoting the truth: as an efficient procedure. That is, thirdly, natural powers could be completely endorsed.

And examples of such “perfecting” procedures can again be found within the scientific and historiographic practices. Indeed, many debates about and changes to scientific and historiographic methodology are cases in which a new procedure is put forward and where a new procedure is accepted as being more truth-conducive than another (Gower 1997, Lemon 2003). Again, during the Modern period, there was a forceful concern, that the work of Bacon and other regulative epistemologists show, with scientific method (§1.1). But this concern with regulatory procedures that guide our acquisition of scientific and other kinds of truths isn’t limited to this period: both Ancient and Medieval philosophers, as well as contemporary ones, are concerned with the formation of good habits of mind, or procedures, within different domains. So, for example, since the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century, historiography “has become a profession with explicit and sometimes sophisticated methods, with exacting criteria for success, requiring both thorough training and diligence of research” (Day 2008:5).

Now, as mentioned, these “perfecting” procedures are sensitivities or capacities we acquire: the fine-tuning of our natural powers is the product of education, broadly understood. In other

\(^{46}\) For example, a common error among those not logically attuned is to infer \( \neg p \) from \( \neg (p \land q) \).
words, the cultivation of the procedures that regulate the “gifts of Nature” is the product of either implicit training or explicit learning. And, the kind of social cultivation that we go through from a very early stage makes some of these acquired procedures likely to become “second nature,” and so they are applied automatically and spontaneously (we come back to this later). But, what is important to note from the above is that these procedures are developed to promote the truth by, at least, some members of the epistemic community, such as the above regulative epistemologists. That is, the procedures, whether corrective, restrictive or endorsing, are strategies, as we shall say, designed to obtain the truth for beings like us: procedures which are reasonably thought to be truth-promoting, since that is their purpose. So, the virtue of Acceptance consists of a set of designed and acquired procedures, some of which can be properly labelled as cognitive habits, which assist the hearer with the acceptance of Competent and Sincere testimony: the kind of testimony that promotes the truth. Similarly, the virtue of Competence consists of a series of designed and acquired procedures, some of which are likely to be well-anchored habits of the mind, which assist the speaker with the adoption of the truth that is to be shared.

So, these virtues and their procedures promote the truth. But, these procedures involve, as Williams says, an “investigative investment:” “information, acquiring a true belief about a given question, can have a cost, in time, energy, opportunities lost, perhaps dangers run” (2002:87). Given inquiry is more or less costly, without a shared set of acquired procedures, individuals are likely to invest differently in their inquiries due to their particular interests, which is likely to affect the promotion of truth. Moreover, without such shared set, individuals are also likely to differ as to how to employ their cognitive capacities in their investigations. So, given that capacities aren’t equally distributed and this diversity with regard to our ability to employ them, differences in the promotion of the truth are again likely. Given this, if we are to avoid variability in truth-conduciveness, which includes low truth-conduciveness, due to individual differences, we require a shared set of acquired procedures (which furthermore save us the costs of calculating whether to continue investigating in any given inquiry, which is a task we would otherwise face).

This need for a shared set of procedures for the more efficient regulation of the practice then seems to rule out a demanding understanding of the procedures as sensitivities that each of us is responsible for developing (given this development is also susceptible to the above diversity). And I suggest that those procedures should be understood as rules of a certain nature (to be specified) that some members of the community (such as the above regulative epistemologists) are responsible for and that most members, mainly, passively internalise (as

47 See also Kappel 2010a.
we shall see below). These shared rules then allow us to avoid the above variability in truth-conduciveness. Indeed, these rules, by standardising the practice, address the possibility of individuals pursuing the truth in different ways and with low-degrees of truth-conduciveness, as well as simplifying matters for the practitioners given that ready-made procedures are in place and making the regulated practice fair with respect to the degree of effort and truth-conduciveness involved in testimonial exchanges.

2.3 Virtues and Rules

The testimonial virtues then consist of shared sets of acquired dispositions to follow “perfecting” procedures designed to promote the truth given our natural capacities. So, these regulative virtues aren’t merely our natural powers, such as eyesight, introspection and memory, nor are they general cognitive traits, such as the intellectual attitudes of open-mindedness, humility and tolerance. Instead, these regulative virtues are systems of acquired, more or less specific, dispositions to use our natural capacities well enough. They provide guidance, concerning the use of our natural powers in certain circumstances, that is aimed at the promotion of truth, but which needn’t be perfect.

So, regulative virtues are educated developments of our natural tendencies. A regulative virtue, as here understood, consists of a set of acquired “perfections” or “completions” of our natural capacities in order to promote the truth. Now, another way of describing these designed “perfections” or “completions” is by employing the notion of a rule (Roberts 1991). Indeed, employing the notion of a rule is a very natural way, as seen, for example, in Descartes’ work, of describing these regulatory procedures that guide our intellectual conduct. So, we can talk of the above virtues as dispositions to follow the designed rules that regulate our testimonial conduct. The idea then is that just like we can talk about having a specific set of explicitly formulated rules in the courtroom to, say, accept the testimony of witnesses, we also can talk of having rules outside the courtroom.

Now, I am not suggesting that formal and natural testimonies have the same rules of Acceptance or even the same sort of rules (where formal testimony takes place in institutionalised settings, such as trials, while natural testimony takes place in our everyday conversational exchanges with others). Indeed, it is clear that, say, in formal witness testimony the speaker has to be seen exclusively as a source of evidence; but that needn’t be the case in

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48 See Sosa 1991, Zagzebski 1996; also Greco and Turri 2009. Moreover, these regulative virtues don’t require the fulfilment of some kind of strong motivational component (say, “an emotion or feeling that initiates and directs action towards an end;” Zagzebski 1996:131). This undue psychological requirement renders virtuous conduct too intellectually demanding. But, as we’ll see, some otherwise demanding features of virtues (such as the aspiration for improvement; Annas 2011:18) are in our account captured at the social, rather than the personal, level.
natural testimony where trusting relations might sometimes be in place. And, while the rules of formal testimony seem to be explicitly formulated, those of natural testimony don’t. Nevertheless, the suggestion is that there are different rules of Acceptance that we are to follow if we are to felicitously accept natural testimony. These rules address different issues concerning, for instance, the type of testifiers (say, strangers, experts or close friends), subject-matters (say, specialised, astonishing or mundane information), biases of the hearer (say, against outsiders) and conflicting reports (say, of experts).

With regard to Competence, the suggestion is then that these rules concern the way we go about adopting the truth that is to be shared in a variety of domains and circumstances and, just like some rules of Acceptance, they needn’t be explicitly formulated. That is, we are equipped with a cluster of procedural rules that regulate the inquiry as to whether \( p \), where most such rules (of natural testimony) are best understood as ingrained cognitive habits that are acquired after much implicit social training (viz. enculturation where no explicit formulation of the rules is evoked). But, not all Competence rules need to be so understood, especially those developed for institutionalised settings. To use Barry Stroud’s example, consider the rules his airplane-spotters “learn from their manuals,” “if a plane has features \( x \), \( y \), and \( w \) it is an \( E \), and if it has \( x \), \( y \), and \( z \) it is an \( F \),” and only when the spotter finds all three features of \( F \) can he “report that the plane in the sky is \( F \)” (1984:67).

Nevertheless, most everyday Competence rules should be seen as being cognitive habits that we acquire through implicit social training, which can then help us make sense of the fact that we find it difficult to articulate them and appreciate the fact that a habit-oriented regulative epistemology needn’t be incompatible with a rule-oriented one. In the next section, we exploit analogies with the rules of grammar and physical skills in order to elucidate many of the above claims and expand on the nature of these rules. But, before we do that, let us point out further advantages for thinking of these acquired procedures as rules that we follow.

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49 This is, of course, on the assumption that trusting relations are truth-conducive. This then puts us at odds with the so-called *assurance view of testimony* (Moran 2006), if such view denies the relevance of truth-conduciveness for felicitous acceptance. But, if so, then it isn’t clear whether this view offers an *epistemology* of acceptance (Lackey 2008).

50 I take it we are likely to end up with a *hybrid account of testimonial acceptance* with regard to the monitoring required by the hearer. In natural testimony, as suggested, the way we seem to deal with it varies depending on, say, the type of testifier and subject-matter. So, in some cases we seem to require positive evidence for the trustworthiness of the speaker, while in other cases the absence of negative evidence against her trustworthiness might be all we need. We end up then with a mixed bag, but a more realistic one too (Fricker 1994:139, Beilby 1999:145, Jones 2002:156). However, I should stress that although I sympathise with this hybrid approach, the above isn’t intended as an argument for it and, more importantly, I needn’t, for our purposes, commit to this or any other (“evidential”) view concerning this controversial issue. Indeed, it is an advantage we can remain neutral about it.

51 As Locke (*Conduct §4*) seems to believe. See also Wolterstorff 1996:153.
Understanding the acquired procedures as rules allows us, for example, to make sense of the idea that practices are rule-governed activities. These rules, as Rawls says, “cannot be taken as simply describing how those engaged in the practice in fact behave: it is not simply that they act as if they were obeying the rules” (1955:24). Practices, including the testimonial, are rule-governed (in a sense to be specified below), as opposed to merely being rule-described (viz. merely being in accordance with certain rules). But, we need to keep in mind that not all rules are related to their practices in the same way. Some rules are constitutive of the practice, while others are regulative. Say, in the case of games, the constitutive rules are the rules which “define” the game and so are “intimately connected” to it (Rawls 1955:26, Williamson 2000:239). One can’t play the game without following those rules. But, that isn’t so in the case of the regulative rules, since they “assess different ways of playing the game: they specify what it is to play the game well [by, say, telling us what qualifies as unsportsmanlike conduct within the game], but presuppose that there is something that counts as playing the game in the first place” (Maitra 2011:280). We can then say that in order to play a game, every player must follow the constitutive rules of the game, but in order to play it well, they must follow the regulative rules. So, given this, unlike the constitutive rules of football and chess, our rules are regulative of the testimonial practice. The testimonial practice then isn’t essentially governed by these rules; after all, our rules are regulatory procedures for felicitous testimonial exchanges (§2.1). Indeed, we can engage in testimonial exchanges badly: non-felicitous testimonial exchanges are still testimonial exchanges. Nevertheless, as its practitioner, one is expected to follow these regulative rules for felicitous telling and acceptance.

And, this approach is in line with what seems to be a feature of normal life: our behaviour is ubiquitously regulated by rules. To appreciate this, think, for example, of the many different domains in which we follow social conventions (where social conventions consist of arbitrary rules that govern human conduct). We follow them in greeting and meeting people, driving and walking around, dressing for occasions, eating with company, playing games and marking homework, among others. Social conventions pervade almost every aspect of our lives. We clearly have the ability to follow rules and we clearly exploit such ability. Indeed, given our socially interdependent lifestyle and that social conventions can solve coordination problems, we can appreciate why we have many such conventions. So, in a rule-governed community like ours and given the power of rules to direct human conduct, we can certainly expect there to be rules for important behaviours, such as cooperative ones, that require regulation.

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53 Our rules then aren’t social conventions, since they aren’t arbitrary.
So, I take it that our regulative virtues are just a set of well-entrenched designed rules that govern felicitous testimonial exchanges, where these rules (and so the virtues) are understood partly by the way they are originated and acquired (more on this below). We could then label these virtues ‘rule-based-virtues’ to contrast them to faculty-based-virtues and trait-based-virtues. Still, this rule-based understanding of virtues is consistent with the “core idea of a virtue:” as “a stable, good or excellent, disposition” (Henderson and Horgan 2009:297).54 And, although virtues aren’t normally understood by means of rules, they aren’t incompatible with them (Roberts 1991, Davies 2001). That is, there is nothing in the notion of a virtue that requires them being unruly, especially since the rules, at least as here understood, can be cognitive capacities that are internalised through training: that is, acquired and deeply-anchored habits of the mind. But more needs to be said about the nature of these rules that make up the testimonial virtues, to which I now turn.

2.4 The Nature of the Rules

These rules can be either rules of permission or obligation. They specify a particular cognitive state as being permitted or required under certain kinds of sufficient conditions, such as “if the speaker is severely intoxicated, then one must not accept the testimony” and “if such-and-such lighting, distance, etc., conditions are met and it visually appears that \( p \), then it is permissible to hold that \( p \).”55 They are general conditional propositions where antecedents specify certain types of circumstances and consequents guide us to certain types of cognitive state (Greco 2010). So, as here understood, the rules aren’t imperatives such as “Tell the truth!” since, first, they don’t specify the conditions under which they obtain and, second and more importantly, it isn’t clear we can accommodate rules of permission in imperatival terms since an imperative “will require you to do something, or to refrain from doing something [but a rule] of permission does not say anything about anyone’s doing anything, or refraining from doing anything” (Boghossian 2008:477). So, even if imperatival rules specify the conditions under which they obtain (“In circumstances C, do X!”),56 not all rules could have such form since many rules are rules of permission (say, “if a trustworthy expert testifies that \( p \) and \( p \)’s subject-matter is within her domain of expertise, then it is permissible to accept that \( p \)”), as opposed to requirement. So, the rules are conditional propositions that apply in certain conditions and guide our testimonial conduct (but, a rule like the previous one guides us only in the absence of counter-reasons that defeat it: say, the expert is severely intoxicated).

54 Annas (2011:8-9) speaks of virtue as a persisting, reliable, deep disposition of the person.
55 Of course, I’m not pretending, nor attempting, to provide exact formulations of rules.
56 Compare the Sincerity rule: “When information is requested, you must be honest and relevant.”
Moreover, many rules are likely to be quite fine-grained given the “perfecting” they aim to provide by correcting our natural powers or restricting them in certain ways (although whether they are more or less fine-grained depends on the specific details surrounding each rule). Indeed, many of these fine-grained rules are needed because Mother Nature doesn’t prepare us for our current varied environments and interests. So, it seems that the refinements and additions to our natural powers (to improve their truth-conduciveness) give us a rich system of fine-grained corrective and restrictive rules. As an example, consider our rules of Acceptance. As mentioned, we are likely to approach testimonies differently depending on, say, the type of testifier and subject-matter. More particularly, consider the case of astonishing reports.

David Hume famously dedicates section X of the *Enquiry* to this issue. Although he is primarily concerned with the extreme case of reports of miracles, the procedures he suggests we should follow when deciding to accept such testimony clearly apply more generally to astonishing reports. His suggestion is that we assess, on the one hand, the trustworthiness of the testifiers (he provides different criteria in Part I) and, on the other, the plausibility of the reported events, and then weigh the cases against each other. Now, Hume went on to argue that neither assessment favours the credibility of the miraculous report: first, the testifiers aren’t trustworthy (he provides different reasons for this in Part II) and the events reported are implausible. But, as Hume was aware, it is possible for the two assessments to pull in different directions: as he would say, for one proof to be opposed by another proof. And, when that is the case, “we have nothing to do but subtract the one from the other, an embrace an opinion, either on one side or the other” (1975:127). Moreover, Karen Jones put forward three rules that are “intended to guide epistemic practice in all cases involving astonishing reports” (2002:169), which can be seen as supplementing the Humean view.

Now, I don’t want to commit to any particular set of rules concerning the acceptance of astonishing reports, but it should be clear from the above that the rules are likely to be quite fine-grained if we are to “perfect” our natural dispositions, in this case, for credulity and, as Hume says, “the love of wonder.” So, I take it we are armed, in ordinary contexts, with many rules of a fine-grained sort, which is consistent with the fact that we acquire, mainly through training, subtle dispositions to deal with specific subject-matters in specific circumstances.

But, perhaps more importantly, the above case makes clear that rules may sometimes prescribe the use of some faculty in certain circumstances in order to deal with the issue at hand. For example, one may naturally understand the above assessments of evidence and plausibility as being “a matter of delicate judgement” (Jones 2002:171). And, in fact, Jones

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claims that her rules are “not algorithms for how to arrive at a judgment regarding a particular report—indeed, they are entirely silent on the question of how to form an all-things-considered judgment regarding a report” (2002:170).  

Now, I don’t want to deny that some rules may, in fact, rely on our capacity for judgement. That is, the rules themselves may not determine the all-things-considered judgements. But, this doesn’t represent a problem for the view put forward (just like it doesn’t for the rules Descartes puts forward59). After all, these are the kinds of rules that either fully endorse natural capacities in all circumstances (however unlikely that is), restrict those capacities to certain circumstances, or correct those capacities by exploiting others instead. So, as long as such rules are truth-conducive, then their exploiting some capacity or other in order to achieve such truth-conduciveness is inconsequential. Again, the rules are meant to “perfect” our natural dispositions to, say, inquire as to whether \( p \) or accept the testimony that \( p \), and this can be done by a variety of means, including the exploitation of some other capacity, in certain circumstances. As long as said capacity helps us achieve the (better) promotion of truth, then the correcting rule provides us with the kind of “perfecting” procedure we are interested in.

But, it is important to notice two things. First, we might come to reasonably think that such capacity isn’t truth-conducive in some circumstances we previously considered it to be (we come back to this in §2.4.1). Second, in such a case, the correcting procedure replacing the use of the deficient capacity (in those circumstances) could consist of an algorithm. Indeed, it seems that (at least some) “matters of judgement” can be replaced by algorithms, which are in fact more truth-conducive. Indeed, “psychologists and statisticians have shown that people who have great experience and training at making certain sorts of prediction are often less reliable than (often very simple) Statistical Prediction Rules” (Bishop and Trout 2005:25). So, even if presently the above all-things-considered judgements aren’t reduced to algorithms in our rules, they could become so. And, importantly, since our rules needn’t provide algorithms, not doing so doesn’t represent a problem to our view.

Furthermore, regardless of whether the enculturation of the procedures involves the explicit formulation of the rules (and, the suggestion is anyway that no explicit formulation is normally evoked in our social training), these rules shouldn’t be understood as necessarily being implemented by explicit cognitive representations of the procedures we are meant to follow. Indeed, they needn’t be, and perhaps normally aren’t, so implemented. In a way, these rules

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58 I take it Jones isn’t working with a notion of ‘algorithm’ as a procedure that consists of a set of steps that, if done rightly, give you the correct result (such as the mathematical algorithm for addition), hence algorithms having perfect (conditional) reliability.

59 Indeed, Descartes famously endorsed, in cases of “clear and distinct perceptions,” the God-given capacity for judgement.
are akin the rules of grammar. There is a sense in which language is a rule-governed activity even if the rules of grammar aren’t explicitly implemented in our cognitive system, as connectionists would normally claim (Bechtel and Abrahamsen 1991, Horgan and Tienson 1996).\textsuperscript{60} So, these issues concerning the implementation of the rules as rules in our cognitive architecture are orthogonal to our purposes. We aren’t committed to a classical construal of cognitive rules (cf. Greco 2010), where the procedures are necessarily implemented as explicitly represented rules in our cognitive system. That is, I leave it open whether the rules are explicitly implemented in our cognitive architecture, which makes issues concerning whether non-classical cognitive rules are required in order to avoid computational intractability irrelevant (Henderson and Horgan 2009).

Now, the above analogy with the rules of grammar seems fitting in other regards too. Just as native speakers normally can’t (or find it difficult to) articulate the rules of grammar (although they can, mostly, easily say when a sentence is grammatical or not), we similarly can’t normally fully articulate the rules of Competence and Acceptance (although we can, mostly, easily say when a testimonial exchange is felicitous or not). But, as with all analogies, this one is also likely to be imperfect, especially if some are right about the degree of innateness surrounding our ability to acquire native languages. But, even if they are, such innately-determined process of acquisition shouldn’t be taken as a paradigmatic case for the cognitive (Sterelny 2003).

Indeed, learning environments can be engineered so to scaffold the acquisition of crucial life-skills and some such impressive social and cultural structures have arisen around human beings. Moreover, “there are many ways animals can engineer the epistemic environment of their young without depending on explicit teaching” (Sterelny 2003:157). That is, groups can structure the learning environment of their young and skills can be transmitted by this scaffolding of the developmental environments without recourse to explicit teaching. This then allows for a developmental (and hence behavioural) plasticity that proves useful in environments that change, evolutionary speaking, rapidly.\textsuperscript{61} So, we shouldn’t underestimate the power and benefits of this cumulative downstream epistemic engineering. And, this is good news for us, since it seems implausible that our rules can be the product of an innately-determined process of acquisition as language might be. In fact, the suggestion, as seen, is that they are learnt by a process of socialisation mostly (but not only) taking place in our (atypically) long youth and through extensive investment of parents and other close members of the

\textsuperscript{60} Connectionism isn’t incompatible with such explicit representation of rules; they just don’t require it.

\textsuperscript{61} Indeed, our brains are likely to have been designed to accommodate such plasticity, given the many evolutionary significant environments, both physical and social, were both irregular (where changes occur over a generation) and unstable (where changes occur over generations). Consider, say, the effects of climatic variability and niche construction. See also Richerson and Boyd 2005.
community. Moreover, given this, we can alleviate the worry that these rules only describe, rather than govern, our cognitive activity since such activity mightn’t be the result of anything like *using those rules* (Greco 2010:31).\(^{62}\)

Nevertheless, we tend to apply these socially-inherited rules automatically and spontaneously at a sub-personal level. So, again, comparing them to the rules of grammar helps, since, although language-use is a rule-governed activity, we don’t consciously follow the rules (consider our judgements about Chomsky’s famous “colourless green ideas sleep furiously” example and the same five words backwards).\(^{63}\) Indeed, it is just as important not to conflate in the linguistic case as in ours the appeal to unconscious rules to explain behaviour and the appeal to innate knowledge to explain the rule’s possession. And the suggestion is that the unconscious rule-system we possess (our “acquired epistemic grammar”) isn’t likely to have an innate basis (“universal epistemic grammar”) for its acquisition.

And, considering physical skills also helps with regard to the unconscious application of rules. Indeed, it is especially common in the physical case not to be aware of the procedures responsible for the skill. For example, most people can’t state the rules by which they can balance on a bicycle. Nevertheless, such failure doesn’t prevent us from either riding well or from helping others learning to ride. Moreover, even professional sports-people are susceptible to this phenomenon: they can do something (indeed, excel at it) but are neither consciously aware of how they do it nor, as one would expect, able to articulate any procedures they follow (Gigerenzer 2007). Analogous points can be made for cognitive skills such as those involved in Competence and Acceptance. Our lack of awareness of the procedures doesn’t rule out the possibility of executing the skill properly or assisting others in acquiring the skill. And, even if the speaker isn’t capable of (fully) articulating the different rules available to her to, say, determine whether \(p\), she can still successfully follow the appropriate ones (given the circumstances) without having awareness of doing so.

But, as previously mentioned, not all rules need to be ingrained cognitive habits that are acquired after much social training and practice and whose operations are (mostly) opaque to us. Indeed, rules can be learnt by explicit instruction and be followed consciously and so also be accessible via reflection. This is a general phenomenon since we often learn to engage in practices by being taught explicitly formulated rules to follow, of which we can be aware, as in

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\(^{62}\) As well as alleviating the worry as to which rules we are actually using when engaging in the rule-governed behaviour.

\(^{63}\) In the former case, we think that, although semantically nonsensical, it is a well-formed English sentence at the syntax-level; but not so in the latter case. The explanation appeals to an unconscious rule where the construction of the form \(\text{Adj}+\text{Adj}+\text{Noun}+\text{Verb}+\text{Adv}\) is permissible, but not one with the reversed order. For the case for unconscious moral rules, see Mallon and Nichols 2010:299ff.
the case of foreign languages and chess. Importantly, in all these cases, we (tend to) consciously follow the rules. Nevertheless, we might in the long run end up following them unconsciously. That is, they can also become “second nature,” particularly once proficiency within the activity is achieved. In this case, we cease to appeal explicitly to them and mightn’t even be able to access them any longer (consider becoming proficient on a foreign language), although they still govern the activity. As John Pollock and Joseph Cruz (1999:127) say, when you become even just good enough at an activity:

You do not usually give any explicit thought to what to do—you just do it. This does not mean, however, that your behaviour is no longer guided by those [rules] you [explicitly] learned […]. The point here is that [rules] can govern your behaviour without your having to think about them.

So, the skilful performance is in this case achieved automatically without the need to follow the originally explicitly formulated rules consciously. Those rules are applied in an automatic manner at a sub-personal level and their operations are opaque to us. And experience tells us that compliance to rules is often automatic and unreflective: normally, we don’t consciously deliberate about the rules, nor consciously follow them (we don’t usually have to “do it by the book”). But, the “intellectualist model” of conscious rule-following isn’t just an unrealistic position, phenomenologically speaking, to hold, it also seems, computationally speaking, an excessively demanding position, given the pervasiveness of rule-following behaviour and the fact that this model denies reliance on automatic and sub-personal processes. Moreover, since conscious rule-following is, as Cristina Bicchieri (2006:4) notes, “likely to be costly in time, resources, and effort and to require considerable skill,” an alternative seems desirable given the importance, evolutionarily speaking, of developmentally and behaviourally plastic rule-following skills. At any rate, we can either consciously follow a rule or we can do it automatically and thoughtlessly and, importantly, we can combine the two (Bicchieri 2006).

So, by now, it should be clear that our rules shouldn’t be understood as being imperatives, nor necessarily algorithms. Neither should they be understood as necessarily being explicitly represented or codified, nor fully articulable. Moreover, these rules can be followed either consciously or automatically. But, as just seen, many (if not most) of the rules become, over the course of the aforementioned socialisation, internalised patterns of behaviour that we automatically follow, like in bicycle riding (Pollock and Cruz 1999:130, Bicchieri 2006:97). That is, in many (if not most) cases, following our rules involves a programmed plan of behaviour which guides our conduct without requiring us to think about it and which is acquired in the social milieu. Indeed, this kind of internalisation of rules is a real and ubiquitous human
phenomenon.\textsuperscript{64} We follow all kinds of rules in all kinds of practices, where we are typically consciously unaware of the governing rules. This is then how our rules, mainly, govern the practice, where anyway following a rule isn’t merely acting in accordance to a rule, but acting in light of the acquired rule. That is, these aren’t mere regularities that we conform to, but acquired procedures that direct our testimonial conduct.

Finally, before moving onto the social and normative aspects of the rules, I would like to call our attention to another feature of them. We said that the testimonial virtues consist mainly of a set of dispositions to follow procedural rules that promote the practice’s goal, namely truth. Now, these rules need to be not only instrumentally adequate (i.e. truth-conducive—otherwise the practice becomes pointless) but also feasible (i.e. tailored to human capacities—otherwise the practice becomes useless). It is clear that, if the rules are to regulate the practice, those procedures we are to follow need to be humanly tractable: regulatory procedures human beings can acquire and apply (Henderson 2008). Indeed, this regulation, which is mainly a response to perceived deficiencies in our testimonial conduct, has the very practical concern to improve our practice; hence the need for their tractability. And it is, as Jones says, “no use recommending a procedure if, given how we are constituted, the attempt to follow that procedure will lead us further from our truth-seeking goal” (2002:168). So the rules need to be tailored to our human capacities. That is, the rules that guide our testimonial conduct need to be feasible: they can be acquired and employed by normal human beings.

And recall that our rules needn’t only be instrumentally adequate (in a humanly tractable way), but also reasonably taken to be so by their designers (§2.2). After all, these are procedures we design (that is, develop or endorse) with the aim of being tractably truth-conducive so to improve the practice. And, this feature of the rules helps us appreciate their social nature, as we shall now see.

\textbf{2.4.1 Social and Historical Features}

The rules that govern felicitous testimony are designed to regulate the practice: a practice that involves social interaction. Indeed, testimonial activity is what Reid calls a “social operation” or “social act,” as opposed to “solitary” ones. This is what he says:

\textsuperscript{64} Indeed, cooperative behaviour is most plausibly explained by means of this internalisation of rules that direct individuals to behave in certain ways, or, more precisely, that influence individuals when deciding what course of action to take (Bowles and Gintis 2003, Gintis 2003, 2007, 2009, Heath 2008, Henrich et al. 2004, Sripada and Stich 2007). This internalisation explains the fact that, “having been taught to comply with the […] rules of their group, people exhibit a \textit{lifelong} pattern of \textit{highly reliable} compliance with the rule,” even in cases of one-shot, anonymous interactions (Sripada and Stich 2007:286).
I understand such [social] operations as necessarily suppose an intercourse with some other intelligent being. [When a man] bears testimony, or receives the testimony of another; [...] when he gives a command to his servant [...]; when he plights his faith in a promise or contract; these are acts of social intercourse between intelligent beings, and can have no place in solitude. They suppose understanding and will; but they suppose something more, which is neither understanding nor will; that is, society with other intelligent beings. [...] Testimony is neither simple apprehension, nor judgement, nor reasoning [nor their combination]. (2002:68)

And I suggest that the special operation of the mind that requires society with other intelligent beings is its regulation by means of the above shared procedures. And, it is the origin of the rules, and not that they are communally shared, that makes them social in an interesting way, since it is us, through generations, that determine what those rules are.

So, these rules are social in the more interesting sense that we design them, where such design can merely involve the recognition that a natural power is truth-conducive in all circumstances or, more commonly, in certain circumstances. But, in the case of correction (as opposed to full endorsement and restriction), such design is likely to be more substantial since it involves the development of a procedure to replace a natural tendency, rather than merely validating the truth-conduciveness of a natural power (in certain circumstances). In these cases, we detect and correct inefficient, given the goal of the practice, deployments of our natural powers. Anyway, in both cases, we adopt procedures that promote the truth and indeed, often, we develop procedures or restrict natural capacities in order to promote the truth. As David Papineau says, we can “simply set ourselves to be more reliable sources of true belief. That is, we can identify and analyse different kinds of problem situation, figure out which methods of belief-formation will actually deliver true answers in those situations, and then set ourselves to practice these reliable methods. In this way we can ‘transcend’ the ‘quick and dirty’ modes of thought bequeathed to us by evolution” (2000:182).

But, this pursuit of reliability, with respect to the rules that facilitate the pooling of truths, is carried out, in a cooperative community which inherits rules, through a division of labour and through time. Indeed, most rules are likely to be the product of the experiences of different people over a long time. So, when I say that we design the rules I don’t mean that each of us does so or is involved in such a process. A division of labour, characteristic of human society, is in place, which is as easily appreciated, for example, in the domain of scientific and historiographic investigation as it is in the case of Stroud’s airplane-spotters. So, although the rules are developed by us, they needn’t be developed by all of us. Again, as Papineau says,

Not everybody whose belief-forming strategies are improved by human civilisation need themselves have reflected on the advantages of these improvements. Once a certain technique [...] has been designed by innovative individuals in the interests of improved reliability-for-truth, then others can be trained in these techniques, without themselves necessarily appreciating their rationale. (2000:184)
And, since rules are passed from generation to generation, our generation needn’t be the one responsible for the design of the procedures we currently exploit. So, rules are neither necessarily fostered in isolation, nor necessarily developed by our generation. And, the normal case, for most of us, concerning most subject-matters, involves the passive acquisition of these rules through a process of socialisation which exploits our cultural environment and from which we internalise the procedures.

So, the rules are both inter-subjectively determined and socially inherited and cultivated. But, this doesn’t mean that the rules designed by past generations can’t be changed. On the contrary, like other social phenomena, the rules are open to revision. For example, changes in our circumstances can prompt (reasonable) changes to those rules. And, in fact, these rules are likely to evolve through time, given new experiences and situations, and through the combined effort of individuals. For example, over time (perhaps generations), a primitive rule (say, “if it visually appears that \( p \), it is permissible to hold that \( p \)” ) might fragment into a variety of more sophisticated and fine-grained rules given some discoveries (say, about lighting conditions), where the refinements aim to make improvements on the truth-conduciveness associated with the rules. That is, learning about new defeating conditions (by gaining information about our environment and nature) prompts such revision (but, again, it needn’t be carried out by everyone, and, indeed, for most of us, the revised rules are simply passed on).

Consider, for instance, the rules of Acceptance. Even if the need for the virtue of Acceptance remains constant across time for creatures like us, there is a historical evolution of the particular procedures of which it is composed. These procedures are open to revision, since they can be improved or eliminated because of a change in our understanding of ourselves or our circumstances. For example, it has been argued that determining the gentlemanly status of the speaker in 17th Century England would assist hearers decide whether to accept the scientific testimony of the speaker (Shapin 1994). More generally, gentlemen were regarded as the kind of person whose testimony one could trust. Perhaps, such Acceptance procedure was reasonably taken to be truth-conducive at the time, since they had very little to gain from deceiving and misinforming and much to lose. But, no such gentlemanly credibility is in place nowadays. As Philip Kitcher says, “Over three centuries later, we have come to understand that even gentlemen, “free and unconfin’d,” with all the advantages of the best educations, can sometimes fudge the data, report experiments that were never done, or be led to advocate unsupported conjectures because of their personal or political passions”(2001:29).

65 But not perhaps when considering scientific reports of extraordinary phenomena (Da Costa 2002).
Similarly, the rules of Competence are revisable and eliminable and, as noticed earlier, some of them have been the target of much debate. Again, this is easily appreciated when considering the procedures that guide our acquisition of scientific truths. Their revision is well documented, and the numerous debates concerning scientific method and the work of regulative epistemologists show that the rules are also frequently challenged. Or consider, again, the changes in historiographic methodology: such as the changes to Herodotus’ historiographic practice that Thucydides and Polybius promoted. And, these changes take place because they are meant to promote the truth. Similarly, as Williams (2002:131) notes, we have eliminated Roman augury as a procedure for acquiring truths about the outcome of battles, since we reasonably take it not to be truth-conducive. And, Vassilopoulou (2009:7) provides us, while commenting on the “other ways to discover truth” in late antiquity, with other examples of eliminated procedures: “What is unusual, from our perspective, in the late-antique philosophers is that certain ‘non-rational’ practices, such as oracular testimonies, theurgic rituals, erotic passion, poetic inspiration, metaphors, and myths, were reckoned as reliable as reasoned argument, or better still.”

Now, given this possibility of revision, the rules clearly have a historical dimension. Moreover, the above shows that it is possible that different communities throughout time, as well as at a given time, can have different sets of rules, given different circumstances. That is, it is possible that some rules aren’t well suited to some other community’s circumstances. For example, consider an adaptation of the famous fake-barn case (Goldman 1976). In Fake-Barn County, where it is customary to fill the countryside with fake-barns, people are to follow different rules when determining whether something is a barn than we do. Indeed, simply having a visual seeming of a barn from the distance won’t do in Fake-Barn County. In this case, the rules would differ simply because in the fake-barn environment different rules are expected to better promote the truth. So, the rules are also sensitive to the circumstances of the community that is doing the pooling of truths. The rules evolve through time and depend on the circumstances of the community. So, the rules historicise the practice.

We can now see then that the rules introduce different social features to the practice. They are procedures which are developed inter-subjectively and over time in response to the community’s circumstances and which are in most cases passively inherited through enculturation. And, given that they are shaped by many cultural and historical aspects of the community, the rules are relative to particular communities. But, it is important to notice two things. First, we shouldn’t underestimate the fact that, given our shared make-up and types of environment, many of these rules will, as a matter of natural necessity, be widely shared. That

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66 Namely, leaving embellishments to entertain out of the narrative (Williams 2002, Burrow 2007).
is, for creatures like ourselves who share a common world, there will be substantial overlap concerning these rules (just as there is within other domains\(^67\)). And, second, this relativity on its own needn’t give us relativism, as we shall now see when focusing on the normative nature of the rules.

### 2.4.2 Normative Features

As well as the above social and historical features, the rules also have a normative component, since they are the ways of settling what we should hold or accept under particular circumstances given the practice’s goal. Indeed, the rules are meant to be truth-conducive and only those that are so are legitimate rules.\(^68\) That is, for these rules to be legitimate, they need to be instrumentally adequate: promote the truth. But, their legitimacy is only partly determined by their truth-conduciveness. The content of the rules, as seen, is determined by us. And, the rules needn’t only be (tractably) truth-conducive but also reasonably taken to be so since we develop them with the aim to improve the practice through truth-promoting (§2.2). So, given the purpose of the rules, we should design the rules given what we reasonably take to promote the truth and only those rules so designed that objectively promote the truth are legitimate ones. Furthermore, these rules are meant to be regarded both as being guiding and evaluative standards. That is, these rules aren’t only meant to provide us with *guiding standards* that tell us what we should do, as epistemologists have traditionally recognised, but also with *evaluative standards*, where we use the rule to evaluate the behaviour of others (§2.1). So, the rules are employed both to regulate our conduct and for theoretical appraisal.

Moreover, this instrumental normativity makes it clear that we aren’t committed to relativism because of the above relativity. After all, the rules, even if designed by us, need to be truth-conducive. So, not all alternatives are “equally valid” or “on a par” since what partly determines whether a rule is legitimate is whether it is actually successful to promote the truth. So, we aren’t endorsing the doctrine that “anything goes.” In fact, relativism involves two central tenets: the first one requires relativity and the second one requires absence of neutrality (Siegel 1987, 2004). Given this then, it is easy to see that our rules don’t commit us to relativism, since unless we further add that there is no local transcendence (i.e. no way to neutrally evaluate the rules), then we don’t end up with relativism. It is this absence of neutrality that allows for those claims of “equal validity” and “parity,” given some relativity. But, in our case, there is no such absence.

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\(^{67}\) Consider rules against killing or mating with one’s kin.

\(^{68}\) After all, if they aren’t truth-conducive, they fail their purpose.
This instrumental normativity also helps us deal with another worry one might have given the social nature of the rules. The dissatisfaction here would derive from thinking that if the content of the rules is determined by us, we can’t respect the distinction between the rules we hold as a community and the norms we ought to hold. And this is a distinction that we want to hold since we think that “[mere] acceptance by a community is not sufficient for rightness, for a system to be really right as opposed to being thought to be right” (Goldman 1989:72). And, this is, in fact, a criticism that communitarian approaches to normative domains, such as Martin Kusch’s (2002) communitarian epistemology, are susceptible to (Henderson 2003). But, this concern is, in our case, misplaced, since the rules that we hold as a community needn’t be legitimate rules. It isn’t the case that whatever rules we take (even reasonably take) to be legitimate are indeed so, since they need to in fact be truth-conducive too. So, the above distinction still holds.

To conclude, legitimate rules (or norms) of Competence and Acceptance describe the way we should go about forming judgements as to whether p and accepting p in testimony, given the goal of the practice. And, these rules not only determine what one should do when considering whether p or accepting p, but they also allow us to evaluate someone’s behaviour when determining whether p or accepting p. Moreover, if we focus on the instrumental nature of the rules, then we can think of our view as being a type of rule-instrumentalism, in which the rules are designed to promote the goal of the practice: truth. So, this is a form of consequentialism, where the rules are derivative, rather than primary (like in the case of deontological rules, which are independent of consequences). Indeed, in our case, the promotion of truth not only explains why a certain rule is right but also what makes something a virtue. So, just like the rules, the virtues are derivative. They are virtues because of their promotion of the practice’s goal. That is, given this goal, specific ways of acting become virtuous within the practice: the ways that conduce to it. So, regulative virtues are relative to the practices they enhance and their goals. So, our view about the nature of the testimonial practice is consequentialist, as opposed to deontic or aretaic.

Now that we have described what we take to be the nature of the testimonial practice, which does justice to our rational, social and communicative nature by positing the above social and normative governing rules, we can finally introduce the story concerning the practical explication of the concept of knowledge.

2.5 The Concept of Knowledge

Taking a cue from Craig (1990), the starting point from which we build our theory is the hypothesis that the concept of knowledge is required to satisfy a certain need of ours. Of
course, once we have the concept of knowledge, we might use it in a variety of different ways. But the idea is that there is a particular need that the concept is meant to satisfy that provides it with its point, which in turn helps us make sense of features of the target phenomenon (Kappel 2010a). And the suggestion is that this need arises out of the development of our fundamental and pervasive testimonial practice. More precisely, the concept of knowledge is the result of a conceptual need related to this practice (Kappel 2010a). We saw that it is developed and shaped by our need for truth, so the question arises as to why the concept of knowledge, as suggested, is needed.

To answer this question, we need to think of the possibility of failure and success in the testimonial practice. From the speaker’s side, she can fail to engage in felicitous testimony by either not being Sincere or Competent (or both). If the speaker fails, in a given occasion, to fulfil those conditions, then we can say that she is lying or incompetent. But, in felicitous cases, neither being Sincere nor Competent entails that what is being told is true. More particularly, Competent performance doesn’t pick out only those cases in which one achieves the truth. After all, the rules needn’t be perfectly truth-conducive (§2.3), and neither are they likely to be so given the above feasibility constraint (§2.4). So, Competence isn’t factive.

Nevertheless, if one Competently and Sincerely testifies that \( p \), then even if \( p \) isn’t the case, one isn’t to blame for such unsuccessful testimony. But, blameless testimony (viz. Competent and Sincere testimony) isn’t the aim of the practice. The practice is designed to deliver truth, and without it, the testimony, even if blameless, doesn’t satisfy the practice’s goal. We require more from testimony than blamelessness. Particularly, successful testimony requires truth. So, given we want to be able to refer to those cases of Competence in which we do achieve the truth (i.e. those cases in which Competence is successful, given the practice’s goal), then we seem to need a new concept. This concept then picks out those cases of Competence that succeed in achieving the truth and the suggestion is that such concept is knowledge.

The concept of knowledge is then needed to pick out those successful cases in which the truth is achieved by means of Competence, and we refer to those cases as being ‘knowledge’ and to the individual who apprehends the truth in such a way as ‘knowing.’ The basic idea, on which this hypothesis rests, is that the verb ‘know’ is what Ryle (1949) calls an “achievement word,” as opposed to a task word (compare finding to looking, and scoring to shooting). ‘Know’ is a “verb of success” (1949:125): a verb indicating the successful accomplishment of a task. The suggestion then is that ‘know’ is a verb that indicates success with regard to the Competence task. That is, ‘know’ indicates the possession of the truth by means of Competence.
So, the concept of knowledge addresses a particular conceptual need generated by our universal and pervasive testimonial practice. This need can provide us with a practical explication of the concept of knowledge that allows us to explain why the concept enjoys such widespread use. And, to repeat, given that Competence doesn’t entail truth (given that no perfect truth-conduciveness is required of Competence), we need the concept of knowledge to pick out the successful cases of Competence. So, some concepts are required in connection with our testimonial practice, one of which is the success concept *knowledge* that picks out cases of Competence that deliver the truth: that allows us to refer to these successful cases.\(^{69}\)

Now, it is important to notice three things. First, due to the aforementioned connection between Competence and Acceptance, the concept of knowledge also applies to hearers who felicitously acquire the truth via testimony, since a Competent way to acquire the truth (given the regulation of testimony and the usual scenario involving chains of testimony) is by means of testimony (§2.1). After all, this virtuous way of acquiring the truth renders it fit for further transmission by the hearer. That is, some cases of Competence are cases of Acceptance. So, we can also talk of hearers as knowing when Accepting testimony.

Second, and for similar reasons, we can also talk of hearers knowing when speakers aren’t Competent or Sincere but the hearer can compensate for such deficiency. Suppose you ask your friend how many people were in the meeting and you are aware that he always double-counts the first person or suppose that you ask a known pathological liar whether he was in the meeting (although, admittedly, it isn’t often that we have this sort of compensating information). On the assumption that the extra information you possess about the speakers compensates for their deficiencies, this would again be another virtuous way of acquiring the truth. In these cases though, the speakers are better regarded as instruments, rather than testifiers, that with the appropriate correction can reliably afford us the truth (like any corrected faulty instrument would).\(^{70}\)

Third, we can also refer to individuals who aren’t involved in a testimonial exchange as knowing. That is, potential testifiers as well as individuals who aren’t trusted or who won’t testify or who deceive us, can be thought as knowing. This is because, regardless of whether

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\(^{69}\) The concept of knowledge also allows us to refer to those cases of felicitous testimony that transmit the truth. That is, it can help us pick out and mark the success of testimonial exchanges (“She let me know that p”); something that *tell*-that can’t do (“She told me that p”), hence allowing us to refer to infelicitous cases (“I was told that p but not not-p,” “I told her that p, but I lied”). However, *tell*-wh seems to be factive, so *know* isn’t required for this.

\(^{70}\) This suggests the existence of Competence procedures for said correction, which, if taken to generate knowledge (§2.6), allow us to acquire knowledge from a speaker who doesn’t herself know. The issue as to whether testimony merely transmits or also generates knowledge has been much discussed and different views that deny that testimony can only transmit have been put forward. Our view requires that the truth is reliably acquired by the hearer via a given procedure (cf. Graham 2000, Goldberg 2005).
one transmits the truth and whether someone accepts it, if one Competently achieves it, one qualifies as knowing. So, the Mafioso, the liar and the Boy-that-cried-wolf all can be said to know, as we would expect.⁷¹

Moreover, even if we are right about the conceptual need that the concept of knowledge is meant to satisfy, the concept can still fulfil different roles. After all, once we have the concept, we might use it in a variety of different ways. Indeed, there are many other uses for it. For example, it allows us to flag good social sources of truth (i.e. those people who have knowledge: “She knows whether p,” when, say, one is aware of her positional advantage or expertise) and so to inquiry for these social sources of truth (“Who knows whether p?”).⁷² Relatedly, the concept allows the speaker to present herself as an authority (or, expert) as to whether p (“I know whether p”).⁷³ Also, it allows the hearer to phrase questions that make his intentions to engage in testimony clear (“Do you know whether p?”).⁷⁴ And, it allows the community to group those truths under its heading.

So, these are some of the things that the concept of knowledge can do for us,⁷⁵ but still the idea is that there is a particular need that the concept is meant to satisfy that provides it with its point. And the point of the concept (or, “what the concept is for”) is to allow us to pick out the successful cases of Competence: that is, its purpose is to fulfil the need to pick out those success-cases. After all, the testimonial practice is to satisfy our basic need for truth, so a concept that allows us to pick out the truth when Competent seems required. Anyhow, this is the plausible hypothesis I want to put forward. And, importantly, the account of knowledge that we can derive from this practical explication has great explanatory power, a case that will be made in the rest of the thesis. But, first, let us consider how this practical explication helps us understand what knowledge is.

2.6 Knowledge, Factivity and Transmissibility

Knowledge, echoing Craig, is “something that we delineate by operating with a concept which we create in answer to certain needs” (1990:3). This is the methodological presupposition we accepted above (§1.4). Knowledge, although a natural phenomenon, is the kind of phenomenon that we shape. So the suggestion is that the above success-concept, which satisfies a specific conceptual need generated by our basic and universal testimonial practice, delineates the phenomenon of knowledge. Indeed, knowledge is the apprehension of the truth

⁷¹ Craig’s “objectivisation” of the proto-concept is primarily required to capture these cases (1990:82ff.).
⁷² But, it isn’t needed for this; consider: “She can tell you whether p,” “Who can tell me whether p?”
⁷³ But consider “I can tell you whether p.”
⁷⁴ But consider “Can you tell me whether p.”
⁷⁵ See also Reynolds 2002.
by means of these socially-designed truth-conducive rules that are in place for the pooling of information. And, as suggested, the best way to proceed is to assume its correctness and see where it takes us. As mentioned, I think that it takes us to a good place, and the case for this is presented mainly in the next two chapters, where the account is further developed.

So, knowledge is the apprehension of the truth by means of certain truth-conducive rules that are developed for the pooling of information. Indeed, to know is to grasp the truth by means of certain norms, where these norms of knowledge are certain regulatory rules of testimony, which are inter-subjectively developed and mainly passively inherited by social training. But these rules are (legitimate) norms of knowledge only if they are truth-conducive. So, just like we can only have knowledge if what we hold is true, we can only have knowledge if the rules are truth-conducive. After all, the testimonial practice is meant to deliver truths and its regulative rules are meant to promote them. But, these rules, which are designed by us, are also meant to be reasonably regarded as being truth-conducive. So, the rules are (legitimate) norms of knowledge only if they are reasonably taken to be truth-conducive too. And this feature of the rules promotes a sort of epistemic responsibilism that is accomplished through time by a division of labour. So, significantly, these rules provide us with a new perspective on knowledge that combines truth-consequentialism and, what we might call, social-responsibilism, together with an undemanding model of the norms of knowledge, since the rules are mainly internalised: we automatically and thoughtlessly follow them.

These norms then introduce different social elements into the nature of knowledge, which we shall scrutinise in later chapters. So, we can now clearly appreciate why it was important to consider in some detail the nature of the testimonial practice, and particularly the nature of its regulatory rules, if we are to understand what knowledge is. Indeed, in the following chapters, we mostly examine consequences that these rules have for our account of knowledge. But, before we do that, let us first consider some straightforward upshots of our practical explication for our account: results that start showing its explanatory power. Indeed, our practical explication has two clear consequences with regard to our desiderata and another two with regard to oft-noticed connections between knowledge and other phenomena.

First, given that, according to our hypothesis, the concept of knowledge is, as Ryle (1949:125) says, a "concept of success" and success in our case requires the achievement of truth and that, according to our methodological presupposition, knowledge is a phenomenon we delineate by operating with this concept, we can appreciate that the factivity-desideratum is satisfied by our account (§1.5.1). One knows only if the truth is achieved; just following the Competence rules without achieving the truth won’t do (indeed, that would make us Competent informants, not knowing ones). That is, the successful accomplishment of
Competence requires truth and so consequently does knowledge. But, what is important to appreciate is that we not only accommodate the factivity-desideratum (any plausible account of knowledge does), we also have an explanation as to why knowledge requires truth (and, this isn’t something that, say, most “analyses” of knowledge, merely concerned with capturing intuitions, even address).

Second, given that, according to our hypothesis, the concept of knowledge applies equally to both speakers and hearers and our methodological presupposition, we can make sense of the testimonial exchange in terms of a transmission of knowledge. Indeed, given knowledge is the apprehension of the truth by means of Competence and the above connection between Competence and Acceptance (§§2.1, 2.5), the hearer ends up with knowledge in successful exchanges. Put differently, when one, as a hearer, Accepts that \( p \), one also, as a speaker, Competently holds that \( p \) (since, given the regulation of the testimonial practice, the Acceptance of testimony is a Competent way of acquiring truths that can be further transmitted). So, when \( p \) is the case and the testimonial exchange is felicitous, then both the hearer and the speaker know that \( p \). That is, what is being transmitted in such felicitous testimonial exchanges is knowledge. And, so our account can explain the fact that knowledge can be communicated and shared (but, we shall see that not all approaches can; §3.3.1).

Furthermore, given that knowledge is the apprehension of the truth by means of Competence, our account can also explain why knowledge grounds testimonial expertise and closes testimonial inquiry, and why answering such inquiries successfully requires knowledge. And these explanations are illuminating because knowing is a fundamental component of successful testimony. And, it is a further advantage of our account that can tell us why this is so, and not merely capture the phenomena. So, our account can also accommodate and explain the transmissibility-desideratum (§1.5.4).

Third, and related to this transmissibility-desideratum, our account can make sense of the oft-noticed connection between knowledge and assertion (on the assumption that testimony is a kind of assertion).\(^{76}\) Indeed, we can easily appreciate that this account allows us to make sense of the fact that we naturally take it that, in order to testify that \( p \), one needs to know that \( p \). And, our account suggests that when testimonially asserting that \( p \), one represents oneself as knowing that \( p \) (cf. Williams 2002:76). But, whichever knowledge-norm our account might suggest, we shouldn’t think of it as establishing a necessary condition on testimonial assertion. After all, we can testimonially assert that \( p \) even if in an infelicitous way. As pointed out, the

Competence rules aren’t constitutive rules of testimony but regulative ones (§2.3). Testimony isn’t essentially governed by these rules: they are instead regulatory procedures for felicitous testimony. Nevertheless, as a practitioner of testimony, one is expected to follow these regulative rules for felicitous telling, which given their truth-conduciveness they are expected to be successful.

So our view seems to commit us to a regulative knowledge-norm of (successful) testimonial assertion: assert that $p$ only if one knows that $p$ (cf. Williamson 2000:238ff). And, this norm can explain the relevant phenomena, such as the usual recriminations (“You shouldn’t have said so, if you didn’t know”) and challenges (“How do you know?”) to testimonial assertions. Also, it straightforwardly explains why, when not answering questions, one can be excused if one says that one doesn’t know and why one should qualify one’s answer in cases in which one thinks that one doesn’t know (“I believe that $p$”). Moreover, it can also explain why (testimonial) Moorean assertions (“$p$ but I don’t know that $p$”) seem paradoxical given that in asserting $p$ we represent ourselves as knowing $p$ (cf. opining) and why it seems inappropriate to testify that one’s lottery ticket has lost (on the basis of statistical reasons) given that, intuitively, one doesn’t know this.

But, notice two things. First, I am not suggesting that ours is the only norm that can accommodate the data. And, second, our norm is silent about the sufficiency of knowledge to make testimonial assertions (cf. DeRose 2002). And this is as one would expect given that other, perhaps even non-epistemic, regulative norms of testimonial assertion might be in place. Say, if one as an expert must testimonially assert that $p$ only if one can provide a justification (or explanation) for $p$, then for an expert having knowledge (say, via testimony) without said justification isn’t enough to testify (Lackey 2011).

Moreover, this norm is restricted enough so that cases where one is giving advice, expressing one’s opinion, or making philosophical assertions (more generally, making academic assertions that we don’t know) aren’t wrongly taken to impart knowledge. But, aren’t there counterexamples to the necessity claim? One such case is Lackey’s Creationist Teacher (2008), who believes, on personal faith, in creationism but recognizes the overwhelming amount of evidence against it and for evolutionary theory. In this case then it seems that, when teaching evolutionary theory, she appropriately makes assertions without knowing (because she doesn’t even believe those assertions). But, the teacher should probably be seen as a spoke-

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78 Maitra (2011:280-4) argues that no knowledge-norm can be regarded as constitutive, as understood above, of assertion. And Millar (2010:178ff) also restricts the knowledge-norm to testimony.
79 The above data doesn’t require this sufficiency; see Brown 2011.
80 Here a rational-credibility-norm seems adequate; see Douven 2006.
person for a group rather than a testifier of her own views, since it is “her duty as a teacher to include presenting material that is best supported by the available evidence” (2008:111). It is her role to present such material regardless of her beliefs: she isn’t speaking for herself, but for a group of scientists whose views are best supported by the available evidence. Indeed, if these views turn out to be false, we wouldn’t hold the teacher responsible but the relevant group for which she is a spoke-person, which suggests that the source of testimony is actually the group.\footnote{But I’m not suggesting the group is to be blamed for this. Also, one could interpret the case as her merely reporting what some group claims to be the case, in which case she both believes and knows that (cf. Kvanvig 2011:235-7). But what about cases in which a Gettiered-subject asserts that $p$: how can, given a knowledge-norm, these assertions be in some sense appropriate, as they seem? After all, these are cases where the subject unwittingly violates it. And, in fact the assertion is blameless since the subject, of no fault of her own, mistakenly takes herself to know. So, we can easily explain the intuition that, in a sense, there is nothing wrong with her assertion. Having said that, there is also a sense in which it is inadequate, when considering all good-making features of assertions, given that what we are saying is true by accident (§4.3).} So, our account can capture the intuitive data and also explain why knowledge is connected to testimonial assertion. This is then another advantage of our account.

Similarly and finally, our practical explication provides us with an explanation as to why there is an intuitive connection between knowledge and practical deliberation; a connection that has also been increasingly noticed by epistemologists.\footnote{See Hawthorne 2004, Stanley 2005.} Knowledge normally directs our endeavours in the world, and this relation with practical deliberation must be preserved in an adequate account of knowledge. And, as our account suggests, knowledge is related to practical deliberation because the testimonial practice serves the fundamental human need for truths (§2.1), which are predominantly required for use in practical deliberation in order to achieve success in our courses of action (Craig 1990:11). So, in testimonial contexts (i.e. contexts in which we are dealing with the subject-matter of potential or actual testimonial inquiries), knowledge is expected to be the epistemic status relied on for practical deliberation.\footnote{This doesn’t rule out the possibility that, in some testimonial contexts, knowledge isn’t sufficient.} And so in many cases we end up relying on known propositions in our practical reasoning. But this doesn’t entail a knowledge-norm of practical reasoning, such as: only rely on known propositions in practical reasoning.\footnote{Knowledge of the premises is required for the reasoning to be apt. Cf. Hawthorne and Stanley 2008.}

And, given the above association between knowledge and practical deliberation, this norm isn’t required in order to explain the use of knowledge in criticising and defending action based on premises typically acquired through testimony (say, “You shouldn’t have added nuts, you didn’t know that she isn’t allergic to them” and “Actually, it was fine, I knew that”). This connection also explains why, even if what one happens to be told is false (and so not knowledge), one can be criticised if one doesn’t act accordingly (say, wrongly being told that...
we are out of nuts when making a shopping list, and one failing to buy them). And, again, our account doesn’t merely accommodate such data, it also explains, based on our practical explication, why this is so.

Indeed, there seem to be many cases in which knowledge isn’t required in order to engage in acceptable practical reasoning. For example, it seems appropriate for me to plan a local cheap holiday, because I am short of money, even if I hold a ticket for a fair lottery that pays the winner enough money for the more desired safari to Africa. And, although there are some cases of “intuitively awful” practical deliberation in which it is natural to think that this is so because the premises aren’t known (Hawthorne 2004:174-6), this needn’t be the only plausible explanation of the unacceptability of these “awful” cases of reasoning.

Consider one such case of intuitively bad reasoning. When offered a penny for a lottery ticket that costs £1, in a 10000-ticket lottery with a £5000 first prize, one reasons as follows: since I will lose the lottery, and if I keep the ticket, I will get nothing, but if I sell the ticket, I will get a penny, then, I ought to sell the ticket. Since, intuitively, one doesn’t know that one will lose the lottery, so the above norm can explain the intuitive incorrectness of the reasoning. But, it might seem wrong because another premise is false instead; after all, it isn’t clear that one won’t get anything if one keeps the ticket, since we can expect other factors (such as the excitement and hope generated by the ticket’s possession until the drawing) to play a role here; after all, they probably played one in one’s decision to buy the £1-ticket, given that one knew the odds before buying it (so one can expect such factors to be worth more than £0.01). Also notice that deciding to sell one’s ticket when offered £50 for it (even though one still doesn’t know that one won’t win the £5000) doesn’t seem unacceptable to some. And, although the “right” price is likely to vary from person to person given how, among other things, risk-averse they are, it seems clear that the intuition of incorrectness can be easily manipulated by simply changing the sum offered while still not knowing one will lose the lottery. Certainly, more needs to be said if we are to conclude there is no knowledge-norm of practical deliberation that requires that the premises in our practical deliberation be known in order for the reasoning to be appropriate. But, I take it that it is clear that some such norm isn’t at all uncontroversial, and it certainly doesn’t seem to qualify as endoxa: intuitive data that would be preferable to capture.

Anyhow, these consequences of our practical explication are very much welcome, since an adequate understanding of knowledge should preserve and explain these relations of

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85 See Brown 2008. She, moreover, exploits Gettier-situations where it seems appropriate for one to rely on the Gettiered-belief in the reasoning.
86 For more, see Levin 2008.
knowledge to assertion and practical deliberation as well as the above two desiderata. This moreover allows us to start making sense of the role that knowledge plays in our lives (hence providing support for our story). In the next two chapters, we continue showing the account’s explanatory power (while also noticing that its main competitors fall at one hurdle or another). In order to do this, however, we need to further develop the account that our practical explication promotes. And, in the next chapter, we shall focus on the norms of knowledge.
Chapter Three

The Norms of Knowledge

3.1 The Norms of Knowledge
3.2 Fallibilism and Relevant Alternatives
3.3 Contexts, Interests and Pragmatics
   3.3.1 Transmissibility Problems for Contextualism and SSI
   3.3.2 Classical Invariantism and Assertions
3.4 The Knowledge Relation and Extraordinary Possibilities
3.5 Abominable Conjunctions and Principles of Knowledge
   3.5.1 Closure and Transmission
   3.5.2 Easy Knowledge and Discrimination
   3.5.3 Closure Again
3.6 Lottery Problems and Sceptical Paradoxes
3.7 Function, Ability and Analyses of Knowledge
In this and the next chapter, we further develop the account of knowledge that our practical explication promotes, focusing primarily on the nature of the norms of knowledge and their consequences. Let me then briefly say how the material is divided between these chapters.

Much of this chapter is concerned with the norms of knowledge, introducing refinements as well as developing some of their consequences. In particular, they motivate a fallibilist, non-modally-sceptical, account of knowledge. And, we deal with some related and prima facie troubling issues, such as counter-intuitive fallibilistic assertions, as well as other attributions of knowledge that seem problematic for our account, and issues concerning closure and transmission principles, sceptical paradoxes and lottery puzzles. Furthermore, our account promotes a classical invariantist approach to knowledge and we argue for a disadvantage, given the transmissibility-desideratum, of “shifty” approaches, such as attributor contextualism and subject-sensitive invariantism. We also distinguish our account from contrastivist and relativist views which hold a ternary knowledge relation. Moreover, we consider the role that justification and belief play in knowledge and the consequences it has for analyses of knowledge. Finally, the chapter closes by calling our attention to the broadly functionalist understanding of knowledge embraced, where its functional role consists in the ability to correctly and Competently answer potential questions.

In the next chapter, we consider the responsibilism our account promotes and some problems that are normally associated with reliabilism, such as the generality problem, the problem of fleeting processes and the problem of defeating evidence. We also consider Gettier and value problems, as well as some prima facie problematic intuitive cases which exploit the hypothesised but plausible function of knowledge. Along the way we contrast our account to process reliabilist and responsibilist ones, and indicate why it is preferable to anti-luck, virtue and anti-luck virtue competitors, given the non-accidentality and value desiderata.

So, while developing our account, we see that some major competing accounts and approaches aren’t able to capture some of the desiderata we should preferably accommodate. Now, since our account, as we shall see, captures them and has moreover great explanatory power, it seems preferable to its competitors. And, if in the end the account provided is plausible, we would have vindicated our starting points and, ideally, we would have achieved a reflective equilibrium, which aims to promote accuracy and understanding, as well as the traditional meliorative goal to improve our epistemic lives. Indeed, I take the account of knowledge offered to be no more and no less than a plausible and fruitful account. But, if our investigation is to provide such an answer to the question “What is knowledge?,” we need to understand better its norms.
3.1 The Norms of Knowledge

Knowledge, we said, is the apprehension of truth by means of certain truth-conducive rules. These rules, which are socially developed for the pooling of information and mainly passively inherited by social training, are the constitutive norms of knowledge. Now, since our project is that of explaining and understanding what knowledge is, we should study these norms. So, this and most of the following sections then attempt mainly to elucidate some significant consequences of them (and so does the next chapter). Moreover, doing so will presently help us elucidate the connection between our explanatory project and the other two (§1.1). Let us then begin by recalling some of the features of these norms.

As seen, to know is to grasp the truth by means of certain socially-designed truth-conducive rules (§2.6). These rules then determine the standards for knowledge: that is, they are the norms that determine the epistemic relation of the subject to \( p \) in order to know. Moreover, these norms are constitutive of knowledge, in the sense that without them there would be no knowledge (§2.3). But, the norms of knowledge are to promote the truth because they are the instrumental rules of testimony and the aim of this practice is to achieve (through others) truths. And these rules are a cluster of “perfecting” procedures that regulate the testimonial (§2.2). Indeed, they are procedures that guide our epistemic conduct in inquiring as to whether \( p \) and we are armed, in ordinary contexts, with many such (usually) fine-grained procedures that are mainly automatically and thoughtlessly followed and are socially inherited and internalised, and so also normally hard to articulate and probably not codified (§2.4). Moreover, these epistemic demands the rules set provide us not only with the guiding standards to adequately form a judgement as to whether \( p \), but also the evaluative criteria to determine whether someone knows (§2.4.2). They are both the normative commitments and the evaluative criteria for both oneself and other members of the epistemic community.

So, these rules are the epistemic demands the subject is to satisfy in determining as to whether \( p \) in order to promote the truth. Indeed, our account lies within the consequentialist camp. And, given that our testimonial virtues are understood in terms of these rules, it provides a “comfortable home” for both rules and virtues, as a complete account of knowledge should (§1.6). Both the virtues and the rules are derivative, in the sense that they promote truth: that is, primacy is given to consequences (§2.4.2). So our account is clearly a kind of consequentialism, irrespective of our virtue- and rule-talk (Blackburn 2001). But, it isn’t a standard truth-consequentialist view, since although only rules that actually promote the truth are norms of knowledge, we design (and revise), through a division of labour and time, the rules given what we reasonably take to promote truth (§§2.2-2.4.2). Roughly, in order for \( S \) to know, \( S \) needs to follow the rules that are reasonably taken to be truth-conducive by \( S \)’s
community and such rules need to be truth-conducive. While the content of a legitimate rule then is (inter-)subjectively and reasonably developed, the rule’s truth-conduciveness is an objective matter. This kind of rule-consequentialism then combines responsibilism (of a social strand) with reliabilism (§2.6), which is what a satisfactory account of knowledge should also do (Fogelin 1994, Greco 2000, Russell 2001, Williams 2008).

This is a desirable result because views that take into account only the (inter-)subjective responsibility seem to fail to be appropriately normative. Consider Astrology or Tea-Leaf-Reading communities that responsibly, but wrongly, decide to use those means to find out the truth; I take it those unreliable procedures don’t provide the knowledge-relevant normative status. On the other hand, views that take into account only the de facto reliability of one’s belief-forming capacities are vulnerable to cases in which irresponsibility seems to rule out knowledge regardless of this reliability, such as in the reliable clairvoyant and Mr. Truemp cases. That is, there seems to be cases in which reliability’s positive epistemic status is swamped by irresponsibility (and much is made of this in the following chapter, when we come back to these issues). So, there are two normative questions to be addressed with regard to the appropriate way to hold p: the (inter-)subjective and objective ones (Grimm 2011:90).

Furthermore, these norms of knowledge are a varied bunch: a heterogeneous group of procedures. Perhaps, following these norms can be thought as providing some kind of “epistemic justification” in a very broad sense of the term. After all, since ‘epistemic justification’ is a technical term, we are free to stipulate its meaning. Indeed, we don’t ordinarily talk of justified beliefs (although we talk of justified actions, plans and decisions, among others). Instead, we seem to normally refer to them, in epistemic contexts, as ‘reasonable.’ And, only in subject-matters heavily connected to philosophy, such as jurisprudence, we find such talk of justified beliefs. But, this term has been variously understood within epistemology (Swinburne 2001, Alston 2005). Having said that, a common understanding of this notion is that of justification as, roughly, requiring evidence accessible via reflection. This, we might say, is the traditional and narrower understanding of it. So, employing this notion is likely to invite confusion at no extra benefit. Let me explain.

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87 “Communitarian epistemologies” (Kusch 2002, Welbourne 1986) stress this subjective normative aspect at the expense of the objective one.

88 See BonJour 1985:40, Lehrer 1990:163. Details matter (§4.2.2) since different intuitions are likely to be pumped but the common factor is that there is much evidence available against the reliable capacity.

89 The capacity for evidence to justify depends on its connection with truth. So the relevant sense of evidence is that of something which serves as a reliable sign of that which is evidence of (and which requires awareness of the connection between the sign and the phenomena; Kelly 2006). Evidence is a guide to the truth and together with its being reflectively available provides justification with its traditional truth-directed and perspectival nature (Foley 2005:313-4).
This is because these norms shouldn’t all be thought of as providing what is narrowly and traditionally understood as epistemic justification. Given the nature of the norms, they needn’t require the subject to possess any reasons that bear on the truth of the proposition or the reliability of the procedure. These norms need to be truth-conducive and reasonably regarded by the epistemic community as being so but, in order to satisfy this, they needn’t require the possession of evidence by the knower (in creatures like ourselves). For example, given the truth-conduciveness and endorsement of (certain types of) memory, we can know what we remember even if we have forgotten the evidence for it or lack evidence for the procedure’s reliability. That is, memory can serve one well to know that $p$ although one doesn’t possess any evidence to show how likely it is for $p$ to be the case or even to support the truth-conduciveness of such memory. And, the same goes for (certain types of) testimony, where no (positive) evidence, as seen, seems required for either $p$ or the trustworthiness of the testifier, and other truth-conducive capacities: they can give us knowledge that $p$ without one possessing evidence for $p$ or the source of $p$ (as in face-recognition and naïve chicken-sexer cases\textsuperscript{90}). And, this result is in line with the endoxa (we don’t think that such evidence is required for knowledge) and has been widely appreciated.\textsuperscript{91}

So, following the different norms needn’t give us justification, as understood above. That is, knowledge needn’t be a reflective success. This is indeed why A.J. Ayer (1956:35) used the phrase “right to be sure,” instead of the narrowly and traditionally understood “justification.” This “right to be sure” is intended to be earned in many different ways, some of which don’t involve the possession of evidence (Ayer 1972:15). But, although there can be many different routes to knowledge that don’t require the possession of evidence, we needn’t claim that such possession of evidence is never required. In some cases, possession of evidence can be required in order to promote truth-conduciveness and the endoxa suggests this is so too.

Indeed, it should be clear that these norms are a heterogeneous group of procedures, whose truth-conduciveness needn’t require the subject’s possession of evidence. So, the term ‘norms of knowledge’ unites varied procedures under the one heading, and, as seen, we shouldn’t refer to them as providing justification in the traditional and narrow sense of having evidence. In fact, only if we understand ‘epistemic justification’ as an umbrella term for whatever epistemic demands are required of the subject in order for her judgement to be truth-conducive, knowledge entails justification (so understood). But, aside from this inviting confusion given the more common and narrower understanding of the notion (let alone other understandings), such stipulation won’t, even if it makes this justification necessary for

\textsuperscript{90} See Lewis 1996:551, Foley 1987:168. Again, details matter and I take it that the (natural or trained) reliable procedure is (reasonably) endorsed by the subject’s community; see §4.2.2.

knowledge, be enlightening since such justification would consist of a disjunction concerning
different sorts of ways we can truth-conducively judge as to whether \( p \). So, since such
justification will pick out different routes to knowledge, referring to these norms as such won’t
afford us a precise characterisation of knowledge, but still a “vague formula” (Ayer 1972:15).
No benefit is then gained by thinking of the norms as providing us with some such justification.

Moreover, the different norms of knowledge (which are regulatory rules of testimony) provide
us with the answers to the common and legitimate “How do you know?” question (Austin
1970, Ryle 1949). Because of the connection between the explanatory and regulative projects
that our account promotes, the constitutive norms of knowledge are just these different “ways
of knowing.” This connection is significant, given that “it is something like a conceptual truth
that someone who says or implies that he knows that \( P \) is exposed to the [above] question”
(Cassam 2009a:112-3). Now, the fact that the norms are normally difficult to fully articulate
needn’t worry us. First, as noticed, although we don’t accept that there is no answer providing
a way of knowing, we can allow the knower not to have an answer to this question (Cassam
2009a:113-4). And, second, we can normally provide a rough characterisation of the relevant
way of knowing. But it is important to note that “Because I have a justified true belief” doesn’t
seem to properly address the question. So, again, nothing would be gained by thinking of the
norms of knowledge as providing justification. Even if we are free to stipulate that epistemic
justification consists in following these norms, it is better not to do so and to think of them as
providing the “positive epistemic status” required for knowledge (or “knowledge-constituting
status”) in order to avoid confusions.92

But, some might still be discontent with our instrumental norms, since these norms, they
might protest, conflate the theoretical and the practical. There might be two worries here. One
might be that (narrow) epistemic norms are meant to give us a distinct kind of normativity, but
our norms don’t, since they are an instance of practical or instrumental normativity. The other
might be that pragmatic factors shouldn’t determine whether a given judgement that \( p \) is
knowledge, but it isn’t clear, they might say, our account doesn’t allow that. So, the first worry
applies at the practice-level, the other at the judgement-level. Let us take them in that order.

Now, (narrow) epistemic normativity might be a species of the general and common genus of
instrumental normativity, but that, in a sense, needn’t deprive such normativity of distinctness. What would make it distinct from other sorts of instrumental normativities is its
particular goal: truth. That is, this distinct cognitive goal would render this type of instrumental

92 These confusions can give us the impression that something is wrong with an account of knowledge,
since it fails to capture phenomena that we mistakenly associate with it (e.g. Greco 1993). So, following
Foley (2002, 2004), we relax the ties between the projects of understanding knowledge and justification.
normativity distinct. But, the complaint might instead be that, in line with our value-desideratum, what is required is a non-instrumental normativity. And, as we shall see, this instrumental normativity need only be part of the story, since our norms provide knowledge with a distinct kind of value that isn’t instrumental (§4.5.1). Anyway, the norms aren’t to promote other goals of ours, either universal or local, other than truth.\footnote{Although how this goal is promoted takes into account feasibility issues (§§2.4, 3.2).} This then allows us to appreciate that the pragmatic doesn’t infiltrate the practice at the judgement-level, as the second worry suggests. Just like the rule-utilitarian justifies, by means of utilitarian considerations, the adoption of certain rules but individual actions are justified only by appeal to the rules of the practice (Rawls 1955, Hooker 2000), similarly, in our case, the adoption of the norms is determined instrumentally (where the goal is truth), but individual judgements have positive epistemic status if achieved by means of these norms only. So, pragmatic considerations at the judgement-level (say, how useful it would be for a judgement to be true) don’t interfere with what counts as knowledge.

A further worry that our norms might generate is that they make our account of knowledge circular (Fumerton 2001). After all, we are saying that the content of the norms is determined by us, given what we \textit{reasonably} take to promote the truth. Our norms are the product of instrumental rationality: we (as an epistemic community) need to reasonably believe what the likely consequences of a rule are in order to endorse it. So, we seem to be relying on the epistemic norms that we need to establish. But, leaving aside the issue as to whether this would be in fact a \textit{vicious} circularity, by charging our account with circularity, one would be missing the point that these rules needn’t be the norms that establish what is epistemically reasonable or responsible (crudely, what the subject holds after critical reflection), and many certainly aren’t given what we said about the rules and the requirement for evidence.\footnote{Suggesting that reasonable belief is responsible belief isn’t trivial; but see §4.1 (also Foley 2005).} Here it would help to keep in mind the distinction between narrow and broad epistemology (§1.1). So, we are trying to instrumentally establish \textit{narrow} epistemic norms, while we rely on \textit{broad} epistemic norms of reasonable judgement; hence the threat of circularity can be diffused. This worry, nevertheless, allows us to see that a complete explanation as to how we determine the rules involves a story concerning reasonable judgement. However, we can’t do that here. Determining what reasonable judgement is lies, of course, beyond the scope of the current work. Instead below I want to concentrate on another important consequence of our norms.

3.2 Fallibilism and Relevant Alternatives

Non-modally-sceptical accounts of knowledge normally accept, in order to accommodate the possibility of knowledge (§1.1), fallibilism: the thesis that not all possibilities of error need to
be excluded in order to know (Cohen 1988, Lewis 1996). Our account of knowledge can explain why fallibilism is the right approach without having to merely appeal to the possibility of knowledge.95 And, although “the natural motivation for fallibilism [...] is the intuition that in order to know one only needs to be able to rule out the error-possibilities that are [...] relevant” (Pritchard 2005:35) our explanation doesn’t rely on this general intuition or the related particular ones (say, we don’t think that the detective needs to rule out all possible suspects in order to know who the murderer is) but on the nature of the testimonial rules that are the norms of knowledge.

The norms of knowledge are certain legitimate regulatory rules of the testimonial practice that aim to satisfy our fundamental need for truth. But these rules ought to be feasible (viz. tailored to human capacities) if they aren’t to be useless (§2.4). After all, these rules are to regulate the practice and so guide our testimonial conduct. So the rules need to be acquired and employed by normal human beings. Given this, these norms cannot be too demanding. Indeed, we don’t want them to stop people from testifying because they haven’t ruled out some distant possibility: that is, they haven’t shown the possibility not to hold. Consider Stroud’s plain-spotter case again: “The trainees were never told about [planes G, which also have features x, y, z] because it would have made the recognition of Fs too difficult; it is almost impossible to distinguish an F from a G from the ground. The policy of simplifying the whole operation by not mentioning Gs in the training manual might be justified by the fact that there are not many of them” and so, one assumes, not significantly reducing the truth-conduciveness of the procedure (1984:67).96 On the other hand, we don’t want people to give merely their opinions without having ruled out significant error-possibilities either, since we want the rules to deliver the goal. That is, we need to avoid this sort of inquiry that won’t deliver truths. Similarly, we need to avoid obsessive and over-cautious inquiry that won’t deliver the goods either, because it won’t, often, deliver anything.97 So, the rules can neither be too demanding nor too relaxed, so that they become useless. The rules then establish a shared feasible standard that can deliver the goods.

Importantly for our purposes, the rules shouldn’t be so hard to satisfy that we can’t do so, otherwise they would defeat the purpose of the practice. So, we don’t need to eliminate all error-possibilities: we don’t have to meet all conceivable epistemic challenges to p. The idea instead is that we only need to meet those that are relevant, where the relevant alternatives

96 But, if the reason for not taking into consideration planes G is that “they are only reconnaissance planes, or that in some other ways they are not as directly dangerous as Fs [thus] it does not matter as much whether they fly over our territory” (1984:67-8), then those procedures won’t count as legitimate rules, since they aren’t concerned with truth-promotion.
97 See also Price 1969:126.
are those significant possibilities of error: possibilities that aren’t far-fetched and unlikely given our shared worldview (since we design the rules). So, for example, when determining whether something is a goldfinch, we don’t need to show that it isn’t a stuffed goldfinch (we don’t need to follow a rule that eliminates such possibility), unless our worldview renders that error-possibility a significant one (in which case, a different rule should apply). Similarly, in the plane-spotter case, we don’t need to take into account the possibility that the plane is G unless we reasonably think there are many of them around: that is, we reasonably think the existence of Gs makes the procedure non-truth-conducive. That is, we don’t need to rule out any imaginable way for the given proposition to be false. This, moreover, is in line with our intuitions (say, we don’t think that the detective needs to rule out the possibility that the Queen stole my car). So, the rules eliminate only the relevant alternatives that challenge the truth of \( p \) (and not all possible challenges) because the practice that these rules regulate demands this compromise.

The subject then is to meet all the epistemic challenges that are reasonable with regard to \( p \) (given her community’s worldview). And these are the challenges that are dealt with by following the rules, or, as Austin says, the various “recognized procedures (more or less roughly recognized, of course), appropriate to the particular type of case” (1970:87). So, the rules are designed to eliminate only the relevant alternatives and this makes our account a version of the *relevant alternatives approach*.\(^9^8\) It is only the reasonable and non-far-fetched demands to make the rules truth-conducive which ought to be met: the epistemic demands that are *enough to prove \( p \)* (Austin 1970:85). But, “Enough is enough: it doesn’t mean everything. Enough means enough to show that [within reason] it ‘can’t’ be anything else, there is no room for an alternative, competing, description of it. It does not mean, for example, enough to show that it isn’t a *stuffed goldfinch*” (1970:84).

So, whether a given challenge is relevant with regard to \( p \) depends on our worldview: more precisely, on whether we reasonably take such a challenge to represent a likely error-possibility.\(^9^9\) In other words, if some possibility is reasonably taken not to significantly change the truth-conduciveness of a procedure, then such possibility is discounted as irrelevant. This is then the sense of ‘relevant’ that we are working with and it is this sense that explains why we don’t think we need to eliminate the possibility of the bird being a stuffed goldfinch when considering whether it is a goldfinch (similarly, with the zebra being a cleverly disguised mule, or the plane being a G). And, importantly, this is also why we don’t think we need to rule out sceptical possibilities, such as evil demons and brains-in-vats scenarios. So, this view then

\(^9^8\) Hendricks (2006) refers to this approach as *forcing*, where error-possibilities are forced out for being too remote or speculative and so not being considered during the knowledge-acquisition process.

\(^9^9\) See also Rysiew 2001:488, 2005:54.
matches our pre-theoretical intuitions, as we would prefer (Greco 2000:205). And, moreover, we answered the question as to why far-fetched and sceptical alternatives aren’t among the relevant alternatives without either merely appealing to the possibility of knowledge or simply follow our intuitions. In our case, the basis for circumscribing those alternatives is that the norms of knowledge are regulatory rules of a practice that aims to deliver certain goods, and so such practice demands the compromise between feasibility and the promotion of the good.

So, our account turns out to be fallibilist, since not every error-possibility need to be eliminated in order to know that p. Moreover, we can explain why fallibilism is the right approach, without our account being ad hoc (Greco 2000:205). This fallibilist approach is the result of the norms of knowledge being regulatory rules of a practice that requires them to be truth-conducive in a humanly tractable way. So, the rules eliminate only the relevant alternatives that challenge the truth of p, and not all possible challenges. But this, again, doesn’t mean that pragmatic considerations determine whether someone knows (§3.1) and, as we shall see (§3.3.1), neither we would want it to be so since it would threaten the transmissibility-desideratum.

Now, this fallibilism is a welcome result since it isn’t clear we could have much knowledge if an infallibilism were to be adopted, since conclusive grounds, where all possible challenges are ruled out, aren’t readily available for creatures like us. In most cases, our grounds seem to be logically consistent with the truth of not-p: that is, our grounds normally don’t seem to entail or necessitate the truth of p (consider again the plane-spotter who identifies the planes on the basis of inconclusive information, and so do we, when identifying goldfinches and zebras). Indeed, infallibilism seems to rule out knowledge in many different domains (such as scientific and historical) that we would normally claim to be able to have it. As Lewis (1996:549) says, “uneliminated possibilities of error are everywhere. Those possibilities of error are far-fetched, of course, but possibilities all the same. They bite into even our most everyday knowledge.” And, since such an infallibilistic position would conflict with our intuition about the possibility of knowledge in different domains, fallibilism seems preferable. Indeed, its continuing widespread acceptance in epistemology can be seen as a result of this piece of endoxta and, as seen, this possibility is presupposed by those engaged in the regulative project (§1.1).

And, the above also allows us to answer Stroud’s complaint that we “cannot conclude simply from our having carefully and conscientiously followed the standards and procedures of everyday life that we thereby know the things we ordinarily claim to know [...given that the] admitted fact that we do not insist on eliminating [the sceptical] possibility in everyday life.

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does not show that we do not need to eliminate it in order to know” (1984:69). Our answer to this is that it is the very nature of the norms of knowledge as rules of the testimonial practice to eliminate only relevant alternatives and, given our worldview, we don’t need to eliminate those sceptical possibilities in order to know. After all, the rules (which regulate testimony), at the expense of self-defeat, need to be feasible, hence only significant error-possibilities are considered and not all epistemic challenges. Importantly, sceptical hypotheses don’t represent, given our worldview, significant error-possibilities. The above then motivates feasible standards for knowledge: the norms of knowledge are humanly tractable; hence making knowledge possible.

But, by simply following the norms we don’t necessarily achieve knowledge: after all, we mightn’t actually come to apprehend the truth. More importantly, the rules we follow mightn’t be legitimate: say, they mightn’t actually be truth-conducive. Even if the rules are reasonably developed and endorsed, it is a further issue whether they are truth-conducive. Given this then, we mightn’t actually have any knowledge. So, there is still room for systematic scepticism. Indeed, (systematic) actuality-scepticism is very much alive. Nevertheless, infallibilism-based scepticism, which demands for all error-possibilities to be eliminated in order to have knowledge and maintains that we can’t do so, isn’t. The rules, which if legitimate are the norms of knowledge, are a shared set of achievable standards that don’t require us to eliminate all error-possibilities, as infallibilism demands.

And, since our account allows for the norms of knowledge to be those legitimate and achievable rules that we design, we don’t merely have a story that can successfully explain why we attribute knowledge according to fallibilism. Our account does more than that: it explains why fallibilism is the right approach to knowledge without making use of “the core relevant alternatives intuition behind fallibilism” (Pritchard 2005:35). But, this fallibilism seems to present us with a problem, to which we now turn.

3.3 Contexts, Interests and Pragmatics

Fallibilism claims that even if we are able to conceive epistemic challenges to \( p \) that we aren’t able to meet, it doesn’t mean that we don’t know that \( p \) unless such challenges are relevant. But, as Lewis (1996) points out, this view licenses odd-sounding assertions, such as: “I know that \( p \), but it’s possible that not-\( p \)” and “I know that \( p \), but there is a chance of not-\( p \).” This is what Lewis (1996:550) says,

If you are a contented fallibilist, I implore you to be honest, be naive, hear it afresh. ‘He knows, yet he has not eliminated all possibilities of error.’ Even if you’ve numbed your years, doesn’t this overt, explicit fallibilism still sound wrong?
It is true that these fallibilistic assertions are normally odd-sounding.\textsuperscript{101} And the problem for the fallibilist is then to explain why they are so, if they simply express the truth of fallibilism: the fact that knowledge is compatible with grounds that don’t entail or necessitate $p$’s truth.

Some fallibilists, such as Stewart Cohen (1988), might want to explain this oddness by means of 	extit{epistemic contextualism} (cf. Lewis 1996).\textsuperscript{102} This is the view that the epistemic standards that a subject must meet in order for a knowledge-attribution (“S knows that $p$”) to be true vary according to the context of the 	extit{attributor} (Cohen 2000, DeRose 2009). So, contextualism requires a commitment to “contextually varying standards for how strong one’s epistemic position with respect to $p$ must be in order for one to know $p$” (Cohen 2005a:57; see also DeRose 2009:7), where the standards applicable vary according to contextual factors of the attributor (say, the salience of error-possibilities and/or what is at stakes for the attributor). Indeed, Cohen says, “the truth value of a sentence containing the knowledge predicate can vary depending on things like the purposes, intentions, expectations, presuppositions, etc., of the speakers who utter these sentences” (1999:57, 2000:94). So, the truth-condition of a knowledge-attribution is closely tied to the attribution’s particular point, where the attributor’s interests, expectations, focus and so forth can determine said point.

The contextualist then, normally, wants to suggest that, in quotidian situations for the attributor, the standards of knowledge are taken to be low (and achievable), and so the attributor can correctly attribute knowledge to the subject. Conversely, in very demanding situations for the attributor (such as sceptical ones), the standards of knowledge are taken to be high (and unachievable), and so the attributor can’t correctly attribute knowledge to the subject. And, the contextualist can equally suggest that once we introduce the error-possibility in our fallibilistic assertion, the standard of knowledge raises so that the “I know that $p$” conjunct becomes false; hence the oddity of such assertions. So, assuming a contextualist approach can deal with these fallibilistic assertions, all we would have to do in order to explain the phenomenon is to claim that the standards for knowledge are context-sensitive, and particularly to error-possibilities (I am ignoring the fact that such move would be completely \textit{ad hoc}, if the approach isn’t independently motivated).

However, this \textit{attributor-sensitivity} comes at a price: more precisely, it creates problems to fully accommodate the transmissibility-desideratum. And, so I suggest it is advisable not to go contextualist, especially since an alternative explanation of the oddness of the fallibilistic

\textsuperscript{101} The qualification is needed; see §3.3.2.
\textsuperscript{102} We’ll work with a generic version of standards contextualism about knowledge (henceforth, contextualism). We won’t be concerned with specific views. This is fine for our purposes, since we are interested in the contextualist \textit{approach} as an alternative to the invariantist one promoted (see below).
assertions is available. So, in the next sub-section, we introduce the ‘transmissibility problems,’ as I shall say, to which contextualism is subject, and also note that subject-sensitive invariantism (to be introduced below) enjoys a similar fate. In the following sub-section, we introduce the alternative explanation here adopted.

3.3.1 Transmissibility Problems for Contextualism and SSI

Accepting contextualism, as seen, requires a commitment to the variability of epistemic standards: particularly, to making the standards for knowledge sensitive to different attributor-contexts. But, this view seems to jeopardise the transmissibility-desideratum since it introduces a defeating condition on testimony regarding the possible mismatch of epistemic standards applicable to the testifier and the audience when attributing knowledge to the testifier. This is a possibility that ought to be eliminated in order for knowledge to be transmitted by testimony. But there is a clear tension between this requirement and the situation we normally find ourselves in with regard to the needed information to satisfy it. And, our inability to rule out this possibility then threatens both the point of our pervasive testimonial practice and the knowledge we think we normally acquire through it. This then gives us a reason to reject contextualism.

In order to bring these problems clearly to the surface, the first thing to note is that contextualism has, as Cohen says, “the consequence that […] one speaker may say “S knows p”, and another say “S does not know p”, (relative to the same circumstances), and both speakers thereby say something true” (2000:94, 1988:97). This consequence is intended as a virtue, since it can then easily accommodate cases such as Cohen’s (1999:58) Airport and DeRose’s (1992:913) Bank examples. In the former case, Mary wants to know whether the flight stops at Chicago, because she has a very important meeting there, and overhears someone ask a fellow passenger, Smith, if he knows whether this is so. After checking his itinerary, he replies “Yes, I know—it does stop in Chicago,” but Mary, due to the high stakes of her situation, wonders whether he really knows, since the itinerary could contain a misprint or they could have changed the schedule at the last minute. Mary then concludes Smith doesn’t know and decides to check with the airline agent.

Now, this is a good illustration of the variability of knowledge-attribution that contextualism is meant to handle (a variability that seems due to either practical significance and/or attention

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103 Cases which, assuming their legitimacy (but see Stone 2007), all accounts should capture. See §3.3.2.
104 DeRose’s Bank example exploits a situation in which the individuals have the same attributor-context, so it won’t help us make our point. Anyway, DeRose would agree that the Airport case is the “right kind of test case” for contextualism (2009:157-8).
As Cohen (2008:422) says, “When in response to a normal query, Smith consult his flight itinerary and says, “I know the plane stops in Chicago,” intuitively, what he says is true. [...We] readily allow that we can come to know things on the basis of written information contained in things like flight itineraries. But when we consider the situation of [...] Mary, intuitively, [she speaks] the truth when [she says], “Smith does not know the plane stops in Chicago.” So, this is a case of an eavesdropper, Mary, who is in a more demanding attributor-context from Smith, and so she can’t agree with him that he knows given her own standards.  

But, this case also helps us appreciate that if contextualism is correct then, given at least the independently plausible (and so desirable to accommodate) regulative knowledge-norm of testimonial assertion (§2.6), a defeating condition on testimony is introduced: namely, the possibility that the testifier, whose self-attribution of knowledge is pivotal for the regulation of the practice, is in a less demanding attributor-context than the audience. That is, the possibility of a mismatch of epistemic standards applicable to the testifier and the audience when attributing knowledge to the testifier. So, even if the testifier knows that \( p \), given his own attributor-context, and sincerely tells the audience that \( p \), if the audience’s attributor-context is more demanding than his, then the audience has a reason for not accepting \( p \), since, from the audience’s perspective, the testifier doesn’t know. Imagining a slightly modified case, where Mary asks Smith for the information, makes this clear. And, although Mary’s (actual and modified) case isn’t problematic for contextualism, the defeating condition that it clearly exploits creates, as we shall see, problems with testimony in slightly different but certainly more common cases.

But, one might at this point think that this sort of case, where there is a similar mismatch of contexts, is limited to just a few unusual situations, since normally the testifier and audience are in the same attributor-context. But, I doubt this is so. After all, the standards can vary depending on things like the attributor’s practical interests and/or awareness of error-possibilities. These factors can and usually vary from person to person, as Mary’s case illustrates. Indeed, this is meant to be part of the attraction of contextualism, since it allows us to capture the variability in ordinary knowledge-attribution, and its main motivation (DeRose

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105 These cases are meant to “differ with respect to as many of the features that plausibly affect the epistemic standards, and especially those features which most clearly appear to affect epistemic standards, as possible,” so “intuitions supporting contextualism will be strongest” (DeRose 2009:54).
106 As DeRose claims, in contexts when we are wondering as enquirers whether some subject is a source of information for us, we “should and do apply epistemic standards that are appropriate to [our] own practical situation” (2011:5).
107 As one would expect, some contextualists are sympathetic or committed to some such knowledge-norm; Cohen 2004, DeRose 2009. See §3.3.2.
So, restricting those factors in order to reduce the effect this attributor-sensitivity has on testimony would threaten the motivation for the approach (and question the methodology employed).

So, given contextualism, this sort of mismatch of contexts, where the audience is in a more demanding attributor-context than the testifier, won’t be at all rare. Now, since this sort of case can easily arise within the contextualist framework, adopting a default stance assuming the lack of variability isn’t an option: the alleged variability of standards doesn’t permit it. Indeed, the point of contextualism is to allow this common variability. So, we can’t simply assume that there is no such variability and only act accordingly if we happen to pick out some reason for thinking there is a relevant mismatch. The possible mismatches then ought to be ruled out in all cases of testimony given how common, according to contextualism, they can be. And, there are two main ways the contextualist can deal with this, depending on how one understands the knowledge-norm of testimonial assertion: that is, whether one relativises it to the speaker’s or hearer’s context. One strategy then assumes that the speaker should self-attribute knowledge according to his own attributor-context, hence requiring the hearer to check for this possible mismatch. The other requires the speaker to testify in accordance to the hearer’s attributor-context (in other words, the standard appropriate for the speaker to testify is set by hearer’s attributor-context), hence the speaker ruling out the mismatch. I consider these options in that order.

Now, regardless of whether we intuitively think that the introduction of a new defeating condition by contextualism is correct, at least in some cases (such as Mary’s), if the onus is on the hearer to rule out this defeating condition, then the very point of the testimonial practice seems to be put under pressure. This is because it isn’t clear that we can, most of the time, rule out this mismatch of standards. Indeed, given contextualism, not only can there be many different standards, but also many different factors that can create the relevant mismatch (say, a very important meeting or cheque, or the salience of the possibility of a misprint or a change of hours). So, it becomes very difficult to determine the testifier’s standards by means of the factors applicable to him, if we aren’t to interrogate him (which, aside from the fact that it threatens to introduce a regress, practically speaking, it seems inadequate).

108 Although, historically, contextualist views were primarily motivated by the fact that they seem to solve epistemological puzzles, especially the sceptical paradox (e.g. Cohen 1988, Neta 2002). But “the contextualist’s appeal to varying standards for knowledge in his solution to scepticism would rightly seem unmotivated and ad hoc if we didn’t have independent reason from non-philosophical talk to think such shifts in the content of knowledge attributions occur” (DeRose 2002:169).
109 One expects contextualists to be sympathetic to this possibility. See DeRose 2009:239-41, 2011:5.
And, significantly, we aren’t normally in Mary’s (fortunate) situation, which allows her to be aware of the standard applicable to the testifier through being aware of the “way of knowing” employed (Mary happens to be aware of the method Smith employs to know, given his attributor-context, that the plane stops in Chicago because she can see him checking the itinerary—hence Mary’s case doesn’t seem problematic). In fact, much testimony one is offered is simply information the testifier already possesses (and much of which comes in turn from testimony). So, it is normally very difficult for the hearer to be able to pick out what the testifier’s standards are by means of the method employed to work out whether \( p \). And since the hearer needs to rule out the possibility of this sort of mismatch of standards even if the testifier is cooperating and transmitting knowledge (given his attributor-context), the above complications put pressure on the feasibility of the pervasive testimonial practice and on the point of having any such practice in the first place, hence on the transmissibility of knowledge.

Indeed, this ruling out of mismatches that contextualism prescribes isn’t just something that would be difficult (if not impossible), for us, to carry out in most cases, we also don’t normally do it. After all, much testimony we normally accept comes from testifiers that we don’t know much, including their attributor-context and method employed. That is, regardless of whether we can rule out such defeating condition (say, by interrogating the testifier as to what his practical situation or the method employed is), we don’t anyway do it. So, given that we would need to rule out this possibility in order to felicitously accept testimony if contextualism holds, a further consequence of the view is that we don’t normally gain knowledge through testimony since, even in those cases where there is no mismatch of standards, we don’t actually eliminate (even if we can) the possibility (indeed, the only cases in which we would end up having testimonial knowledge are those in which we happen to be aware of the testifiers’ standards; say, if, in the slightly modified case, Smith had consulted the airline’s staff and mentions this to Mary). But this is counter-intuitive and, importantly, unacceptable for the contextualist given her methodology: crudely put, to be primarily guided in theory-construction by pre-theoretical considerations, which of course it aims to accommodate.

At this point, the contextualist might suggest that this ruling out of mismatches (if merely difficult) could be and is done at a subconscious level as our rules allow (say, we subconsciously pick out cues as to how much the testifier cares about whether \( p \) is the case or, perhaps less plausibly, what possibilities are salient to him). But, I don’t think this is the case. Perhaps much monitoring of defeating conditions goes on at that level (consider detecting cues for lying behaviour), but unlike other defeating conditions, we don’t seem to become aware of this one once detected by the subconscious monitoring (for example, once we detect the cues for lying behaviour, normally, we don’t accept the testimony on the grounds of being
deceitful, even if we aren’t aware of why we think so). So, it doesn’t seem that anything like a subconscious monitoring of mismatches (even if feasible) is normally in place (especially given how common they are meant to be).

Failing this, the contextualist might then attempt to excuse the hearer from checking for the mismatches. The idea here would be that because we are normally ignorant, and not due to negligence or incompetence, about this possibility, we aren’t being epistemically irresponsible when not ruling it out. So, at least in those cases when there is no relevant mismatch, knowledge can be transmitted. This might salvage the testimonial practice for the “ignorant” folk (although due to the commonality of the relevant mismatches, much testimony still won’t dispense knowledge), but it certainly doesn’t for the “converted.” Indeed, this move might do the trick at the expense of people being able to believe that contextualism is true. Contextualists would then need to foster the illusion that contextualism isn’t correct if they are to save the testimonial practice (as the Victorian lady said of Darwin’s theory: “if it is true, let us hope it doesn’t become generally known”). But, contextualism requiring us to be (non-culpably) ignorant about its truth in order to be able to gain (some) knowledge via testimony invites the question as to why we developed the practice this way. Moreover, this ignorance seems to put pressure on contextualism’s ability to overcome criticisms. For example, contextualism seems to require the awareness of mismatches affecting oneself in order to deal with the criticism that one “loses knowledge” when moving to stricter attributor-contexts. And to require the awareness that subjects of knowledge can be in different attributor-contexts from one’s own in order to avoid criticisms regarding third-person attributions where “it seems that the subject’s context sets the standards” (since the speaker’s own conversational purposes call for it; DeRose 2009:239). So, this strategy doesn’t seem very promising either.

Finally, the contextualist might opt for the aforementioned second move: to relativise the knowledge-norm of testimonial assertion to the hearer’s context. That is, the option is to think of the testifier as having to be sensitive to those potential differences in standards, so for the testifier to be able to attribute himself knowledge in an (at least) equally demanding attributor-context as his audience, hence eliminating the relevant mismatches. But, this move is also unsuccessful, and for similar reasons to the previous one. After all, just as the audience doesn’t normally consider this possibility, nor do the testifiers. And, even if they were to do so, they would also face the often intractable complications that the hearers would (given the standards’ variability due to differences in practical interests and so forth and the fact that the methods employed are normally even opaque to the testifier, let alone the audience). Lastly, excusing the testifier from checking for the possibility of a relevant mismatch is also an unpromising strategy for the reasons pointed out above.
Moreover, this second option seems counter-intuitive (as one would expect, since we *qua testifiers* don’t normally attempt to work out what the relevant standard for the audience is). After all, if the hearer is aware of the fact that the testifier knows, according to his own attributor-context, although failing to know according to hers, it seems wrong for her to criticise the testifier. That is, we don’t think it is the speaker’s duty to testify according to the hearer’s attributor-context: would Mary, having requested the information directly to Smith, complain to him when he says he knows by checking the itinerary? The recrimination seems out of place: whether or not working out the hearer’s attributor-context is a realistic target, it isn’t something we think the testifier ought to do.

So, given the failure of the above contextualist moves, it seems that contextualism sets conditions on testimony that, at worst, jeopardise the testimonial practice and so the transmissibility of knowledge and, at best, rule out much of what we take to be instances of testimonial knowledge (even in cases where there is no mismatch of standards). This is because there is a clear tension between what contextualism requires for felicitous testimonial exchanges and the situation we normally find ourselves in with regard to the available information to satisfy such requirements.

But, couldn’t contextualists attempt to evade the defeating condition altogether by eradicating the possibility of mismatches in testimony? Indeed, by focusing on the idea that knowledge closes the inquiry and given that one can be aware that tougher attributor-contexts can deprive us of knowledge we would otherwise enjoy, contextualists seem to have the means available to reduce their view, in testimonial exchanges, to a fixed-standard theory. This is because whether one should stop inquiring depends on one’s attributor-context and the same inquiry for the same individual might be closed at one point in one attributor-context but not in another one but, if one is aware that there are tougher standards to be met, it seems improper to close the inquiry at the laxer point. That is, “once one’s innocence is lost,” it isn’t clear that one can ignore the stricter standards: after all, one’s circumstances are likely to change and knowledge in low-standards isn’t likely to be good enough in many situations. And, given one stores one’s knowledge in memory but normally forgets the methods by which it was attained, it seems inappropriate for one to close the inquiry when only low-standards have been employed.\(^\text{110}\) Now, this needn’t threaten the idea that knowledge closes the inquiry, since it is open to the contextualist to claim that, given the agent’s awareness of the above situation, she can’t correctly self-ascribe low-standards knowledge. In other words, such awareness raises the standards to the highest (and, importantly, achievable) one and so there are no cases in which she can (low-standardly) know but not be able to close the inquiry.

Nevertheless, it should now be clear that, for any such (cooperative) agent, contextualism would reduce to a (non-sceptical) fixed-standard theory both for practical and testimonial purposes. So, significantly for present purposes, contextualism would seem to be able to remove the possibility of mismatches in testimonial exchanges (and so too all the difficulties they generate\textsuperscript{111}) by suggesting that, in such cases, one invariant standard applies (although contextualists would still have to explain the point of having the other standards given their obsoleteness for practical and testimonial purposes\textsuperscript{112}). However, that won’t do since it seems wrong that the appropriate standards for the testifier’s self-regulation are the highest (achievable) ones. After all, we don’t think that Smith does anything wrong when, after checking his itinerary, he testifies: that is, we think that this procedure can allow Smith and his audience to know. So, it seems that contextualism would in fact reduce to the wrong kind of fixed-standard theory, since such standard would seem to be too demanding.

So we can see that contextualism is in a bad place when considering certain commonly accepted phenomena about our testimonial practice: phenomena that can’t, due to their commonsensical nature, be neglected or rejected by contextualists, given their methodology. Indeed, the phenomena pick out some central features of knowledge that any account would want to accommodate (§1.5.4). And, the moral we can draw is that the truth-conditions of knowledge-attributions won’t vary with the prevailing conversational contexts because there is pressure towards seeing those attributions as part of a much larger setting than that of the immediate conversation. That is, the relevant discourse for thinking about the point of the attribution isn’t the local discourse (§3.3) but the larger public discourse. The emphasis should be on the social point of knowledge-attributions (Craig 1990).

So, it seems that invariantism (i.e. the denial of contextualism) is preferable. But, not all forms of invariantism seem exempt from these problems since some invariantist views also allow for local variability in the standards for knowledge. They are instances of what is often referred to as subject-sensitive invariantism (SSI);\textsuperscript{113} that is, the kind of invariantism that is normally taken to be sensitive to the practical situation of the subject (i.e. the individual that we are talking about rather than the individual who attributes the knowledge). Very crudely put, the higher the stakes for the subject the higher the standards for knowing (Hawthorne 2004, Stanley 2005). So, for SSI, pace contextualism, “know” doesn’t change meaning across attributor-

\textsuperscript{111} I’ve been ignoring a further difficulty: if the testifier’s standards are higher than the audience’s there is a significant risk of the audience failing to gain the sought and otherwise attainable (by the audience’s standards) knowledge (the clearest case is when the testifier’s standards are the sceptics’ ones). So, ideally, we would want to rule out this sort of mismatch too, so the testifier can be as useful as possible.

\textsuperscript{112} To avoid an “ugly and unmotivated amalgamation of contextualism and classical invariantism” (DeRose 2009:108).

\textsuperscript{113} Again, we work with a generic version.
contexts; instead, whether the semantically invariant term is properly applied depends, in all attributor-contexts, on the subject’s circumstances. So, this particular denial of contextualism (hence the ‘invariantism’ in SSI) is committed to the idea that S knowing that \( p \) depends on the interests, among other things, of S (hence the ‘subject-sensitive’ in SSI). So, according to SSI, whether S knows depends not just on truth-conducive factors (say, the evidence the subject has) but also on truth-independent factors (say, what is at stake for the subject); hence the denial of classical invariantism, which accepts “intellectualism:” the thesis that only truth-conducive factors play a role in making a true belief knowledge (Stanley 2005). 114

And, it is SSI’s subject-sensitivity of the standards for knowledge (that is, sensitivity to the subject’s interests, focus on error-possibilities and the like) that creates again problems when considering the transmissibility-desideratum (although, of course, it isn’t a discrepancy of knowledge-attributions concerning the testifier that causes them). In fact, some have already noted the problems (MacFarlane 2005a, Schaffer 2006) and so our exposition of them then is both selective and brief, introducing three problems which concern the transmission of knowledge through testimony, the grounding of expertise and the closing of inquiry.

First, given that testimony can transmit knowledge and a mismatch of stakes between individuals qua subjects of knowledge (rather than attributors), specifically a testifier being in low-stakes and an audience in high-stakes, Jonathan Schaffer points out that the audience can gain high-stakes knowledge off the testifier’s low-stake evidence (2006:97), as long as, we should add, there are no defeaters for its acceptance (cf. MacFarlane 2005a). 115 For example, I might have little evidence that \( p \) but still, given my low-stakes, qualify as knowing, according to SSI, and transmit this knowledge to you, who are in a high-stakes situation and can’t deny that I know that \( p \). But this, Schaffer rightly points out, is “epistemic cheating.” It certainly is counter-intuitive since, as John MacFarlane says, “[someone] subject to high epistemic standards should not be able to escape their stringent demands by getting her knowledge second-hand from someone in more forgiving circumstances, whose epistemic position may be no better than her own!” (2005a:134). So, the issue here concerns the acquisition of knowledge through testimony in an intuitively illegitimate way, as opposed to a defeating condition to testimony that impedes the acquisition of knowledge through testimony and which threatens the practice (ironically, contextualism can avoid the above counter-intuitive

114 But, while classical invariantism is committed to intellectualism and SSI to anti-intellectualism, contextualism, though compatible with anti-intellectualism, is normally developed as an intellectualist view (DeRose 2009:188, 2011:4).
115 MacFarlane emphasises the tension between SSI and a widely-held view about testimony (Burge 1993, Coady 1992). He notices counter-intuitive results, including bizarre “knowledge laundering” cases: where someone “who does not know that \( p \) can come to know that \( p \) [given the absence of defeaters] simply by cycling her evidence through someone in less demanding circumstances” (2005a:134).
result and so the charge of epistemic cheating because of this defeating condition). And, Schaffer adds: “the social role of testimony is to allow for the spread of knowledge. This practice proceeds without needing to know what may be at stake for the testifier. If testimony could only transmit knowledge to subjects with comparable stakes (or at least to hearers with no more at stake than testifiers), then our practice of relying on testimony would be troubled. Whether we could learn from our teachers would depend on the details of their personal lives” (2006:97-8). And, MacFarlane concludes that regarding “knowledge as a transmissible property precludes regarding epistemic standards as circumstance-sensitive” (2005a:137).

Second, given that knowledge grounds expertise and that one can gain much knowledge on a subject-matter given low enough stakes, Schaffer points out that one counts, according to SSI, as an expert on said subject. But this, he rightly says, is counter-intuitive. After all, someone highly trained on the subject who finds herself in high-stakes and so doesn’t count as knowing, given SSI, is the one we think we should defer to, as opposed to the former subject. And, he adds: “the social role of the expert is to serve as a reservoir of knowledge [and this] requires a stability in one’s pool of knowledge that is not compatible with [SSI]. The social status of expertise cannot fluctuate as the stakes rise and fall. For instance, one cannot gain in expertise by suddenly not caring about the topic” (2006:97).^{116}

Third, assuming that knowledge closes (testimonial) inquiry and a mismatch of stakes between individuals qua subjects of knowledge, one individual might be in a position to close the inquiry, given his low-stakes, whereas the other might not, given her high-stakes, although they both share the same evidence. To use Schaffer’s example: given the same evidence, only Watson, and not Holmes, who is next in the murderer’s list, knows that Black is the murderer (2006:96). According to SSI, Watson’s low-stakes give him a “competitive edge” over Holmes. But, “surely it would be wrong here to say that only Watson is able to solve the mystery.” And, more particularly, it seems wrong to say that only Watson can testify as to who the murderer is. Indeed, pace the anti-intellectualist, one “cannot gain a competitive advantage in [detective or scientific or other] inquiry, for instance, by not caring about the result” (ibid.).

It seems then that SSI throws counter-intuitive results when focusing on, at least, some of the phenomena that the transmissibility-desideratum picks out (§1.5.4). So, both contextualism and SSI seem to face problems related to it. But, it shouldn’t be surprising that they do. After all, they are alike with respect to whether knowledge involves some sort of sensitivity to an

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^{116} But, one might think it is correct that the social status of expertise fluctuates according to the stakes of the attributor, as contextualism suggests. After all, if knowledge grounds expertise and one can’t attribute knowledge to a subject (because, given contextualism, of one’s high-stakes), then we shouldn’t defer to her. So, once again, the above defeating condition can be usefully exploited by contextualists.
individual’s (either an attributor or the subject of knowledge) practical interests and the like and, I suggest, all theories that are committed to some kind of relativity that can make the standards applicable vary inter- and intra-personally due to the individuals’ practical interests and the like are likely to be vulnerable to some kind of, as we might say, ‘transmissibility problems.’ After all, this general sensitivity of “shifty approaches” (Brown 2011) allows knowledge to come and go easily, hence creating an instability that promotes the breakdown in transmissibility and threatens our pervasive testimonial practice. This in turn undermines the possibility of a stable social reservoir of knowledge and, if the distinct value of knowledge, as we shall see, derives from its relation to our testimonial practice, then it undermines this too (§4.5.1). Indeed, shifty approaches fail to do justice to the ancient-old idea, as Plato says in Meno, that knowledge has a “tether:” it enjoys some sort of stability through both social and temporal dimensions. But on these approaches the relevant standards can (and will usually) vary from individual to individual and from time to time, hence threatening the testimonial practice and undermining our interest in knowledge.

### 3.3.2 Classical Invariantism and Assertions

Our account however won’t be susceptible to these problems (even though the rules are relative to epistemic communities; §2.4.1), since no such variability due to individuals’ practical interests and the like is allowed: pragmatic factors don’t permeate the practice (§3.1). That is, there is no local variability of standards, since the point of the attribution is determined by larger communitarian interests. So, regardless of changes in the practical circumstances of individuals, the same standards apply to them, namely their community’s: there is no local shift of standards. This communitarian aspect then provides the required stability for such social source and reservoir of truths within one’s epistemic community, which is naturally where testimonial exchanges occur so not threatening the transmissibility of knowledge. And, since our rules, given their purpose (§2.1), won’t allow for this local shiftiness, if it introduces, as suggested, problems with respect to the transmissibility of knowledge and so truth, our account promotes a classical (non-sceptical) invariantist approach.

Moreover, since neither contextualism nor SSI seem compatible with the transmissibility-desideratum and an account that doesn’t do violence to it is, all else being equal, preferable, it seems that classical (non-sceptical) invariantism should be preferred. So, we shouldn’t be tempted to explain the oddity of the fallibilistic assertions (and other assertions involving

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117 Consider, say, MacFarlane’s (2005b) relativistic view of knowledge-attributions. Some problems raised for contextualism are here applicable given the relevant fixes; I leave the reader to do this.

118 But not any non-subject-sensitive invariantism will do, since an invariantist committed to the idea that, say, knowledge comes in degrees and that different grades are appropriate in different situations (e.g. Reed 2010), also suffers from related transmissibility problems. The lower and higher grades required in different circumstances introduce worries about the relevant defeating condition.
knowledge) by means of shifty approaches. Instead, we should consider an explanation that doesn’t involve this sort of variability of standards. That explanation I suggest is pragmatic: where it is improper to assert a sentence even if true. That is, false but legitimately inferred conversational implicatures can be derived from fallibilistic assertions; and so we can explain away the intuition of incorrectness of such assertions, given that it pragmatically conveys a falsehood. Let me explain.

Assuming a Gricean approach (where our talk exchanges are governed by something like the Cooperative Principle: make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged), asserting “I know that \( p \), but it is possible that not\( -p \)’ can sound odd because the second conjunct typically conversationally conveys that the speaker doesn’t know that \( p \). This is because we normally hear “it is possible that not\( -p \)” as implying that there is a significant possibility that not\( -p \) and so no knowledge that \( p \), given the Maxim of Relation (i.e. to be relevant). As Austin would say, claiming that it is possible that not\( -p \) doesn’t (normally) mean merely that you are a fallible human being: “it means that you have some concrete reason to suppose that you may be mistaken in this case” (1970:98). After all, if the possibility isn’t significant, then the Maxim of Quantity (i.e. to be as informative as required) recommends that one doesn’t assert the second conjunct.

Moreover, given that our explanation makes such assertions literally true, it has the advantage of not making people speak falsely when making such assertions, which we do and which shifty approaches that exploit the salience of possibilities will have a harder time accommodating. Trent Dougherty and Patrick Rysiew (2009) give some examples: “Of course it’s possible that oil prices will fall dramatically over the next month, but we all know that that’s not going to happen,” “We now know that there is a top quark: we have presented considerable evidence indicating its existence. Of course, our experiments are not conclusive, and there is a chance that our results will be overturned” (which is meant to characterise the natural way scientific articles end) and “I know no one will get confused about this, but it is possible someone will” (from their article’s reviewer). Furthermore, given Grice’s (1989:47) Modified Occam’s Razor (that senses aren’t to be multiplied beyond necessity), our account has the advantage of being more economical than the contextualist alternative. Also, this type of explanation is preferable to those that involve postulating “senses, conventional semantic implicatures, or semantic presuppositions because conversational implicatures can be derived from independently motivated psychosocial principles” (Davies 2005:8; also Hazlett 2009:596-7).

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119 This is Grice’s “rough general principle which participants will be expected […] to observe” (1989:26).
Finally, our explanation satisfies Keith DeRose’s (1999, 2002) criteria of adequacy for proposals of this kind. First, our explanation appeals to general conversational rules, as opposed to ad hoc rules designed for the specific case. Second, it is motivated by conflicting intuitions, since it can sometimes seem inappropriate to say “I know that p, but it’s possible that not-p” but at other times appropriate to say so, so there is a motivation for explaining away one of them. Third, it explains away our intuition of incorrectness and not our intuition of correctness (in cases where it is clear that the possibility isn’t significant: i.e. relevant). That is, our explanation appeals only to the generation of a false implicature, because appealing to a true implicature wouldn’t help since, according to DeRose (1999:199-200), “we want to avoid falsehood both in what we implicate and (especially!) in what we actually say [and so] it would seem that it would be unwarranted to assert a falsehood even if doing so generates a true implicature” (but, reasonable explanations for the speaker’s confusion between what is said and what is conveyed are at hand; see §3.5, also Brown 2006). So, even given the contextualist’s criteria, we can explain the oddity pragmatically.120

So, importantly, our fallibilism licensing odd-sounding assertions doesn’t give us a reason for doubting it or for appealing to shifty approaches: roughly, taking the norms of knowledge to change with the loosely-described practical circumstances of particular individuals. Indeed, it is preferable for the rules not to be sensitive to the context of either the attributor or the subject of knowledge: that is, for there to be fixed-standards for knowledge that apply to all members of the epistemic community regardless of what is important or salient to them as either subjects or attributors. So, all else being equal, an account that doesn’t make, roughly, the norms of knowledge sensitive to any truth-independent factors is preferable.121 And so our fallibilistic approach, in which these loosely-described practical factors don’t permeate the practice, is indeed in the right lines. But, doesn’t the normative connection that we have embraced between knowledge and assertion support the shifty approaches?122 If this is so, then they seem to be back in the game.

Initially, an argument from assertion for contextualism was put forward (DeRose 2002). The gist of it was: “If the standards for when one is in a position to warrantedly assert that P are the same as those that constitute a truth condition for “I know that P,” then if the former vary with context, so do the latter. In short: The knowledge account of assertion together with the context sensitivity of assertability yields contextualism about knowledge” (DeRose 2002:187).

120 Including similar conjunctions (“p but it’s possible not-p”) given a knowledge-norm of assertion; §2.6.
121 I say ‘roughly’ because, for contextualism, these practical factors (often, only) determine the relevant sense of the term, while they (exclusively) determine, for SSI, the conditions for the one and only sense of it. The qualifications are required because of their relation to intellectualism; see fn.114.
122 We haven’t embraced a knowledge-norm of practical reasoning (§2.6), so we won’t consider the connection between knowledge and practical deliberation as supporting them (Hawthorne 2004).
But, as things stand, this argument isn’t successful as an argument for contextualism, since it ignores the possibility of SSI explaining the context-sensitivity of assertability (Blackson 2004). SSI can accommodate the relevant data given that “SSI can accept the conclusion that truth-conditions for first-person knowledge claims vary with speaker’s context, for SSI holds that the standards vary with the subject’s context, and in the case of first-person knowledge claims, the speaker is the subject” (DeRose 2009:108). So, the argument can support contextualism, as opposed to shifty approaches, only if SSI can be ruled out.

But for our purposes this is of no help, since SSI is just another shifty theory we would like to avoid. Nevertheless, and more importantly, it further ignores a range of possibilities open to the non-subject-sensitive invariantist; such as the possibility of “warranted assertibility maneuvers” (WAMs, for short), where the suggestion is that a pragmatic phenomenon is confused with a semantic one, as seen when explaining away the appearance of falsehood of some fallibilistic assertions. To be fair, the contextualist has arguments against the plausibility of both kinds of invariantism (DeRose 1999, 2004). The main argument against classical (non-sceptical) invariantism is that it can’t capture the “contextualist” data, such as the attributions of knowledge in the Airport and Bank cases, since it can only provide “lame” WAMs, given DeRose’s above criteria for “good” WAMs, to explain away those linguistic intuitions.

However, it isn’t clear, first, that the WAMs DeRose consider as “lame” are really so, given that, as seen, there is room for doubting the above third constraint. But regardless of that, and second, many WAMs have been put forward that aim to satisfy DeRose’s criteria (Rysiew 2001, Black 2005, Brown 2005, Pritchard 2010b). If this strategy is successful, it allows us to explain the appearance of correctness or incorrectness of certain attributions of knowledge by means of their conversationally appropriateness or inappropriateness, since, given the distinction between truth-conditions and assertibility-conditions, an attribution can be true but not warranted and vice versa. But, significantly and third, this isn’t the only way to explain away these intuitions either. So, classical invariantists can appeal to other types of explanations of the data, such as an error-theoretic one. In this case, the appearance of correctness or incorrectness is explained by means of, say, mistaken beliefs about knowledge or some psychological bias or heuristic and, again, many have attempted such explanations (Vogel 2004, Hawthorne 2004, Williamson 2005b, Nagel 2010).

Now, I am not here suggesting that one of the already proposed solutions will do, or even that a solution (more precisely, different explanations for the different data) needs to be found only within one of the above strategies (indeed, it is likely that we will need to use more than

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123 Another explanation exploits changes in the threshold of doxastic confidence (Bach 2005, 2010).
one approach to explain the data). But, in order to infer from the way we speak to truth-conditions, we need to first rule out, at least, the above possibilities (let alone making sure that most of us do speak that way\textsuperscript{124}). So, all I want to point out is that the argument from assertion for shifty approaches isn’t valid unless its supporter can eliminate these possibilities. That is, without ruling them out, the argument has no bite. And, I would add that the claim that the “knowledge account of assertion demands a [shifty] account of knowledge and is simply incredible without it” (2002:182) is simply premature. So, if the proponent of shifty approaches wants to use this argument to make us accept her view, then the burden is on her to show that such possibilities don’t hold.\textsuperscript{125} With this I am not suggesting that the proponent of classical invariantism shouldn’t be concerned with providing explanations that can deal with such “contextualist” data. As noticed, everyone should be concerned with it: after all, it is a theoretical virtue to explain (away) the data, which can moreover have powerful dialectical consequences (§1.6).\textsuperscript{126} All I am suggesting is that the acceptance of a knowledge-norm of testimonial assertion doesn’t force us towards a shifty approach.

In fact, given that we merely hold a necessity knowledge-norm of testimonial assertion (for which we have good independent reasons), as opposed to a bi-conditional and general norm of the kind DeRose (2002) exploits, it seems that the argument won’t have much bite for us. Firstly, and more straightforwardly, for the argument to go through (given our norm), there needs to be context-sensitivity in testimonial assertion. Indeed, data concerning the context-sensitivity of non-testimonial assertion is irrelevant. But, even assuming there is such context-sensitivity, secondly, and more importantly, our norm, which doesn’t state that knowledge is both necessary \textit{and sufficient} for testifying, doesn’t rule out the possibility that such sensitivity is due to some other property/properties that is/are (at least) sometimes required for such assertions and context-sensitive (§2.6). So, given our knowledge-norm and unless, at least, a strong case is made for the sufficiency-claim, we can see that the above argument from assertion won’t provide the alleged support for shifty approaches.\textsuperscript{127}

\subsection*{3.4 The Knowledge Relation and Extraordinary Possibilities}

We have seen that the norms of knowledge are social in nature: to know is to apprehend the truth by means of inter-subjectively designed norms that underlie the cooperative pursuit of truth and are socially inherited. Also, although these norms don’t vary with the loosely-described practical interests of particular individuals, they can change given relevant changes

\textsuperscript{124} See Stone 2007; also Buckwalter 2010, May et al. 2010 (but see DeRose 2011).

\textsuperscript{125} In fact, she needs to argue against the above sort of pragmatic and error-theoretic explanation of the data if we are to buy into her methodological approach.

\textsuperscript{126} Unfortunately, we won’t be able to engage with all of the data here; but see §3.5.

\textsuperscript{127} For scepticism about the prospects of providing such case for the sufficiency-claim, see Brown 2011.
in the community’s circumstances (given that certain changes can affect what rules we can reasonably take to be truth-conducive), and so are open to revision. This introduces a relativity with regard to the norms since communities in different circumstances can have different sets of rules (although, as noticed, most rules are normally shared, given our common nature and environments; §2.4.1). And, since to know is to grasp the truth by means of these rules, another consequence of our account is that knowledge is relative to these rules. More precisely, knowledge is relative to the legitimate relevant rules of the subject’s community.

One might wonder why the rules to be followed should be the rules of one’s community, as opposed to one’s own (regardless of whether they are shared by one’s community), and why they should be the rules of the subject’s community, as opposed to those of the attributor of knowledge (although, of course, the attributors normally belong to the subject’s community). The reason is simply that the purpose of these rules is, as seen, to create a shared standard for the transmission of truths within an epistemic community, and so a social source and reservoir of standardised truths that can be exploited by its members. So, the community to which the subject belongs is the group whose relevant circumstances are pertinent in determining the content of the rules: the putative standards that apply to knowledge.

So, according to our account, knowledge is relativised to the legitimate relevant rules of the subject’s community. Now, this might give us the impression that our account commits us to the view that knowledge is a three-place relation between a subject, a proposition and a system of rules. But it would be wrong. In order to see this, it might be useful to compare our view to Schaffer’s (2004, 2005) contrastivism. This is the view that all knowledge is a ternary relation involving a subject, a proposition and a contrastive proposition (the foil): S knows that p rather than q, where q is the contrastive proposition. Now, contrastivism being “a direct implementation of a classic relevant alternatives view of knowledge” (Schaffer and Knobe 2010:13), the foil determines the relevant alternatives that are eliminated. So, the proposition being expressed by a sentence of the form “S knows that p” depends on the implicit foil that determines the relevant alternatives. And, although contrastivism, unlike contextualism, doesn’t take the meaning of “know” to vary with the conversational context, it allows the context to determine the value of this implicit foil. So, importantly for our purposes, the contrastive view allows that one ascriber could truly say “s knows that p,” while a second ascriber in a second context (with a different range of relevant alternatives) could truly deny “s knows that p.” This is because the first ascriber could truly express the proposition that s knows that p rather than q1, while the second ascriber could truly deny s knows that p rather than q2. (Schaffer and Knobe 2010:13)

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128 But see §4.4.5.
Contrastivism then agrees with contextualism that while I can truly say “S knows that \( p \),” you can truly deny it because of a difference in conversational context.

Now, this makes it clear that (Schaffer’s) contrastivism is another shifty approach we should avoid, but more importantly, for present purposes, it helps us appreciate a crucial fact about this ternary relation. If knowledge is a ternary relation, then it should be possible for the same \( S \) and the same \( p \) (at the same time) to be both known and unknown: i.e. the compatibility of \( \text{Kspq}_1 \) and not-\( \text{Kspq}_2 \). That is, the third argument (in this case, the foil) can have different values, hence allowing for both the correct attribution and denial of knowledge of the same \( S \) and \( p \). But, our account doesn’t allow for different systems of rules to apply to \( S \). As seen, the subject \( S \) determines the set of rules applicable: specifically, the rules of \( S \)'s epistemic community. So, no other system of rules can take the place of the third argument. And this should then make it clear that such a third argument would be redundant given that \( S \) already determines the set of rules applicable. In other words, appearances to the contrary, the relativity of knowledge to the rules of \( S \)'s community doesn’t commit us to a ternary relation.

Having said that, according to our account, one knows a proposition relative to a set of alternatives that the subject eliminates by following the pertinent rule. So, knowledge involves an implicit contrast, since the rules only eliminate a set of relevant alternatives to \( p \). But, like the classic relevant alternative approach, our account needn’t give the (set of) contrastive proposition(s) a formal place in the knowledge relation.\(^{131}\) And, although this implicit contrast class is fixed by the relevant rule (by determining the way to achieve the truth), neither does our account need to give the rules a formal place. This then differentiates our account from another view that is committed to knowledge being a ternary relation: namely, Ram Neta’s (2008) evidentiary relativism. This is the view that the knowledge relation holds between a subject, a proposition and an “evidence rule” \( E \), which “restricts the kinds of things that can be elements of someone’s evidence set” (2008:291). A further difference between the accounts is that, since \( E \) is fixed by the purposes, interests and the like of the attributor (in making the epistemic appraisal), evidentiary relativism is then an attributor-sensitive view (2008:301-3).

Nevertheless, this attributor-sensitivity, it is claimed (Neta 2008), allows the view to accommodate a wider class of intuitive judgements than contrastivism. Specifically, the claim is that, although both evidentiary relativism and contrastivism can capture folk-intuitions

\(^{131}\) This doesn’t mean however that we couldn’t give our account the “contrastivist” treatment if wanted. After all, as Neta (2008:290) says, “[virtually] any binary theory of knowledge [such as a process reliabilist or a defeasibility theory] can [...] be transposed into the contrastivist key.” Indeed, if different rules by which we can come to know some \( p \) (within an epistemic community) exclude different alternatives, then the possibility for such a treatment is open for those \( ps \). Say, we can know that the animal is a zebra by merely looking at it or by some other thorough method where more alternatives are ruled out (see §3.5). But, whether this is possible for all knowledge is a further question.
about sceptical scenarios (particularly, the fact that “lots of people, on lots of occasions, intuitively find it false and unacceptable to assert, of someone that he/she knows that he/she is not a brain-in-a-vat, and these same people, on these same occasions, intuitively find it true and acceptable to assert, of someone, that he/she does not know that he/she is not a brain-in-a-vat;” 2008:300), evidentiary relativism but not contrastivism can capture the intuitions of Neo-Moorean philosophers (particularly, that they “find it true and acceptable to say of someone that he/she knows that he/she is not a brain-in-a-vat, and [...] false and unacceptable to say of someone that he/she does not know that he/she is not a brain-in-a-vat;” ibid.). Evidentiary relativism can do this because E can vary from person to person and from situation to situation. And, it is this capacity to accommodate more data that should makes us favour evidentiary relativism over contrastivism and any other view that can’t capture this data.

But, first, it is doubtful that the above Neo-Moorean judgements are pre-theoretical, and so neither are they intuitive nor evidence (for the theory of knowledge they are based on). And, second, those judgements don’t count as endoxa (i.e. commonsensical or intuitive judgements of the folk): they are the judgements of some philosophers (concerning, furthermore, some extraordinary case). So, we can agree that this Neo-Moorean data needs to be explained but that includes explaining it away, and that can be done, I suggest in this case, at no extra cost whatsoever for the theory (§§1.4, 1.6). That is, given that this Neo-Moorean data isn’t endoxa, capturing it, as opposed to explaining it away, shouldn’t sway our persuasions.

But, the above brings to our attention our folk-intuitions concerning sceptical scenarios, which, although dealing with extraordinary cases, are more important than the Neo-Moorean data when adjudicating theories. Can our account accommodate them? It is clear that it can capture the folk’s judgements concerning ordinary cases, such as knowing that one has a hand. But, can it accommodate the extraordinary cases, such as not knowing that one is a brain-in-a-vat? It can, but it captures these intuitions because of the lack of a relevant rule to achieve the knowledge, rather than because we can’t satisfy the rule. That is, since there is no rule that the folk can implement in order to know that, there is no knowledge. As mentioned, S knows that p via a rule R, so without R, there is no knowledge. That is why, we find it false and unacceptable to assert, of someone, that she knows that she isn’t a brain-in-a-vat and true and acceptable to assert that she doesn’t know that she isn’t a brain-in-a-vat, and why, importantly, we are often puzzled by the question as to whether she knows so.\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{132} An explanation that would probably rely on the theoretical commitments of the Neo-Moorean.
\textsuperscript{133} But, we sometimes find it acceptable, in non-testimonial situations, to assert “I’m not a brain-in-a-vat.” Our knowledge-norm of testimonial assertion (§2.6) can explain this.
Anyway, the reason for the above lack of rules dealing with sceptical propositions is simply that our practice isn’t developed to deal with possibilities that are extraordinary or far-fetched (given our worldview). After all, we were never meant to rule out this kind of remote possibility (§3.2). Indeed, the sceptic would add that the rules for this sort of far-fetched situations aren’t feasible because we couldn’t eliminate the possibilities given the nature of the scenarios (say, in the brain-in-a-vat case, the vat-experiences are subjectively indistinguishable from the non-vat-experiences: so things would look and feel the same for you). I am not sure the sceptic is right. For one, even if it wouldn’t make sense, according our account, to devise a rule especially for these cases (given the remoteness of the possibility), there might already be one that can be applied to them. In the next section, we shall see that a procedure exploiting deduction, what we might call a deduction rule, won’t help us here but, perhaps, an inference to the best explanation (IBE) rule can. In an IBE, one infers a hypothesis that explains a given set of data better than competing hypotheses (which is what, say, the detective normally does, Sherlock Holmes aside, when confronted with the clues). Assuming that some such rule is already in place (indeed, it seems that it is in place in institutional settings, such as science, as well as, more importantly, in everyday life: say, concluding that a party took place at home, when I see empty bottles and cigarette-buts everywhere, as opposed to my housemates planting them to make me believe so), we could apply it then to the sceptical cases, such as whether one is a brain-in-a-vat, as some have suggested.

But, even if we assume that the rule satisfies the conditions for legitimacy (roughly, reasonably taken to be and actually being truth-conducive), it isn’t clear that the folk would be able to make such inferences with regard to this subject-matter (and it is clear that most haven’t attempted them). Certainly philosophers have often suggested and sometimes attempted (though schematically) such IBEs and the hypothesis of not being a brain-in-a-vat seems to be a better explanation of the data than the alternatives. But, in order to make the inference, the folk wouldn’t only need to be aware of the relevant data but also of the different competing hypotheses so to weigh their merits. So, although some might be able to know via IBE that one isn’t a brain-in-a-vat, most people aren’t. That is, given the requirements on performing such IBEs, their successful employment is significantly restricted. So, we can expect the IBE rule to normally fail to provide the folk with the knowledge that one isn’t a brain-in-a-vat (even if it

134 Normally, features, such as simplicity, economy and fit with background information, are put forward as the kind of virtues that allow us to choose among alternatives; see Lycan 1988, 2002. But, what makes a hypothesis better than another one is a tricky issue that I ignore; see Lipton 2004.


136 Note that, when explaining the data, the negative hypothesis “not being a brain-in-a-vat” needs to be backed up by a specific (“real-world”) hypothesis. See Bonjour 1985, Vogel 2008.
is a legitimate rule). This then can explain why the folk normally think that they don’t know that they aren’t brain-in-vats: there is no rule they can normally implement.

Certainly, there is no ordinary perceptual rule to directly address such extraordinary possibilities. After all, they aren’t meant to do so, since the sceptical possibilities aren’t relevant (so we don’t design the rules to deal with them). And, we can expect, in extraordinary cases, a lack of relevant rules that directly address such situations. But, not all extraordinary cases are on the same boat: we can in fact differentiate between two types (Sinnott-Armstrong 2004). On the one hand, we have the sceptical scenarios, such as the brain-in-a-vat and Cartesian demon cases, which are specifically designed for us not to be able to eliminate, at least, by ordinary means. On the other, we have odd scenarios, such as painted mules and vase holograms, that are eliminable by some relatively ordinary means (we will perhaps need to do more than just look at the animal as we would otherwise do, but we can easily find out whether it is a painted mule or a zebra by checking for paint). Given this, we should expect a lack of rules relevant to extraordinary cases of the first kind. But, that isn’t the case for the second kind of extraordinary cases. Nevertheless, notice that, although the odd scenarios are readily eliminable, the possibilities they represent won’t, as a default position, be taken into account when considering ordinary everyday cases, since they still don’t represent significant error-possibilities (given our worldview); hence the oddity. So, if we are asked whether we know that the animal in the zoo pen is a zebra, then we normally employ a rule that eliminates the possibility of it being, say, a giraffe or a horse but doesn’t eliminate the possibility that it is a painted mule (assuming our worldview isn’t such that makes it significant).

3.5 Abominable Conjunctions and Principles of Knowledge

The above, however, seems to commit us to the possibility, at least for the folk, of an “abominable conjunction” (DeRose 1995), say, that we can know that I have a hand and not know that I am not a brain-in-a-vat. Moreover, even in the odd cases, the view seems to commit us to such abominable conjunctions, since it seems that when looking at the zebra, I can know that it is a zebra but not know that it is a painted mule given that the ordinary rule we use to determine that it is a zebra doesn’t rule out the possibility of it being a painted mule. So, given that the conjunctions seem “abominable,” I want to examine first where this impression of abomination comes from. So, let us consider in which circumstances, if any, we would ordinarily hold such a conjunction. Consider the following conversation between two normal adults in the zoo:

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137 Sinnott-Armstrong (2004) takes them to be uneliminable. But, an IBE rule might eliminate them.
138 Notice the point isn’t that the rules fail when dealing with these extraordinary cases, but that they aren’t designed to eliminate these far-fetched possibilities (given our worldview).
A: Do you know what animal that is?
B: Yes, it’s a zebra, just look at the stripes.
A: How do you know that it isn’t a painted mule?
B: Well, I don’t.
A: So, do you really know that it’s a zebra?

I take it that B’s answer could be that he does know that it is a zebra if B is aware that A doesn’t have any concrete reasons for introducing the painted-mule possibility (and their sharing a worldview helps determine this). In other words, even if the painted mule possibility is salient in the conversation, given their shared worldview and that no concrete reason in support of it is given or thought to be available in this particular case, such possibility isn’t considered relevant (that is, the shared background information makes the painted-mule possibility insignificant). Salient possibilities needn’t be regarded relevant.

But if that is the case, then wouldn’t B also say, contrary to our dialogue, that he does know that it isn’t a painted mule? After all, B could infer that he also knows that it isn’t a painted mule given the background information. That is, he can use that information (say, that zoos don’t commit such deceptions, that the consequences would be severe, that such a deception isn’t likely to last, etc.) to make an IBE or an inductive inference that the animal isn’t a painted mule (although such background information isn’t always available; consider the airplane-spotters).\(^{139}\) In this case then we would be applying an inferential rule (as opposed to, say, a perceptual rule: a rule exploiting perceptual capacities) to know that it isn’t a painted mule. So, given there is no reason to take the possibility seriously, we would normally think that we can extend our knowledge in that way (viz. via an IBE or inductive rule) in this case.\(^{140}\) And so this doesn’t turn out to be a case where the “abominable” is held, since we would end up attributing knowledge, and correctly so, that it is a zebra and that it isn’t a painted mule.

Nevertheless, normally, we would withdraw the knowledge claim and, perhaps, even reverse it, after being presented with a possibility that we can’t eliminate. More precisely, we usually seem to withdraw but not reverse the claim, if not clear as to whether the introduction of the possibility is legitimate (i.e. based on concrete reasons), and we usually seem to withdraw and reverse it, if clear about the legitimacy of such introduction. So, given that we naturally think that knowledge requires elimination of significant (i.e. relevant) error-possibilities (§3.2), the reason for the withdrawal is that we aren’t sure whether the painted-mule possibility is a significant one and the reason for the reversal is that we think such possibility is significant.

\(^{139}\) That is, we can extend our knowledge by means of non-deductive reasoning. I’m assuming that IBE isn’t a disguised inductive inference. The inductive inference might go like this: All zoos so far haven’t engaged in such a deception (the fact that there are no reports that zoos engage in such deception supports this general statement), so in all likelihood this zoo isn’t engaged in such a deception.

\(^{140}\) This allows us to explain cases, such as Kvanvig’s (2008:477), where we assert the animals aren’t “fancy robotics,” if such an assertion is understood as being testimonial (cf. opinions).
Importantly, when people introduce error-possibilities, we naturally think that there is some concrete reason for the introduction given the Maxim of Relation (otherwise, there would be no point in doing so—§3.3.2) and so naturally reverse the claim.

Applying this to our case, the painted mule possibility is now taken to be not merely a salient possibility but a relevant one that isn’t eliminated by the (perceptual) rule applied to determine whether the animal is a zebra in the ordinary case, hence we end up with a reversal.141 Once the painted-mule possibility is introduced in the above circumstances where one takes it to be a significant possibility, it would be conversationally infelicitous to continue claiming that one knows that it is a zebra since it implicates that one can rule it out. Indeed, unless one thinks there are no concrete reasons for the introduction of the possibility and even if it actually is an insignificant one, one doesn’t take oneself to know given that a putative significant error-possibility hasn’t been eliminated. In these circumstances then we wouldn’t hold the conjunction either. So, even given our account, we wouldn’t normally hold the abominable conjunction, whether we are clear or not as to whether the possibility is significant or not. And so this seems to explain why we think it is an “abominable” conjunction.142

3.5.1 Closure and Transmission

But, isn’t the problem really that such conjunction violates the Principle of Closure for Knowledge, roughly, C: if one knows that p, competently deduces q from p and believes that q, then one knows that q?143 This principle, one might think, is what makes the conjunction abominable, since it (or something like it) is meant to be intuitive (indeed, this is why the closure-based sceptical argument is regarded as a paradox; §1.3). Since one knows that it is a zebra and given that the animal being a zebra entails that it isn’t a painted mule, then one seem to also know that the animal isn’t a painted mule. So, it seems wrong to claim that one knows that it is a zebra but doesn’t know that it isn’t a painted mule. The counter-intuitiveness of the abominable conjunction is the result of our holding an intuitive closure principle. Indeed, even those who, for theoretical reasons, deny the principle admit to its intuitive plausibility (Nozick 1981:205-6). But, what is the content of the “closure intuition” and is it a folk-intuition that, as endoxa, would be preferable to accommodate (cf. Kvanvig 2008:476)? So, what is the endoxa, if any, with regard to closure, as we shall say?

141 That is, although the possibility isn’t relevant, the fact that it is taken seriously makes it a misleading defeater of the employed rule, since such rule doesn’t cater to such possibility (§4.1).
142 See also Dretske 2005.
143 Where p can stand for [p and (p→q)]. Baumann (2011:599) refers to C as expressing “the core of the idea of knowledge closure currently discussed.” Cf. Dretske (2010:133): “Closure is the principle that one knows, or at least one is automatically positioned to know […] all the known logical consequences of things one knows.” But we won’t be concerned with weaker and vaguer being-positioned-to-know closure principles.
Certainly, the content isn’t some specific formulation of the principle, say, C above. And, if C were the content of the intuition, it would need to be true (otherwise there would be no problem in rejecting it), and C isn’t since, say, one might cease to know \( p \) by the time one comes to believe \( q \). Indeed, refinements to C (e.g. that one retains the knowledge that \( p \)) are required if we are to have a closure principle that is true (Hawthorne 2004, 2005). But, as Robert Nozick (1981:205) says: “We would be ill-advised, however, to quibble over the details of [C]. Although these details are difficult to get straight, it will continue to appear that something like [C] is correct.”

Below I suggest why something like C seems correct, but now we need to notice that it is difficult to reach a version of C that is clearly true.\(^{145}\) So, it seems that, whatever our closure intuition is, it isn’t some specific true principle. Even if there is some true, specific formulation of the principle, it isn’t immediately intuited. That is, the content of our intuition isn’t a specific true principle.

Now, we seem to have an intuition whose content seems instead to be something like the idea that we can gain knowledge by competent deduction (or “that deduction is a good epistemic method, or that knowledge can be extended by deduction, or that deduction transmits knowledge,” Lawlor 2005:31). And, John Hawthorne says that C, together with some refinements (as the one pointed out), is a “more satisfying development of the closure intuition. The core idea behind closure is that we can add to what we know by performing deductions on what we already know” (2005:29; see also Williamson 2000:117). Indeed, Kvanvig identifies “the intuitive idea” behind C in the current debate as being “that knowledge can be extended by deduction” (2008:456, 474). But, this core general intuition seems to support a slightly different principle: a Transmission Principle (T). This is a principle that states that knowledge that \( q \) is achieved on the basis of the deduction: if one knows that \( p \), competently deduces \( q \) from \( p \) and believes that \( q \), then one comes to know that \( q \) on the basis of the deduction.\(^{146}\) The main difference between (some version of) C and T is that, while T clearly states that one knows that \( q \) on the basis of the deduction, C is silent as to where the knowledge that \( q \) comes from and, in fact, it needn’t be arrived at by the deduction (Baumann

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\(^{144}\) See also Hawthorne 2004:36.

\(^{145}\) Particularly, if the principle is to give us a plausible closure-based sceptical argument. David and Warfield (2008:159) argue there is a restriction issue, since the refinements force the sceptic to make assumptions (in order to reach their general conclusion), such as attributions of “lots of beliefs involving denials of lots of different particular sceptical hypotheses” to the folk, which are clearly implausible. And add that the more refinements are introduced to make C plausible, the more problematic beliefs are required (ibid.). Cf. Lawlor 2005, where the suggestion is that, since one has antecedent reason for believing that one doesn’t know that one isn’t a brain-in-a-vat and closure doesn’t apply if there is evidence against \( p \) (in this case, the ordinary proposition), C together with the refinement suggested above can’t generate the paradox.

\(^{146}\) Just as with C, there are different formulations of T found in the literature.
So, given that in cases where a deduction fails to transmit knowledge, one can still know that $q$ through some other means, counter-examples to $T$ aren’t counter-examples to $C$. But, importantly for present purposes, if $T$ is true, then $C$ is too, since deduction is a means of coming to know that $q$.

So, the “core idea” that we can gain knowledge by deduction makes $T$ intuitive, which in turn makes $C$ intuitive. This general folk-intuition then indirectly supports $C$ via $T$ (which allows knowledge to be extended through deduction), hence the intuitiveness of any such $C$, as Nozick points out. And this intuition can also explain why we think that we should be “very reluctant” to reject $C$: “If we reject it, in what circumstances can we gain knowledge by deduction?” (Williamson 2000:118; we shall answer this question below). After all, if $C$ fails then $T$ does too, since deduction represents one way of coming to know that $q$ that, given $C$’s failure, we can’t come to know in any way. So, $C$’s failure threatens $T$, which is in turn supported by the “core idea.” But, we should notice that this intuition doesn’t address the full generality of $T$: it merely says that we can gain knowledge by deduction. The intuition is in fact compatible with restrictions to $T$. As Kvanvig says, the claim that “deduction is always and everywhere knowledge-extending does not follow from the obviously correct claim that deduction is a way of extending knowledge” (2008:474). So, it is consistent with the endoxa for both $T$ and $C$ being restricted but not altogether rejected (Dretske 2005, 2010), unless $T$’s restrictions are such that the possibility of gaining knowledge by deduction is more or less limited than what we normally take it to be (given consideration to particular cases). But, if this is so, then the denial of the full generality of $C$, which borrows its intuitiveness from the “core idea,” needn’t count as not capturing the endoxa.

Of course, none of this shows that $C$ should be restricted. But, if the above is correct, it puts pressure on the claim that the “abominable conjunctions” are counter-intuitive, for the folk, because of $C$, since at least the general intuition doesn’t commit us to $C$’s universality. And, as we shall now see, particular intuitions concerning $T$ support a restriction of $T$ in extraordinary cases (such as the zebra case), hence those intuitions failing to support $C$ in those cases too (given that if $T$ holds, $C$ holds too). And, although we shouldn’t forget that counter-examples to $T$ aren’t counter-examples to $C$ (so $C$ can still retain its full generality even if our intuitions suggest restrictions to $T$), the intuitive case for the above explanation of the abomination of the conjunctions is surely weakened. So, let us introduce in the next sub-section the case for an intuitive restriction to $T$ and consider in the following one whether an analogous one applies to $C$ too.

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147 I hereby ignore the parenthetical qualification.
3.5.2 Easy Knowledge and Discrimination

When confronted with some cases of deductive reasoning instantiating T’s antecedent, we have the intuition that we can’t claim to gain knowledge of the conclusion (Cohen 2005b). So, in these cases, T seems wrong since it allows for knowledge of certain propositions via the deduction far too easily. When determining (in ordinary cases) whether the animal is a zebra via a perceptual rule mainly involving looking at it, we don’t consider whether it is a painted mule, so the claim that we know via a deductive rule that it isn’t a painted mule (based on our knowledge that it is a zebra and that if it is a zebra then it isn’t a painted mule) seems in this case unsatisfactory. That is, if one says, when answering the legitimate question “How do you know it’s not a painted mule?”, “I know it’s a zebra [via ordinary means]; so, deductively, I know it’s not a painted mule,” then, as Kvanvig says, a “sense of shame would be appropriate at putting on such airs” (2008:477). So, some restriction to T doesn’t only seem compatible with the endoxa, but also required by it.

One might at this point suggest that the problem with the reasoning isn’t T but the premise claiming knowledge that it is a zebra. That is, the reasoning seems suspect because we don’t actually know that it is a zebra. But this, I take it, isn’t what the folk would say. That is, we normally claim to know so by looking at the animal and seeing its stripes (when the odd alternatives aren’t regarded as significant). One might anyway suggest that the problem is that it seems as if one doesn’t know that it is a zebra: after all, the possibility of it being a painted mule is salient. But, as seen, when the possibility isn’t taken to be significant, we won’t normally either withdraw or reverse the knowledge claim. In these cases, where the possibility of being a painted mule is salient but not taken to be relevant and so not thought as having to be eliminated in order to know that \( p \) it is a zebra, we still think that there is something amiss in the above reasoning when concluding that one knows that \( q \) it isn’t a painted mule by means of a deductive inference based on the fact that \( p \) entails \( q \), and precisely because the possibility of being a painted mule hasn’t been eliminated in order to know that \( q \). And, although in those cases, we can know through an IBE or induction rule (given our background information) that the animal isn’t a painted mule, the issue here concerns the gain of knowledge through deduction. Hence, there seems to be a problem with T. And, if we are right about it, this is endoxa that we would prefer to accommodate.

Indeed, it seems clear that such reasoning won’t work, since if we were looking for a painted mule that looked like a zebra, we would look for an animal that looked like a zebra (which is the perceptual procedure used to know that it is a zebra in the example above) and then further investigate whether it is a zebra or a painted mule (say, by checking for paint). So, it isn’t clear, in this case, how we can deduce from our knowledge that it is a zebra via the
ordinary means (of looking at the animal) that we know that it isn’t a painted mule (Cohen 2005b:424, Wright 2003:60). Again, in that case, if we were asked how we knew that it isn’t a painted mule, we would find it absurd to reply that we do so because it looks like a zebra (“Look at the stripes!”) and if it is a zebra then it isn’t a painted mule, since it doesn’t seem that we are in a position to know. It seems that we would know too easily that the painted mule hypothesis is false. This is of course a version of the “problem of easy knowledge” (Cohen 2002, 2005b), where some “basic knowledge” interacts with a deductive rule to allow us to know certain propositions far too easily given the circumstances.\(^{148}\) And, although normally the problem is considered with regard to C, we are here exploiting this problem to point out that T seems to require some restriction and so that the denial of the full generality of T actually counts as capturing the endoxa.

Therefore, the above general intuition is consistent with a restriction on the class of known propositions that deduction can be used on to gain knowledge and a restriction seems required, I suggest, when considering our particular intuitions concerning specific cases, as the above exemplifies. Now, according to our account, T doesn’t apply to all known propositions. Our restriction applies to both types of extraordinary propositions, which aren’t easily knowable (if knowable at all, in the case of sceptical propositions; §3.4). These extraordinary propositions aren’t easily knowable because normally the possibilities they represent won’t, as a default position, be taken into account when considering ordinary everyday cases, since they aren’t significant possibilities (given our worldview). The reason one doesn’t come to know some extraordinary proposition (say, that one isn’t a brain-in-a-vat) via a deductive rule is that the reasoning from an ordinary one (say, I know I have hands) doesn’t provide the positive epistemic status needed for knowledge of the conclusion. And this is because, as noticed, the rules determine an implicit relevant contrast, which in the case of the deductive rule isn’t always the appropriate one. Let me expand.

The rules are truth-discriminating: that is, they discriminate truths from falsehoods. So, the rules provide us with the capacity to distinguish competing state of affairs. This is easily seen in the zebra case: when following the perceptual rule, one distinguishes there being a zebra from, say, there being a giraffe. And, this ability to tell the difference between competing states of affairs is an essential element of what makes a procedure truth-conducive. So, as one would expect, this notion of discrimination is central to reliability (Goldman 1976, 1986). As Alvin Goldman says, “To be reliable, a cognitive mechanism must enable a person to discriminate or differentiate between incompatible states of affairs” (1976:771). He motivates

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\(^{148}\) “Basic knowledge” is knowledge that one has prior to knowing that its source is legitimate. We won’t deal with the other “problem of easy knowledge:” “bootstrapping,” where easy knowledge is obtained via track-record arguments that exploit deductions (Vogel 2000, Cohen 2002, Van Cleve 2003).
this claim by means of the famous fake-barn case, where one can’t distinguish the real from
the fake barns and so one doesn’t seem to know. That is, he exploits our intuition that knowing
that \( p \) requires the ability to distinguish \( p \) from state of affairs where \( p \) is false.

This ability to discriminate is central to our understanding of the rules as reliable procedures.
That is, it should be seen as a refinement on our understanding of legitimate rules: \( R \) is a
legitimate rule for \( p \) only if \( R \) can discriminate \( p \) from other state of affairs where \( p \) is false.
Knowledge requires a discriminative capacity: the capacity to discriminate truth from
falsehood. Indeed, if it were lacking, one would be achieving the truth accidentally and not
have knowledge (McGinn 1999). And, consequently, “A knowledge attribution imputes to
someone the discrimination of a given state of affairs from possible alternatives” (Goldman
1976:772). Indeed, this ability to discriminate is what provides the proper connection to the
world that knowledge requires and we desire. So, this refinement is motivated by the fact that
"knowledge is a matter of responsiveness to the way the world is" (Roush 2005:122) and
discrimination is the natural option that allows us to achieve such responsiveness.\(^{149}\)
Knowledge requires a proper connection to the fact that makes the target proposition true,
where a “proper connection” is a connection that allows us to discriminate such proposition
from other state of affairs where it is false. So, it is with this constraint in mind that the rules
are developed and it is because of this constraint that the deductive rule fails, in certain cases,
to transmit. Let me illustrate.

I come to know, say, that I have hands via a perceptual rule that doesn’t eliminate the brain-in-
a-vat alternative since it is irrelevant (given our worldview). So, when I infer, on the basis of
having hands entailing not being a brain-in-a-vat, that I am not a brain-in-a-vat, this belief isn’t
knowledge, even if true, because in these cases even if the brain-in-a-vat possibility isn’t
relevant for the having-hands-claim, it certainly is the kind of state of affairs that needs to be
discriminated for the not being a brain-in-a-vat claim, if we are to have knowledge given that it
involves a discriminative capacity. More specifically, there is no discrimination of the target
proposition in this particular piece of reasoning. So, there is no discriminative capacity in place
with respect to the target proposition. When the rule via which we come to know \( p \) doesn’t
discriminate \( q \) then we can’t know via a deductive rule that \( q \), since we would fail to
discriminate \( q \) from other state of affairs where not-\( q \). That is, since in order to know the
conclusion one has to discriminate a possibility that isn’t relevant when coming to know the
premises, one doesn’t come to know the conclusion via the deduction. So, if there is an

\(^{149}\) Sensitivity \((\neg p \rightarrow \neg B(p))\) is another way of being responsive to the world. But, Roush argues,
safety \((B(p) \rightarrow p)\) fails to be so since “it gets the direction of fit wrong for what knowledge is” (2005:121).
Regardless of this, neither of them seems the natural (or right) option; see §4.3.4.
expansion of discriminatory power between the premises and the conclusion, then the deductive rule fails to transmit knowledge.

Now, ordinary procedures (perceptual or otherwise) don’t discriminate extraordinary propositions, since these aren’t relevant (that is, the truth-discriminating power of the ordinary rules is limited to certain significant possibilities given our worldview). So we can expect a failure of T when some such ordinary rule is employed to know the ordinary proposition that entails the extraordinary conclusion. For example, one can’t know by means of the deduction that it isn’t a painted mule from one’s knowledge that it is a zebra by means of looking at it since it doesn’t take into account the extraordinary possibility. After all, as Dretske says, “Our ways of discovering P are not necessarily ways of discovering what we know to be implied by P. From the fact that you know that P implies Q, it does not follow that you can see (smell, feel, etc.) that Q just because you can see (smell, feel, etc.) that P” (2005:14).

So, one can’t come to know, say, that one isn’t a brain-in-a-vat via deduction from one’s knowledge that one has hands via some ordinary (perceptual) rule. But, there might be other ways in which one can come to know that one isn’t a brain-in-a-vat anyway, such as the above IBE (but notice, given the way the sceptical hypotheses are designed, not many rules will be able to deal with them). And so, importantly, if we were to achieve knowledge of an ordinary proposition p via an IBE rule that discriminates the sceptical situation q in order to determine that p, one can come to know, via deduction, that q. Having said that, the Moorean inference, from my knowledge that I have a hand via some ordinary rule, is deeply counter-intuitive and our account allows us to embrace this folk-intuition that one doesn’t come to know that one isn’t a brain-in-a-vat by means of this inference.

Similarly, there are other ways in which one can know that it isn’t a painted mule, say by checking for paint or through an IBE. Importantly, then, there are ways in which we can come to know that it isn’t a painted mule via deduction if we know that it is a zebra through one of these (non-ordinary) methods (given usual circumstances). After all, those are the kind of procedures that help us determine that it is a zebra by ruling out the possibility (among others) that it is a painted mule. Anyway, even if we can gain knowledge that it isn’t a painted mule via deduction when employing certain rules to know that it is a zebra, these rules aren’t normally the procedures we need to use and normally use (given our worldview and assuming its correctness) in order to know that it is a zebra. And, it won’t be known through a deductive rule that exploits one’s knowledge that it is a zebra when achieved through an ordinary rule (since this will be an item of knowledge that isn’t powerful enough to allow for the

\[\text{IBE}\] contrasts the target proposition with competing hypotheses, and so discriminates it from other states of affair where it is false.
discrimination of the target proposition). So, although one can normally gain knowledge via deduction of ordinary propositions (say, that the animal isn’t a giraffe) and even sometimes of extraordinary propositions (say, that the animal isn’t a painted mule—as long as there is no illicit expansion), one cannot always do so.\footnote{I’ve been ignoring the further and trivial possibility of T failure in cases in which one already knows the conclusion (as in premise-circular arguments) if one is to understand the principle as requiring \textit{de novo} knowledge of the conclusion: requiring the acquisition of knowledge not previously had by any other means. So, in cases where knowledge is present before the reasoning occurred, this T fails.}

Anyhow, the cases where we don’t achieve knowledge that \( p \) via some such discriminatorily-powerful rule are also the cases where, as seen above, it seems that we gain knowledge too easily: that we can get knowledge on the cheap. Indeed, it seems that one would, in these cases, be helping oneself to a large piece of unearned knowledge-constituting status, and our account can both accommodate and explain this. After all, as Colin McGinn says, “it can be easier to know \( p \) than \( q \) though \( p \) implies \( q \) (and not vice versa) because \( q \) requires more in the way of discrimination than \( p \)” (1999:27; see also Goldman 1986:56). In these cases, T doesn’t satisfy the above discriminatory constraint, since not-\( q \) isn’t taken into account when considering \( p \), hence not allowing us to discriminate \( q \) from state of affairs where it is false. Indeed, one can’t come to know the conclusion when one’s ordinary (loosely-described) evidence doesn’t address it.

With T, we are preserving knowledge, not merely truth, and since in these cases we aren’t in a position to know the conclusion \textit{via the deductive reasoning}, T fails. To repeat, in these cases, we would be helping ourselves to some unearned positive epistemic status required for knowing. And the lack of discriminatory power explains why we can’t come to know the conclusion, in some cases, when engaging in the deductive reasoning. Now, this explanation isn’t \textit{ad hoc} given the independently motivated reason for this discriminatory constraint. Indeed, it is the natural way for us to develop rules that are responsive to the world. And so an unrestricted T fails in some cases because one can have the positive epistemic status required of knowledge in the case of the premise but not the conclusion, via the deductive reasoning, due to this discriminatory deficit. But, we can see that if there is no discriminatory deficit, then T holds. And this is exactly so in the uncontroversial cases where we can extend our knowledge through deduction (say, where we move from knowing that it is a zebra to the deduced claim that it isn’t a giraffe).

The above then provides us with an explanation as to why we don’t know in cases where the knowledge seems to be acquired too easily and do know in cases where it seems appropriate to extend our knowledge via deduction. So, we can answer Neta’s question as to why it is that,
in the relevant range of cases, we can’t gain knowledge so easily (2005:189): namely, there is a lack of discriminatory power. So, I can know that it is a zebra (via ordinary means) but not know that it isn’t a painted mule (via deduction). And I can know that I have hands (via ordinary means) but not know that I am not a brain-in-a-vat (via deduction). But, although this stops us from having “easy knowledge” of either type of (extraordinary) propositions, we saw we can still have knowledge via deduction in both cases (let alone other means). And, more generally, we saw we can expand our knowledge deductively. As long as there is no lack of discrimination, then we can gain knowledge through deduction. Again, from my knowing that it is a zebra and that if it is a zebra, then it isn’t a hippopotamus, then I know that it isn’t a hippopotamus (and so with goldfinches and cravens, and red tables and blue tables).

So, I suggest that, consistent with the endoxa (particularly, the general “core idea” and the particular intuitions concerning “easy knowledge” cases), T is to be restricted and, given that C’s intuitive support rests on T’s, the endoxa doesn’t support the full generality of C either. So, the apparent abomination of the above conjunctions doesn’t seem to rest, for the folk, on the intuitive appeal of C, since it is silent with respect to its full generality. But, this needn’t mean that C, unlike T, doesn’t enjoy such generality, since counter-examples to T aren’t counter-examples to C even if, as Dretske would say, appreciating the failure of T makes the failure of C “easier to swallow” (2005:15). Next then I want to consider the universality of C, since an unrestricted C would seem to re-introduce problems of easy knowledge as well as allowing for many others, such sceptical and lottery problems (which we consider in the next section).

3.5.3 Closure Again

Recall that C doesn’t specify the way we come to know the conclusion, so the fact that T is restricted doesn’t show that C is. Indeed, C doesn’t concern any specific procedure by which we acquire the knowledge of the conclusion, it simply states that some attributions of knowledge about a subject are incompatible: more precisely, if the antecedent of C is satisfied (knowledge that \(p\), etc.), you must attribute knowledge that \(q\) to the subject. So, C merely states that we know the conclusion by whichever means. Indeed, we might know the conclusion by some other inferential method, such as an inductive or IBE rule. And, as pointed out above, we can know via some such rule that, say, the animal isn’t a painted mule, given our background information. So, even if the deduction fails to transmit knowledge in this case, we might still be able to know the conclusion. That is, we can have T failure without C failure. But, the fact that we can know via these other methods the conclusion (given the available background information) doesn’t mean that we always know. And, if C is about knowing that \(q\), rather than merely being in a position to know that \(q\), then the above concession doesn’t help us establish C’s universality.
At this point, however, one might want to suggest that, in becoming aware of the entailment, one also becomes aware of an error-possibility for which one must “form a view about what entitles you to dismiss this possibility,” since “becoming aware of an error-possibility that you know is incompatible with what you believe and being unable to rationally dismiss it is [...] knowledge-defeating” (Pritchard 2010c:255-6, 261). And the background information is meant to provide the evidence to defeat this defeater. Now, if this is correct, then we can easily appreciate that C holds in this case (as well as T, given that retaining the knowledge that \( p \) is also required in this case). After all, the evidence required to rationally dismiss the defeater to \( p \) eliminates the expansion of discriminatory capacity otherwise normally present in such cases, since that evidence is meant to rule out the possibility that not-\( q \).

Now, although this move doesn’t commit one to the implausible view that one needs to dismiss these error-possibilities at all times, however easily this would be done (given our shared worldview), in order to know ordinary propositions (2010c:261, 265-fn.19), the move still seems to be too demanding. After all, as noticed, salient possibilities needn’t be taken as relevant ones (i.e. as introducing a significant error-possibility; cf. Pritchard 2010c:260-1). But the deeper disagreement lies elsewhere, namely: the role salient possibilities might have as defeaters. Indeed, the suggestion is that “if I hadn’t considered the possibility before, I should now” and that even if I don’t have any concrete reasons for thinking that this is a significant error-possibility, still “I should be able to rule it out” (2010c:262). But, this seems, intuitively speaking, too demanding, since after all one doesn’t have reasons to believe that the alternative represents a significant error-possibility (and neither it is one); so why would one consider eliminating this possibility? And, why think that a possibility when first considered and classified as irrelevant provides us with the means to eliminate said possibility? After all, it seems that at least in some cases for some people, when first faced with some extraordinary possibility (say, the brains-in-vats hypothesis), will classify it as “off-the-wall” without that allowing them to rule it out (§3.4).

Importantly, our account doesn’t require us to rule out such a merely salient extraordinary possibility either. Indeed, the ordinary procedure doesn’t require us to eliminate extraordinary possibilities and only if we have reasons to regard an alternative as introducing a significant error-possibility, then there would be a need, given that the procedures’ goal is to promote the truth, to eliminate it: such an alternative would count as a defeater (§4.2.1). So, if an extraordinary possibility is merely salient, we don’t need to rule it out. Moreover, there is no need for one to be able to classify the salient possibility as extraordinary since, without reasons to back them up, no possibilities need to be taken into account, since ordinary possibilities are already taken into account in the procedure and extraordinary ones can be
ignored. So, although the far-fetched possibility could certainly be ruled out when coming to classify it as such, this needn’t and it is unlikely to be always the case, hence not eliminating the possibility of an illicit expansion in discriminatory power. That is, C is likely to fail in some cases for some people, and in particular for the folk when dealing with sceptical scenarios.

So, C doesn’t hold in full generality. And, significantly, by restricting C to those cases where there isn’t discriminatory deficit, we can avoid some unpalatable moves given the endoxa. First, we can avoid the sceptical move: if we don’t know that some extraordinary (sceptical or odd) hypothesis doesn’t hold, then given C’s universality, we fail to know many ordinary propositions incompatible with it. But, this seems wrong since we don’t think we need to eliminate such hypotheses to have ordinary knowledge. Second, we can avoid the Moorean move: given that we know those ordinary propositions and C’s universality, we also know that those hypotheses don’t hold. But, this again seems wrong since we don’t think we can normally eliminate those hypotheses. Third, we can avoid the rejection move: that is, the wholesale rejection of C. And, as the “core idea” behind C makes clear, this seems wrong. Although the endoxa doesn’t address C’s universality, hence allowing us to restrict C, it is clear our general and particular intuitions support a restricted T, which suggests that C at least sometimes holds. Fourth, we can also avoid the “shifty” move, where the impression of inconsistency between our ordinary knowledge-claims, extraordinary knowledge-claims and C is explained away in terms of the context-sensitivity of epistemic standards. But, we don’t need to adopt a shifty approach in order to capture the above commonsensical claims, which is welcomed given its transmissibility problems (§3.3).

Just like T then, C holds in some cases and fails in others. Still, this can do justice to our “core idea” that knowledge can be gained by deduction. So, this licenses deductive knowledge but, importantly, doesn’t force us to attribute knowledge in easy knowledge cases (including those involving sceptical scenarios) since, in tune with our folk-intuitions, we can fail to know the conclusion due to a discriminatory deficit. And, as seen, we can “explain why it is that, for any particular piece of [ordinary] knowledge, it seems that we can inferentially expand it in some ways but not in others—even when the inference is the same across these cases” (Neta

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152 One could perhaps exploit the knowledge of the entailment. If one knows the entailment via a procedure that eliminates the extraordinary possibility (say, one might know that if it is a zebra then it isn’t a painted mule via induction), then the discriminatory deficit is avoided even if the procedure via which we acquire the knowledge that it is a zebra isn’t discriminatorily powerful (given the conclusion). This way we won’t be open to the above worry about “manufacturing” positive epistemic status, although it isn’t at all clear that such discriminatory power will always be present (for a subject satisfying C’s antecedent) in order to allow for an unrestricted C. Certainly, some ways of knowing the entailment aren’t so discriminatorily powerful.
And, we can do all of this so without requiring the norms of knowledge to be context-sensitive.\textsuperscript{153}

Nonetheless, even if it can be true that one knows that it is a zebra but not know that it isn’t a painted mule, we wouldn’t, as seen, often hold or utter the above “abominable conjunctions” since we would normally think they are wrong and conversationally infelicitous. But, even if we are unlikely to think or assert them, such propositions needn’t be false, as our account shows.\textsuperscript{154} So, these conjunctions don’t seem abominable due to their falsehood because C holds unrestricted. Therefore, given that our restriction move doesn’t do violence to the endoixa and we can explain why we consider the above conjunctions as “abominable,” we can conclude that our account doesn’t suffer from any closure-related intuitive disadvantages. All else being equal then, there are no reasons for preferring other accounts concerning these closure-related issues, given the relevant folk-intuitions. Moreover, this restriction move helps us avoid re-introducing the sceptical problems that infallibilism seems to generate due to its requirement to eliminate all error-possibilities, including sceptical ones, since if C holds unrestricted, then extraordinary possibilities need to be eliminated in order to know ordinary propositions. And, given that “an outstanding challenge for epistemology [is] to show how knowledge can be possible at all without being easy” (Van Cleve 2003:57) and that our account both accommodates and explains the possibility of knowledge as well as the intuitive data concerning easy knowledge, then we have a very good reason for favouring it. But, where does the above leave us with respect to “lottery propositions”?

3.6 Lottery Problems and Sceptical Paradoxes

A lottery proposition is a proposition that, although highly likely, we intuitively think we don’t know (Hawthorne 2004:5). The paradigmatic lottery proposition is \textit{S’s ticket is a loser} (referring to one of many tickets in a fair lottery, where the bigger the lottery the more likely that it is a loser). And, although some might find themselves “at a loss to say whether and when we know lottery propositions” or might think that “the intuitions we have here are weak” (Vogel 2004:507, 1990b:294), we mostly seem to think that we lack knowledge in these cases. Indeed, this helps us make sense of the fact that we buy lottery tickets and why we check the result in the newspaper (after all, as some lotteries tell us: “You never know”).

This isn’t to say that we couldn’t produce a story as to why we think we don’t know when in fact we do (hence explaining away the above intuition), especially if we think the lottery intuitions aren’t strong. For example, Jonathan Vogel (1990b) exploits our tendency to

\textsuperscript{154} Dretske (2005:19) suggests this is a general phenomenon.
overestimate possibilities in order to explain why we think we lack knowledge in these cases.\footnote{See also Vogel 2004. Cf. Kvanvig 2009:155.} This might be the right description of what is going on here but, although such availability-heuristic strategy might help us explain why we deny knowledge in some cases, our account, as we shall see, can provide us with a different explanation of the phenomenon that also allows us to speak truly when denying knowledge in these cases.

Anyhow, it seems that lottery scenarios provide us with more intuitive counter-examples to C (more precisely, with more folk-intuitions suggesting its restriction). After all, for a great many ordinary propositions (e.g. S will never be rich) that we intuitively think we know, there is some lottery proposition (e.g. S’s ticket is a loser) that we intuitively think we don’t know, even though “in each case the ordinary proposition entails the lottery proposition” (Hawthorne 2004:5). That is, although the lottery proposition is a logical consequence of the ordinary proposition that we seem to know, we don’t seem to know the former; hence C seems to fail in these cases. But, given our restriction to C and the nature of such restriction, this needn’t concern us.

To see this, consider the ordinary proposition that my car is in the parking lot. Assuming that I clearly remember where I parked it, we think that I know that my car is in the parking lot via a mnemonic rule. But, although this ordinary proposition entails the lottery proposition that my car hasn’t been stolen and driven off (assuming there is only a small chance that this is so), we don’t want to say that I know this lottery proposition. And this, according to our view, is to be expected since the procedure employed for knowing the ordinary proposition doesn’t possess enough discriminatory power to allow us to know the conclusion. Moreover, since the possibility of the car being stolen is, \textit{ex-hypothesis}, small, then such possibility isn’t relevant when coming to know the ordinary proposition. Anyway, T doesn’t hold in this case: we can’t always extend our knowledge to lottery propositions. And, C seems to fail too, since there doesn’t seem to always be another way of making up for such discriminatory deficit.

But, although lottery situations won’t create problems related to C for our view, there is a different, general problem for fallibilist views that our account seems to be susceptible to (Cohen 1988:92-3, Hawthorne 2004:9). This is because, although lottery propositions are very likely to be true, we still (sometimes) fail to know them (when true). So, why is it that this statistical evidence, which seems to make the formation of any such lottery belief reliable, isn’t sufficient for knowledge, even when the belief is true? Moreover, although we don’t seem to know that my ticket is a loser on the basis of the statistical evidence, we seem to know that it is a loser on the basis of consulting the lottery results on a newspaper, even though the odds
of owning the winning ticket can be much smaller than the chances of error due to, say, a misprint in the newspaper. So, we need to make sure that our explanation as to why we lack knowledge of the lottery propositions can enlighten us here too.

In order to explain this failure of knowledge, let us introduce a characteristic feature of lottery situations: their arbitrariness (Vogel 1990b). It seems that, in these situations, we are being arbitrary in the sense that we pick on one lottery proposition (e.g. $S_1$’s ticket will lose) from a set of them ($S_1$’s ticket will lose, $S_2$’s ticket will lose,...$S_n$’s ticket will lose) with equal chances of being true. So, as Vogel (1990b:293) says,

with respect to its chances of winning the lottery, each ticket is indistinguishable from every other one. So, any reason you have for thinking that your particular ticket will lose would be an equally good reason for believing of any other ticket in the lottery that it, too, will lose. Under these circumstances, it would be arbitrary to believe of some tickets (including your own) but not others that they will not win.

Now, one might be tempted to suggest that this arbitrariness doesn’t allow us to have knowledge of the particular lottery proposition, since, the suggestion might go, developing some rule based on the statistical evidence would commit us to the fact that we would be able to blamelessly claim to know that every ticket, including the winner, is a loser (although, of course, we wouldn’t actually know that about the winner). After all, it might seem “absurd to suppose that one is able to know of [each lottery proposition] that it will not obtain” (Hawthorne 2004:16), and this would prevent us from developing such a statistical rule of knowledge for lottery propositions. But this seems to be a somewhat ad hoc move, since the statistical rule would clearly be truth-conducive and reasonably thought to be so too.

But, this feature of lottery situations helps us see that the statistical evidence is unconnected to the particular fact that this ticket will lose. That is, the belief that this ticket will lose is based on evidence, namely the odds, that isn’t connected to the drawing of another ticket, which is the reason why this ticket is a loser (and not the odds that it will lose). A belief arrived at by means of an odds-based rule is unconnected to the fact that can make it true. So, I suggest this is the reason a rule that relies merely on odds, call it a purely statistical rule, isn’t a legitimate rule and isn’t in place. As seen, the rules of knowledge aren’t merely required to be truth-conducive, but also discriminatorily so. They need to be responsive to the way the world is and so connect us to the fact that makes the target proposition true (§3.5.2). And sometimes simply distinguishing between possibilities (e.g. being a losing or winning ticket) isn’t good enough to connect us to the fact that makes the proposition true. So, we also need the rules to be able to connect us to the pertinent facts and so the way in which the discrimination between alternatives is done is important. A purely statistical rule to know lottery propositions fails in this respect (i.e. it doesn’t properly connect us to the world) and so such rule isn’t
endorsed as a rule of knowledge, even if it discriminates among possibilities (cf. Cohen 1988:106ff). This is why the fact that the odds of, say, having a heart attack in my population are low doesn’t mean that I know that I won’t suffer one (and relatedly close the inquiry).

So, since there are no purely statistical rules of knowledge to be used in lottery cases, I can’t know on the basis of the odds that my ticket is a loser or that my car hasn’t been stolen. But, this of course doesn’t mean that I can’t know these propositions. Indeed, this refinement also allows us to explain why reading a newspaper or watching the draw can give us knowledge, even though the error-probability can be bigger in these cases (although low enough to still count as truth-conducive) than in the case of a purely statistical rule. Both these procedures connect us to the fact that makes the target proposition true and so are the sort of rules that can give us knowledge of the propositions. But, can we know the lottery propositions via an inductive rule? Say, I bought many lottery tickets for many different lotteries and always lost, do I then know that I will lose this time too by inductively inferring it?

I don’t want to go into an investigation on the nature of induction, but this much seems clear: inductive reasoning isn’t reasoning concerning odds (or purely statistical reasoning). Indeed, although it is highly difficult to determine the rules of good or strong inductive reasoning (Skyrms 2000), it clearly isn’t merely the kind of reasoning where the premises render the conclusion likely to be true. Minimally, we need to take into account the projectability of the observed regularity, given the possibility of accidental regularities, among other things (Skyrms 2000). Importantly, it should be clear that a simple enumerative induction (as the above one) won’t necessarily be an instance of strong inductive reasoning even if the conclusion is thought to enjoy high probability. So, we mightn’t be able to gain knowledge of lottery propositions via an inductive rule. Indeed, it isn’t clear to me that we would claim to have knowledge via an inductive rule that we will lose. But, what seems clear is that we wouldn’t claim to have such knowledge via a purely statistical rule. And, significantly, given that inductive rules aren’t pure statistical rules, our aforementioned refinement hasn’t put pressure on the inductive knowledge that we take ourselves to have.

Moreover, given C’s restriction, the fact that we don’t know in certain circumstances the lottery propositions doesn’t mean that we are committed to some kind of scepticism about those ordinary propositions that they entail. And, the same holds with respect to the above types of extraordinary propositions. That is, given the nature of the denial of C’s universality, we can halt the closure-based sceptical attack. More precisely, neither the anti-sceptic nor the sceptic can conclude by means of a closure-based argument that the other is wrong by rightly pointing out that we do have knowledge of some ordinary proposition (via ordinary means) or that we do lack knowledge of some extraordinary or lottery proposition, respectively. Our
response to the different sceptical paradoxes, whether they concern lottery or extraordinary propositions (either sceptical or odd ones, such as the painted mule one), is the same: C’s restriction, which is in line with the endoxa.

Anyway, given the above, we can also explain the appeal, for some people, of the closure-based sceptical arguments (schematically and exploiting the brain-in-vats hypothesis, Not-K_{Not-BIV} \rightarrow K_{\neg K_{\neg BIV}} \land K_{\neg BIV} \rightarrow K_{\neg K_{\neg BIV}}), as contextualists rightly suggest an adequate treatment of them should (Cohen 2000, DeRose 1995). First, in certain circumstances, we don’t know extraordinary (and lottery) propositions and we are aware of this too. Second, C’s intuitiveness derives from its “core idea” and so something like C will be appealing to us, which licenses, if taken unrestrictedly and since I know that having hands entails not being a brain-in-a-vat, the premise shared by sceptics and Mooreans alike (K_{\text{Hands}} \rightarrow K_{\neg BIV}). Now, the problem with this argument lies with this premise, since unrestricted C fails. But, I think we can expect people to fail to appreciate that a discriminatory deficit wouldn’t allow us to know the conclusion. So, failing to note this, we would accept the problematic entailment given the intuitiveness of C.

Moreover, our account has a straightforward way of capturing the fact that there seems to be a genuine disagreement between sceptics and Mooreans. In fact, as far as the sceptic is concerned, it is clear that she wants to deny our ordinary knowledge-attributions. The point of scepticism is to undermine these attributions. While the Moorean clearly wants to claim that we have ordinary knowledge in order to show that we know some sceptical scenario doesn’t hold. So, there seems to be a genuine conflict here and there is no way we can in our view even suggest that different standards apply in these cases as, say, contextualists could (but needn’t; DeRose 2009). Moreover, it seems that they can, in a single conversational context (the one applying to both the sceptic and the anti-sceptic in their discussions), legitimately make their claims that we know the ordinary propositions and that we don’t know the extraordinary (and lottery) propositions. And, as seen, our account can also accommodate this. Still, what neither seems entitled to is the conclusion of their respective closure-based arguments. And, finally, we can even explain, as some demand, why “I don’t know that I’m not a brain-in-a-vat” is more plausible than “I don’t know that I have hands” and so explain why “the BIV hypothesis can be used to generate the sceptical puzzle but the mere “I don’t have hands” hypothesis can’t be” (Neta 2003:21). So our account also seems to do a good job at explaining the endoxa surrounding the sceptical paradoxes.

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156 The Moorean argues: K_{\text{Hands}} \land K_{\text{Hands}} \rightarrow K_{\neg BIV} \land K_{\neg BIV} \rightarrow K_{\neg K_{\neg BIV}}.

157 Contextualists suggest that what we fail to notice is a mismatch in contexts: to appreciate the context-sensitivity of knowledge; but see §3.3.1.
3.7 Function, Ability and Analyses of Knowledge

We have so far been considering consequences of the norms of knowledge and although, in this section, we continue with that theme, we shall also briefly consider other issues, such as the so-called “belief condition.” Nevertheless, one of those consequences that I want now to stress is that we have the tools to (partially) explain why knowledge has been linked to many different epistemic qualities (van Woudenberg 2005). This is because the rules instantiate different epistemic demands that promote the apprehension of truth, and so knowledge comes to be linked to the epistemic properties they are associated with (such as “being based on adequate evidence,” “being the product of a reliable process” or “being the product of the proper functioning of one’s cognitive faculties”). This diversity then, together with the fact that rules can diverge from community to community and from time to time, calls our attention to the broadly functionalist nature of our account. Let me explain.

The property of being a system of norms of knowledge should be understood as a functional property, where this function is, roughly, to reliably discriminate the truth by means that properly connect us to the facts. Now, this function is multiply realised. First, concerning different systems of rules, different rules can be required by different communities in order to fulfil such function, given different circumstances. Second, concerning a given system of rules, different rules can pick out different types of epistemic demands in order to fulfil such function. So, there is a sense in which the epistemising property of our account is a functional property that can be instantiated in different ways. But, if this property is functional and knowledge is understood as the apprehension of truth by means of such norms, then knowledge isn’t an ambiguous notion because of such multiple realisation (pace van Woudenberg 2005). So, our account can explain why many different epistemic qualities have been legitimately linked to knowledge without postulating different senses.

Relatedly, our account can easily accommodate the different types of knowledge we take ourselves to have at both the low-end and the high-end of the spectrum. This is because some rules instantiate the epistemising property by means of reflective procedures, as virtue responsibilists (who give epistemic responsibility a central role to play in their theories of intellectual virtue) emphasise, whereas other instantiate it by means of non-reflective procedures, as virtue reliabilists (whose focus is on the stability and reliability of the cognitive faculties) emphasise. Anyway, knowledge can be correctly associated with different specific epistemic qualities, and so our account of knowledge can explain why we have those competing intuitions about its nature and why they promote different analyses of knowledge.

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158 See also §§2.4, 4.1.
when focusing on a particular type of putative examples of knowledge (say, perceptual knowledge in the case of reliabilist accounts). So, we can agree with A.D. Woozley that knowledge “is a much more complicated and diverse business than philosophers are liable to allow; and consequently it is both more difficult and more dangerous to generalize about it in the simple way we do than we commonly recognize” (1952-3:172).

Indeed, as suggested by our approach, we should understand knowledge as having a functional role: namely, the ability to correctly and Competently answer potential questions, where such an ability to apprehend the truth can be instantiated in different ways (which is a key feature of functional approaches). Just like a job can be done by different people as long as they satisfy the job description, knowledge can be achieved by different kinds of methods as long as they satisfy this role: to correctly and Competently answer questions. Indeed, knowledge is best understood by identifying what it does for us: that is, as essentially having a functional role (or job-description, which is at the core of the concept), not as essentially being any specific realising properties that achieve the job. This broadly functionalist approach then offers a new perspective on knowledge that allows us to explain what unites the heterogeneous variety of things that fall under its name and opens the possibility of a narrow-epistemological pluralism of sorts, without falling into relativism. Indeed, although there can be different “folk-epistemologies,” not all of them need to be on an equal footing or even legitimate. And, given this possibility, intuitions certainly shouldn’t be taken to be infallible and so taken to trump accounts, as they normally are in standard post-Gettier methodology. Moreover, this perspective allows us to explain why philosophers haven’t been able to produce a satisfactory analysis given their focus on one or another specific epistemic demand.

For example, according to the “traditional” account, knowledge is justified true belief (Lewis 1946, Chisholm 1957). But, knowledge doesn’t require justification, narrowly and traditionally understood (§3.1): this is merely one epistemic demand the rules can set. And, consequently, the often exercised practice of attempting to amend the JTB account (or any other account that focuses only on one such possible epistemic demand) by adding a fourth (anti-Gettier) condition is misguided, and so are the resulting analyses, such as the no-false-lemmas theory (where the fourth-condition aims to eliminate possessed falsehoods) and defeasibility theory (where the fourth-condition aims to eliminate unpossessed defeaters). And, also as seen, understanding justification in a broad manner will give us a necessary condition at the expense of illumination. Indeed, such “justification” would consist of a disjunction concerning different sorts of ways we can come to know, which as we said pick out

159 See also Dretske 1991.
160 But I don’t claim what defines the functional role is a commonsensical implicit theory (Spicer 2008).
161 I sympathise with Kaplan (1985) that this isn’t a “traditional” or “classical” view.

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the different epistemic qualities that, in different circumstances, allow us to reliably discriminate the truth by means that properly connect us to the facts. But, there is no more illuminating and precise necessary “justification condition” for knowledge. In fact, as Ayer pointed out, “if one is trying to define knowledge [...] one may have to be content with some [...] vague formula” (1972:15). Our “vague formula” is that knowledge is the apprehension of truth achieved by following rules which reliably discriminate the truth by means that properly connect us to the facts and which we reasonably take them to do so.

Nevertheless, knowledge is correctly associated with justification, narrowly and traditionally understood, and I want to suggest belief too, although neither seems to be required as truth is. But, while such “justification condition” is nowadays controversial (Foley 2004, Kornblith 2008), it is still widely assumed that knowledge entails belief. However, given our account, knowledge needn’t do so, but just some propositional attitude that allows us to apprehend the truth. As McGinn says, “what is required by knowledge—that is some sort of propositional attitude, but we need an argument to persuade us that this attitude must be belief” (1999:32).

Now, according to our account, one has knowledge when apprehending the truth achieved by means of the appropriate rules. But, is having a belief essential for this apprehension? I don’t see any reason to suppose so, especially if one differentiates between two major mental categories (Wollheim 1999): the *occurrent, experiential* phenomena (such as perceptions, sensations and entertained thoughts) and the *dispositional, non-experiential* phenomena (such as beliefs, desires and intentions). The fundamental difference between these psychological categories is that while the former set of phenomena is properly characterised as mental *acts* (or events) which possess *phenomenology*, the latter isn’t. Beliefs are meant to be dispositions that lack phenomenology, so there is no such thing as an occurrent or conscious belief (Cohen 1992:5, Crane 2001:105-8).

So, given the above apprehension of the truth often involves judgement, which are occurrent phenomena, knowledge that *p* needn’t involve the belief that *p* (but consider, say, mnemonic rules). Similarly, the acceptance of *p* doesn’t require belief. Nevertheless, belief usually accompanies knowledge since the belief that *p* is normally formed as a result of the acceptance or judgement that *p*, which explains why knowledge is associated with belief. So, although there would be no logical entailment between knowledge and belief, the above shows that there can be a causal dependency on each other. Knowledge that *p, if* the above psychological picture is correct, entails either judgment that *p* or belief that *p* or acceptance of

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162 See also Russell 1912:78, 1948:113.
And although we can talk, as we have done, of ‘apprehension,’ it doesn’t tell us much about the type(s) of mental attitude involved in knowing (just as ‘justification,’ broadly understood, doesn’t illuminate us as to the type(s) of epistemic demands to be satisfied in order to know). But, I don’t want to make much of this and in what follows (and to simplify matters) I use belief and judgement, interchangeably, to refer, in line with orthodoxy, to the propositional attitude(s) facilitating the grasping of the truth.

Anyway, returning to the claim that knowledge essentially involves a certain ability, it seems right to understand knowledge this way and, as one would then expect, some have made the connection. For example, Ryle tells us that ‘know’ is a skill word and that “to know is to be equipped to get something right” (1949:129) and Alan White says that knowledge consists in “the ability to produce the correct answer to a possible question, the solution of a possible problem. [...That is,] to know that p is to be able to give an answer, namely that p, which is in fact the correct answer to a possible question” (1982:119-20). And, this is an ability that one needn’t exercise in order to possess and that one can fail to exercise even if one achieves the truth. Moreover, possessing an ability doesn’t require that one has perfect success when exercising it. So, to repeat, knowledge essentially involves the ability to reliably discriminate the truth by means of procedures that properly connect us to the facts. And, this is the kind of ability that allows us to attain a certain responsiveness to the world, which we understandably desire of our rules and is indeed a central feature of knowledge.

However, this connection between knowledge and the ability to successfully and Competently answer potential questions brings to the fore some difficult questions, one of which is the following: according to our account, can infants and animals know? I shall address these challenging intuitive cases that exploit the hypothesised but plausible function of knowledge later (§4.4.1). But, it would be naive to expect these cases to be the only problematic cases our account faces. At least, the enormous Gettier literature should have taught us better. And we shall deal with Gettier-cases and other cases in the next chapter, where we also consider problems that are normally associated with reliabilist accounts (given our account is a form of it). Moreover, we consider more general problems and, in doing this, we shall see our account can capture the remaining two desiderata, the non-accidentality and value of knowledge, hence showing its great explanatory power.

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165 See also Hyman 1999.
Chapter Four

Responsibilism, Non-Accidentality and Value

4.1 Social Responsibilism

4.2 Problems for Reliabilism

4.2.1 Defeating Evidence

4.2.2 Fleeting and Strange Processes

4.2.3 The Generality Problem

4.3 The Gettier Problem

4.3.1 Epistemic Luck

4.3.2 Gettier and Goldman-Ginet Cases

4.3.3 Harman Cases

4.3.4 Local and Global Reliabilism

4.4 Infants, Animals and Other Cases

4.4.1 Infants and Animals

4.4.2 “Congenital” Crusoe and Wolf-Boy

4.4.3 Non-Cooperative Humans

4.4.4 Swampman and Ex-Nihilo Community

4.4.5 Ancient Greek Doctor

4.5 The Value Problem

4.5.1 The Final Value of Knowledge

4.5.2 Fundamental Epistemic Goods and the Swamping Problem
In the last chapter, we considered some consequences of the norms of knowledge. Given that they are regulative rules of testimony one important consequence is that they promote a fallibilist account of knowledge that allows us to halt both infallibilism-based and closure-based scepticisms. Another important consequence is that, given the rules’ purpose, the norms can’t be understood as embracing some sort of context-sensitivity, as shifty approaches suggest, given their transmissibility problems. And, as seen in the chapter before last, our account captures and explains both the transmissibility and factivity of knowledge.

In this chapter, we continue exploiting the fact that the norms of knowledge are regulative rules that we develop and mostly passively inherit, in order to deal with certain prima facie problematic issues normally associated with reliabilism, in particular the generality, strange processes and defeating evidence problems, and other more general issues, in particular the so-called Gettier and value problems. In dealing with these issues, we shall see that our account offers a form of reliabilism that can escape the usual complaints, as well as capturing the remaining two desiderata: the non-accidentality and value of knowledge. And, we shall also see that some competitors, in particular anti-luck accounts, which exploit solely either sensitivity or safety principles, as well as virtue and anti-luck virtue accounts fail to capture it. Moreover, as well as considering Gettier-like cases of intervening luck, such as Gettier’s own cases, and environmental luck, such as Goldman’s fake-barn case, we consider some other prima facie problematic intuitive cases which exploit the hypothesised but plausible function of knowledge. The main concern is the denial of knowledge to infants and animals, but there is much we can do to alleviate the worry. So, by the end of this chapter, we shall be in a position to appreciate the many merits of our account and the advantages it has over some major competitors, hence placing our account as a strong competitor itself since it captures all four desiderata. But, our account’s explanatory power doesn’t stop there, as it should by now be clear from the previous two chapters, and I suggest its many benefits far outweigh its costs. Indeed, we end up with an account that is both noticeably fruitful and plausible and that promotes, as we shall see in the final chapter, a thorough social epistemology.

Before we start dealing with the above issues, we should first consider the kind of responsibilism that our norms promote. Having a better understanding of this helps us deal with some of these issues. Afterwards, we deal with some standard worries for reliabilism, Gettier-like and other prima facie problematic cases and the value problem, in that order.

4.1 Social Responsibilism

Our account of knowledge combines de facto reliability with epistemic responsibility (§§2.6, 3.1). Now, some virtue responsibilists have been motivated to find some such combination
because of their more activist view of the way we acquire knowledge: we are active knowers, not passive recorders of experience. As Linda Zagzebski says, “knowledge is not something that happens to us but is something to which we contribute through our own efforts and skills, and this leads us, at least in some moods, to think of ourselves as bearing responsibility for having or not having it” (1996:261; cf. Code 1987). Here I say more about the particular kind of epistemic responsibility that our account exploits and to what it attaches and how it differs from other responsibilist views, particularly with regard to who bears the responsibility and to what extent. These differences promote a modest and social responsibilism which, unlike other responsibilist views, isn’t intellectually demanding on the knower. This is a welcomed result since such demandingness, if we are to hold that knowledge requires epistemic responsibility, would render our account implausible.  

Now, before introducing our version of responsibilism, let us briefly review different ways in which one might attempt to capture this epistemic responsibility, which is normally taken to require some kind and measure of control. Indeed, epistemic responsibility seems to imply the ability for controlling, in some sense, our beliefs. But, this idea that we can control our beliefs is, to say the least, controversial, at least if what we have in mind is the kind of control that we ordinarily have of our actions. It seems clear that we can’t simply decide to believe that \( p \) and thereby believe it: to directly form a belief at will. And, regardless of the nature of the problem (Alston 1988, Williams 1970), I take it that we cannot directly choose what to believe. So, following William Alston (1988), we can say that we lack basic voluntary control over our beliefs and epistemic responsibility can’t consist in this kind of control.

But, the fact that beliefs are, in a sense, forced on us still leaves open the possibility of other forms of control over them. Now, one such kind of control is non-basic voluntary control (cf. Alston 1988). For example, one can control the state of the world in order to indirectly control one’s beliefs about it (if I want to believe the lights are on, I can do so by simply switching them on; Feldman 2001). But this sort of control is very limited (let alone the fact that we don’t normally exercise it). So, if this control over our beliefs is required for epistemic responsibility and we are to hold that knowledge requires it, then our knowledge set would be implausibly depleted.

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166 Although this demandingness seems tolerable in the ethical case (Annas 2011:16ff.), given the above possibility and transmissibility of knowledge, it isn’t in our case. An “elitist” theory of knowledge would be no theory of the phenomenon we set to investigate. So, although it might be implausible that an adolescent could excel at ethical matters, things are very different when considering knowledge (cf. justification). A sort of epistemic populism, where knowledge is both achievable and widespread, seems the only palatable option.
Another kind of control is _indirect voluntary influence_: the sort of control we have over our beliefs by engaging in some action which results in the acquisition of cognitive habits and the learning of new skills for forming our beliefs. This sort of control involves (normally) long-range projects which are undertaken purposefully (for example, by acquiring a formal education or subscribing to reputed journals). It seems clear that we enjoy this kind of control (Alston 1988). Indeed, there are a range of activities concerning the possession of cognitive habits and skills over which the subject exercises control which confer responsibility to the knower. As Hilary Kornblith (1983:38) says,

there can be no doubt that one can self-consciously install in oneself a certain circumspection in circumstances when a mistake is likely to occur, such as in emotionally charged situations. Once this circumspection is acquired, more reliable belief-acquisition will occur in one automatically, and without any particular action on the agent’s part. Nevertheless, the presence of such automatic process may often be traced to free action designed precisely to result in such processes, and when this is the case, it is to the agent’s credit; failure to take such action may be epistemically irresponsible.

So, this sort of control shifts the locus of epistemic responsibility from the particular forming of the belief to the acquisition of the procedures to form beliefs. That is, the emphasis isn’t in the responsibility we have when forming the belief but the responsibility in possessing the procedures we do to form beliefs. But, it should now be clear that this sort of control is also limited (as Kornblith’s quote suggests). In fact, as our account suggests, many of the procedures we acquire, we acquire them passively. Much of our social training results in such passive acquisition of procedures. In these cases, there is no indirect voluntary control from the subject’s part. So, again, this notion of responsibility won’t do if we are to hold that knowledge requires epistemic responsibility.

At this point, we might opt for a non-voluntarist notion of epistemic responsibility, where voluntary control isn’t required for responsibility (Owens 2000). On this approach, epistemic responsibility simply consists in the ability to attend and respond to reasons: in answerability within “the space of reasons.” That is, epistemic responsibility requires _reflective_ control. This approach is ‘non-voluntarist’ because these reflective beliefs about the grounds of our beliefs are no less forced upon us. So, this notion of epistemic responsibility requires the subject to be self-reflective in her acquisition of knowledge: that is, responsiveness to reflectively accessible reasons is required for knowledge.\(^{167}\) And, this seems to be the right way of interpreting the responsibilism of some virtue responsibilist views. For example, for Zagzebski, “the intellectual virtues are reliably truth conducive, but they are not virtues simply _because_ they are reliable. They put us in touch with the truth in a qualitatively valuable way, a way that involves self-

\(^{167}\) “A state is responsive to reasons when it can be motivated by an awareness of reasons which would justify that state” (Owens 2000:4).
reflectiveness and other internal properties of the agent, including the motivation to obtain knowledge and the motivations distinctive of the individual virtues” (1996:311).

But, the problem with this notion of responsibility is that, if epistemic responsibility is required for knowledge, this view seems to over-intellectualise our practice. As seen, knowledge needn’t be a reflective success (§3.1). Although responsiveness to the world is required of knowledge, responsiveness to reasons isn’t. The latter can certainly help us achieve the former, but the former doesn’t entail the latter. Different creatures could be responsive to the world without being responsive to reasons; and indeed, in our own case, much of our responsiveness to the world is achieved without responsiveness to reasons. Indeed, the fact that “knowledge attributions can be underwritten by a believer’s reliability, even when the believer is not in a position to offer reasons for the belief” can be seen as “the Founding Insight of reliabilism” (Brandom 2000:99). So, as reliabilists, we can’t accept this conception of epistemic responsibility. But, anyway, this is an “insight” because, regardless of one’s sympathies, no such reflective responsiveness to the world seems required in the case of knowledge. So, if epistemic responsibility requires this, then we don’t know much of what we take ourselves to know. Again, the problem is that this notion of responsibility counter-intuitively restricts our knowledge.

So, if none of the above views of epistemic responsibility will do, if such responsibility is required for knowledge, in what way can our account be responsibilist? The answer to this question involves accepting some insights from the most promising voluntarist view and the reflective view. That is, the answer involves applying the notion of reflective control to the procedures employed in acquiring knowledge. But, more importantly, the answer (if it is to be satisfactory) also involves a change in perspective. The responsibilism our account promotes is social, in the sense that the reflective responsibility for the procedures for knowledge is mainly borne by the epistemic community and not its individual members. More specifically, given a division of labour, our responsibilism is mainly borne by some members of the epistemic community, those who design the procedures, where such development involves reflective control: i.e. responsiveness to reflectively accessible reasons is required for the development of the procedures (§§2.2, 2.5.1). Our responsibilism then is compatible with the lack of both the above self-reflective responsibility required of the knower and the voluntary responsibility in possessing the procedures we do to form beliefs. But, before we can further explain the view, let us recall some aspects of our account that shape this particular combination.

Our procedures are consequentialist in nature: they promote truth. But, ours isn’t a typical truth-consequentialist view, since although only procedures that actually promote the truth are norms of knowledge, we design the procedures given what we reasonably take to be the best way to promote the truth. So, importantly, the content of a legitimate procedure is (inter-)subjectively developed, where such development can merely involve the recognition that a natural power is truth-conducive in all circumstances or, more commonly, in certain circumstances, as in the case of endorsements and restrictions. But this development is carried out through a division of labour and through time (normally through generations). And, since procedures are passed from generation to generation, our generation needn’t be the one responsible for the design of the procedures we currently hold. Moreover, the normal case, for most of us, involves the acquisition of these procedures through a process of socialisation, in which we most commonly internalise them from our cultural environment.

So, these procedures are both (inter-)subjectively determined and socially inherited and cultivated. And, importantly for present purposes, not all members of the community need to be involved in the development of the procedures. So, the above reflective process of development of the procedures needn’t be exercised by every member of the epistemic community. Importantly, it needn’t matter if the reasons for a given procedure aren’t reflectively accessible to the particular knower. In fact, this is just another way in which each of us depends on others. That is, our epistemic inter-dependence doesn’t merely rest on our pervasive use of the testimonial practice. And, it is because of our reliance on those who responsibly develop the procedures that all knowledge has a social dimension.

This division of epistemic labour then suggests different epistemic roles for different members of the community (not only for the generation of knowledge but also for its procedures). One such role is that of the epistemic expert within a subject-matter. Such an expert is to reflectively scrutinise both the implicit and explicit procedures within such subject-matter. As Tomoji Shogenji says, “it is the epistemic experts’ responsibility in the division of cognitive labor to study the evidence and reasoning for the community guidelines [i.e. procedures]. There is no need for each epistemic subject to do the research herself” (ms:29). And, importantly, such reflective control is exploited by the entire community by means of enculturation or education. Again, as Papineau (2000:184) says,

Not everybody whose belief-forming strategies are improved by human civilisation need themselves have reflected on the advantages of these improvements. Once a certain technique [...] has been designed by innovative individuals in the interests of improved reliability-for-truth, then others can be trained in these techniques, without themselves necessarily appreciating their rationale.
So, it isn’t the knower’s duty to responsibly, or as we have been saying, reasonably develop the procedures or to be able to appreciate the rationale of the procedures which others have developed and which she has been trained to exploit. The knower then doesn’t need to possess any positive grounds for following the procedures. But, while our social responsibilism entitles us to a *default trusting stance* with regard to our acquired procedures, it doesn’t commit us to blind rule-following.

There is room, within our account, for some sort of *negative reflective control* on the part of each member of the epistemic community (after all, the procedures needn’t be and normally aren’t perfectly reliable). That is, although each knower needn’t possess any positive grounds for the, mostly, inherited procedures, each knower has the duty to deal with *defeating conditions*. As seen, a procedure mightn’t take into account an error-possibility that becomes relevant (§3.5). In this case, the significant error-possibility is a defeater of the procedure, since it doesn’t cater as it should to it. Each member of the epistemic community then is to assume an *epistemically vigilant stance* towards the *procedures* (which in turn might promote changes with regard to the procedures). Moreover, as seen (§2.4), many procedures are rules of permission (as opposed to obligation), so in cases where one employs such procedures (say, “if a trustworthy expert testifies that p and p’s subject-matter is within her domain of expertise, then it is permissible to accept that p”), each knower needs to be sensitive to factors which might defeat them given relevant rules of obligation (say, the expert is severely intoxicated, since “if the speaker is severely intoxicated, one mustn’t accept the testimony”).

So, each knower is meant to monitor for defeating conditions for the procedures employed. This then is how our account combines reliabilism with an epistemic responsibilism of a social strand. And, how we end up with a diffused and multifaceted form of responsibility. At the social level, positive reflective control is required for the endorsement of procedures. At the personal level, negative reflective control is required for the application of those procedures.

This responsibilist view then fits better with the intuitive picture, much exploited by virtue reliabilists, that knowledge is for the most part a matter of involuntarily and automatically exercising reliable virtues (skills or habits) for which we can’t be held responsible in an indirect voluntary way or a direct reflective way. And so, since neither responsibilist element of our account rules out the possibility of achieving knowledge on “autopilot” by means of sub-personal procedures, our combination is preferable to Zagzebski’s “active” one, which, leaving aside her very demanding motivational component of virtue (see above quote), requires responsiveness to reflectively accessible reasons. Now, one might think that this demanding feature can helps us explain the distinctive value of knowledge and so be willing to accept it at a cost. But, if we can explain such value without resorting to this, as we shall do (§4.5.1), then
the motivation for such a stringent responsibilist condition vanishes. Moreover, the negative personal responsibilist element promoted by our account isn’t too demanding so as to rule out legitimate cases of knowledge. Indeed, this element, as we shall see, helps us deal easily with the phenomenon of defeating evidence, which any account of knowledge needs to accommodate and which reliabilist views, it is often suggested, have difficulties making sense of. More generally, our social responsibilism deals with a number of issues facing reliabilism.

4.2 Problems for Reliabilism

Our account is a form of reliabilism that could perhaps be labelled “rule-reliabilism.” The norms of knowledge are to promote the truth, since these are the instrumental rules of testimony that serves our need for truth. Anyhow, whatever the name, it is important to appreciate a crucial difference between generic reliabilism, the view that knowledge is reliably-acquired true belief and where de facto reliability only is what makes a procedure epistemically worthy (Sosa 1991), and our account. According to our account, not only do the rules need to promote the truth in order to qualify as legitimate norms of knowledge, but they also need to be reasonably taken as promoting the truth. So, our account doesn’t represent, I take it, a typical truth-consequentialist view since, although a rule being truth-conducive is an objective matter, the content of the rule is (inter-)subjectively developed. This kind of rule-reliabilism then weds responsibilism (of a social strand) to reliabilism. And this feature of our account plays a central role in helping us deal with different issues that are prima facie problematic for generic reliabilism.

Below then we shall see how our account can deal with some of these problems, which also help us appreciate further the differences between our account and simple process reliabilism (a form of generic reliabilism). Specifically, we consider the problem of defeating evidence, the problem of strange and fleeting processes and the generality problem, in that order.

4.2.1 Defeating Evidence

Consider the following two cases due to Laurence BonJour:

Samantha believes herself to have the power of clairvoyance, but she doesn’t have any reasons either for or against this belief. She comes to believe that \( p \) and she thinks that she does so by means of her clairvoyant power. Moreover, she is also aware of the fact that there is a substantial amount of media-based evidence against \( p \). But, now suppose that \( p \) is the case, that Samantha does have a clairvoyant power that is perfectly reliable and that she did come to believe that \( p \) through such power (1985:38).

So, according to simple process reliabilism, Samantha knows that \( p \), since her belief that \( p \) is true and the product of a reliable faculty. But, as Bonjour (1985:39) points out, it seems that
she doesn’t actually know, and adds that she is being “thoroughly irrational and irresponsible in disregarding the evidence” against $p$. Now consider Maud’s case:

Maud believes herself to have the power of clairvoyance, but she doesn’t have any reasons for this belief. She maintains her belief despite being inundated with substantial amounts of scientific evidence that no such power is possible. She comes to believe that $p$ and she thinks that she does so by means of her clairvoyant power. But, now suppose that $p$ is the case, that Samantha does have a clairvoyant power that is perfectly reliable and that she did come to believe that $p$ through such power (1985:40).

This case is just like Samantha’s except that she possesses substantial evidence against her having such power (as opposed to having evidence against $p$). Here again simple process reliabilism is satisfied but it seems to deliver the wrong result, since it seems, as Bonjour notices, that Maud doesn’t know that $p$ and, he adds, this is again a case of epistemically irresponsible conduct (ibid). These then seem to be cases in which reliability’s positive epistemic status is swamped by defeating evidence. Indeed, taking into account only the de facto reliability of our capacities seems to invite the criticism of irresponsibility that rules out knowledge (regardless of the reliability of the belief-forming capacity).

These two cases bring up the issue of defeaters clearly. Now, all accounts of knowledge need to accommodate this phenomenon, and it is clear that simple process reliabilism fails to handle epistemic defeat. More importantly, it is sometimes thought to be a particularly difficult thing to do for a reliabilist approach (Grundmann 2009, Greco 2010). To see this, consider the two moves reliabilists are likely to make to capture this phenomenon: either offering a reliabilist theory of defeat or by combining reliability with epistemic responsibility. But, both moves are meant to be problematic, so let us briefly consider them.

The first move is to understand defeating evidence along reliabilist lines. This is the most natural response for the reliabilist and it is in fact the one adopted early on by some prominent exponents (Goldman 1979). The idea here is to introduce a no-defeater condition such as “there is no reliable process available to S which, had it been used by S in addition to the process actually used, would have resulted in S’s not believing $p$” (1979:351). But, although some such condition is able to deal with the above cases, given that both defeaters are the result of reliable processes (media and scientific reports), it seems that the condition requires some tweaking to deal with defeater-defeaters: cases in which one has a defeater for the defeater that is the result of a reliable process. More importantly, any such condition fails when considering defeaters generated by unreliable processes (Greco 2010). So, attempting to integrate defeating evidence within a purely reliabilist framework seems unpromising, since it seems we can divorce defeating power from reliability.
So, given the limitations of the first natural move for the reliabilist, she might try to capture the phenomenon of defeating evidence in the most natural, theory-neutral, way, which BonJour’s remarks suggest: by appealing to epistemic responsibility. The problem is that such appeal seems to fit poorly with the overall spirit of reliabilism. As Greco (2010:158-9) says, this must result in a schizophrenic approach to knowledge and evidence. After all, reliabilism insists on a reliabilist account of evidence in favour of a belief. But then how can the same theory plausibly understand evidence against belief differently? Such strategy seems to be ad hoc. At worst, it is theoretically incoherent.

So, there seems to be a prima facie tension between reliabilism and the existence of defeaters. However, I suggest that our account, which combines reliabilism with responsibility in an independently motivated and coherent way, can handle the phenomenon of defeating evidence. In our case, the responsibilist-flavour is given by the fact that the rules are subject to a reasonableness condition. And, in order to see how our account handles defeaters, let us distinguish between undercutting and rebutting defeaters. Undercutting defeaters are defeaters for the unreliability of the procedure by which we form the belief that \( p \) (Maud’s case), while rebutting defeaters are defeaters that give one reason for the falsity of \( p \) (Samantha’s case). Now, it is clear that our account can accommodate undercutting defeaters; after all, these defeaters provide evidence against the truth-conduciveness of the procedures and each knower is to exercise an epistemically vigilant stance towards the procedures (§4.1). So, we can easily make sense of the fact that evidence against the reliability of the rules is an overrider of prima facie positive status.

But, can our account handle rebutting defeaters? These defeaters concern the targeted proposition (a reason to believe that not-\( p \)), rather than the procedure. Nevertheless, our account has the means to handle them, since rebutting defeaters, from the perspective of the subject, point to the fact that the rule, which isn’t anyway meant to be perfectly reliable, isn’t in this case providing us with the truth. That is, the rebutting defeater is taken to indicate that the rule isn’t in this instance conducive to the truth, which is what the rules are meant to deliver, hence defeating the positive epistemic status which the rule would normally confer. Indeed, such defeaters can suggest that the rule isn’t fine-grained enough to provide enough reliability (consider our reaction if a mistake is being made: we want to know what went wrong and how to fix it). And, in line with the above, we can make sense of a rule of obligation, which seems to be in place, of roughly the following form: “one must not believe that \( p \) if one has

\[ 169 \] See also Grundmann 2009.

\[ 170 \] Even if the evidence misleadingly tells against the procedure’s reliability, it still gives us a reason not to trust the procedure. But, unless there is negative evidence, we are entitled to trust our rules.
more evidence against $p$ than in favour of $p$. And, this then would be a rule of obligation to which relevant rules of permission are susceptible (§4.1).

So, given our reasonableness condition on the rules, we are sensitive to counter-evidence to them and its outcomes. In other words, the fact that the rules are responsibly designed by us allows us to dissolve the tension that defeating evidence seems to generate for reliabilism. But this isn’t the only advantage of these rules.

### 4.2.2 Fleeting and Strange Processes

A related problem normally associated with reliabilism is that of fleeting and strange processes and again our account allows us to handle it by means of the fact that we develop the rules, an in particular because of the positive reflective control required, at the social level, for the endorsement of the procedures. Examples of such problematic cases for simple process reliabilism abound. For instance, consider the victim of a brain lesion that reliably produces the belief that one has a brain lesion but the victim isn’t aware of this (Plantinga 1993:199) or Norman who is a perfectly reliable clairvoyant but isn’t aware of it (BonJour 1985:41) or Mr. Truetemp who, unbeknownst to him, is fitted with a reliable computer that give him correct information as to what the temperature is (Lehrer 1990:163). Simple process reliabilism suggests that the subject knows in all these cases, but it seems wrong to make these knowledge-attributions. That is, in all these cases, it seems that even if these subjects achieve a true belief by the reliable processes they would still fail to know.

Now, these aren’t meant to be cases of defeating evidence. For example, Norman doesn’t have any evidence against his clairvoyant faculty or the belief he holds, unlike Maud and Samantha (respectively). Indeed, BonJour says that Norman “possesses no evidence or reasons of any kind for or against the general possibility of such cognitive power or for or against the thesis he possesses it” (1985:41). So, it seems that a no-defeater-condition won’t help reliabilism here, since *ex-hypothesis* there is no counter-evidence. Such a condition wouldn’t be strong enough to deal with these cases. And the difficulty for reliabilists is to introduce a condition that isn’t too strong either. That is, the reliabilist needs to avoid capturing these denials of knowledge by introducing a necessary condition on knowledge that equally rules out much of our everyday knowledge. Some such condition would be the requirement for positive reasons for the processes’ reliability, as Bonjour (1985:42) himself suggest. That is, requiring of each knower to have reflective access to their epistemic situation with regard to

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172 And, paralleling the previous problem, the reliabilist ideally seeks a non-*ad-hoc*, coherent solution.
173 Although this condition will only satisfy those willing to combine reliabilism with responsibility.
the process employed. But, this is far too demanding and would rule out much of our knowledge since we aren’t normally in possession of such reasons (§3.1).

But, although this personal reflective endorsement of the processes is implausibly demanding, its social analogue isn’t (§4.1). Indeed, our social requirement for positive reflective control concerning the procedures doesn’t require each knower to have positive reasons for the procedure’s reliability. We can all exploit (as we often do) different procedures for which we lack any such positive reasons: no such positive reflective responsibility is required of each knower, as long as it is met at the social level. To repeat, the responsibilism our account promotes is social, in the sense that the positive reflective responsibility for the procedures for knowledge is mainly borne by the epistemic community and not its individual members.

So, our social responsibilism, I suggest, helps us deal with cases of fleeting and strange reliable procedures (i.e. capturing the denials of knowledge in those cases) without introducing an implausibly demanding condition on knowledge (i.e. ruling out much putative ordinary knowledge). It is clear that our responsibilism handles cases of fleeting and strange procedures, since these aren’t procedures, due to their fleeting and strange nature, that are endorsed by the epistemic community.¹⁷⁴ This is then why, say, Norman doesn’t know when employing the reliable clairvoyant capacity, even though he doesn’t possess any (misleading) evidence against it (or the true belief). Importantly, the fact that he doesn’t possess any evidence for such capacity isn’t the reason he doesn’t know; otherwise, as mentioned, much ordinary knowledge we take ourselves to have would be implausibly ruled out.

But, notice that, given the above, we should expect to intuitively attribute knowledge in cases in which it is clear that the reliable procedure exploited is endorsed by the epistemic community (such as cases of preservative memory). This then allows us to explain both why some people might waver when confronted with some of the above cases and why some might be willing to attribute knowledge in those cases. After all, the details here matter and if the case allows us to filling in some of those details ourselves, we might end up with different intuitions. Consider, for example, the chicken-sexer who is extremely reliable in differentiating male from female chicks but is oblivious of this (Foley 1987:168). This is often thought as the kind of case that divides opinions with regard to the need for a responsibility condition of some sort for knowledge because of the intuitions it pumps (Pritchard 2005:43). So, while some deny the chicken-sexer knowledge, others attribute it (and still others don’t have any firm intuitions with regard to this sort of case). And we can make sense of this divergence in intuitions by the fact that chicken-sexing is a genuine ability (apparently exploiting our

¹⁷⁴ Compare our Ancient Greek Doctor case; §4.4.5.
olfactory capacities), one that we can acquire by methodical training and achieve near-perfect reliability (Martin 1994). So, it isn’t difficult to imagine that the naïve chicken-sexer (who is completely ignorant about her ability, as opposed to the usual “enlightened” chicken-sexer who is aware of her track-record) doesn’t possess either a fleeting or a strange capacity from the perspective of her epistemic community. That is, we fill in the details in such a way that, although there is no vindication of the procedure’s reliability from the knower’s perspective, there is vindication from the social perspective, hence the knowledge-attribution.

So, I suggest that, depending on how one fills in the details of the case concerning, crudely, the procedure’s “strangeness,” one is likely to get different intuitions.175 Better put, if the procedure isn’t (responsibly) endorsed by the epistemic community, we won’t attribute knowledge. This way then we can explain some divergent intuitions with regard to epistemically naïve individuals. And, to repeat, the reason we don’t have knowledge in some of those cases is that the procedure by which we achieve the reliable true belief isn’t one responsibly endorsed by the epistemic community, as our account suggests it should be. Hence, in the above cases when we claim that Norman and Mr. Truetemp don’t know, we speak truly. Again, the fact that the rules are designed by us allows us to solve another problem of simple process reliabilism.

4.2.3 The Generality Problem

But, the fact that the rules are developed by us also allows us to deal with the infamous generality problem that all forms of reliabilism need to address (Goldman 1979, 1986, Conee and Feldman 1998). This is the problem of providing a principled answer to the question of which process (method, procedure or else) is to be truth-conducive, given that a judgement-token can fall under many different process-types, which needn’t be equally reliable (and re-applicable). For example, the judging that there is a cat in the room could be thought as an instance of the type visually-formed in good lighting conditions or, more broadly, perceptually-formed or, more narrowly, formed by myself by looking through eye-glasses on 9th August 2011 at 5pm. That is, this particular judging of mine both instantiates broader processes and subsumes narrower ones. So, we need a principled, non-ad-hoc, way of determining which one is the relevant type.

Moreover, we need to avoid the extremes of individuating types either too narrowly or too broadly, if our solution is to be satisfactory. More precisely, we need to avoid the “single-case problem” and the “no-distinction problem” (Feldman 1985). The former is the problem of individuating the procedure so narrowly (say, formed by myself by looking through eye-glasses

175 For an example concerning Norman, see Kappel ms:9-10.
on 9th August 2011 at 5pm) that it applies only to the given belief, in which case the procedure will be either perfectly reliable or perfectly unreliable depending on the truth-value of the belief, and so intuitively give in some cases the wrong result (say, lucky guesses). The latter is the problem of individuating the procedures so broadly (say, perceptually-formed regardless of the conditions) that all beliefs so formed are conferred the same positive epistemic status, but that again seems clearly wrong.

Now, it should be clear that our procedures lie between the two extremes. On the one hand, our procedures are inherently re-applicable on different occasions generating different beliefs. They are shared rules of testimony that are meant to be applied by all and applicable in different cases (§2.2); hence avoiding the single-case problem. On the other, our procedures are designed to promote truth-conduciveness and so be fine-grained enough to do so; hence avoiding the no-distinction problem (§2.4). In other words, our procedures are (more or less) fine-grained dispositions to form beliefs which are applicable in different cases by different subjects; hence allowing us to avoid the extremes.

Moreover, these procedures that we design determine the relevant type. That is, we assign the type of the procedure that we need to follow in order to know, so there is no issue as to what the relevant type is: as to which type’s reliability matters. So, our designing of the procedures provides us with a “theory of determination:” “an account of what makes it the case that one type rather than another is relevant” (Kappel 2006b:526). There certainly are different ways of typing methods, but since we develop the procedures in which, moreover, we are trained, then there is, as a matter of fact, one particular type to assess. That is, we develop the procedures that we are trained to follow, so we do the typing of the relevant methods. So, our account allows us a principled way of determining what “the relevant type” is: it “identifies the type whose reliability determines whether a process token yields [knowledge]” (Connee and Feldman 1998:3). Hence, it handles the generality problem. But, the designing of the rules also allows us to handle issues that are clearly not exclusive to reliabilism. Indeed, it does a lot of work for us and one issue it helps with is the Gettier problem.

4.3 The Gettier Problem

Edmund Gettier (1963) offers a couple of cases where one can have a justified true belief but, intuitively, one doesn’t seem to know. These cases, he claims, refute the JTB analysis, since justification, belief and truth aren’t sufficient for knowledge.176 Now, Gettier’s cases exhibit

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176 Many epistemologists, wanting their theories to be counterexample-free, have since engaged in the refinement and amendment of such conditions; Shope 1983. Cf. Butchvarov 1970, Weatherson 2003.
two general features: fallibility and accidentality. The first feature allows a belief to have positive epistemic status even though not all error-possibilities have been eliminated and so for the possibility that one can reach a false belief by following the relevant procedure (Gettier 1963:121). The second feature allows a belief to be true by luck (Unger 1968, Dancy 1985, Zagzebski 1994, Pritchard 2005). So, in Gettier’s cases, one seems to achieve knowledge-constituting status about a belief that only by accident happens to be true.

Gettier-cases share both these features. When I form the belief that a sheep is in the field, I do so on the basis of, say, a reliable visual process that is meant to confer the relevant epistemic status but, unbeknownst to me, what I am actually looking at is a sheep-resembling dog. Luckily, however, there is a sheep in the field, and so my belief is true and possesses the right epistemic status to be knowledge but, importantly, it seems that it isn’t an item of knowledge (Chisholm 1977). So, we can also see why some characterise Gettier-cases as double-luck cases (Zagzebski 1994, 1996): where some bad luck (this time the non-perfectly reliable process didn’t deliver the goods, although it normally does) is cancelled by some good luck (it just happens to be the case that there is a sheep in the field).

Now, it seems that if we want our theory to be Gettier-proof, then we would do well in eliminating either of those features. However, it isn’t an option for us to eliminate fallibilism (cf. Sturgeon 1993). We are committed to it and for good reasons too (§3.2). The most attractive option to deal with Gettier-cases seems to be to eliminate accidentality. Of course, this can be attempted in different ways (say, by positing defeasibility or safety conditions on knowledge). Our account, however, can handle accidentality while both being independently motivated and not requiring supplementation by anti-luck (modal) principles (§4.3.4).

But, before we explain how our account can deal with epistemic luck, we need to make some distinctions with regard to the different types of luck that might be in play. This is important because not all kinds are knowledge-undermining (Unger 1968). Indeed, as we shall see, not all luck of the subject, that at first might seem to be knowledge-threatening, is necessarily incompatible with knowledge.

### 4.3.1 Epistemic Luck

We can differentiate, following Duncan Pritchard (2005:133ff), at least four benign varieties of epistemic luck: **content luck** (when “it is lucky that the proposition is true:” that a certain fact

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177 For one of Gettier’s own cases, see fn.27.
178 I use ‘accidentality’ and ‘luck’ interchangeably.
179 Zagzebski (1994, 1996, cf. 2009) seems to suggest that only infallibilist accounts can avoid these counter-examples; but see Howard-Snyder et al. 2003.
occurs), capacity luck (when “it is lucky that the agent is capable of knowledge:” that she exists or has the pertinent abilities), evidential luck (when “it is lucky that the agent acquires the evidence that she has in favour of her belief:” that certain evidence becomes available) and doxastic luck (when “it is lucky that the agent believes the proposition:” that she forms the belief). Luck in these cases doesn’t seem to threaten knowledge. But, there are, at least, two types of epistemic luck that are prima facie knowledge-threatening: namely, veritic luck, which is “a matter of luck that the agent’s belief is true,” and reflective luck, which, “given only what the agent is able to know by reflection alone, it is a matter of luck that her belief is true.”

Now, given that reflective luck can be the product of epistemic irresponsibility with regard to the procedures exploited, the threat that reflective luck imposes on knowledge applies only at the social level, and not the personal one. For example, in the case of the naïve chicken-sexer, although “from the agent’s reflective position, it is a matter of luck that her belief is true” (2005:173), from the perspective of the epistemic community, it needn’t be. And, since our account allows for knowledge even in those cases where there is only a social vindication of the procedures, then such personal reflective luck needn’t threaten knowledge. That is, the reflective luck of the subject needn’t affect the epistemic responsibility required for the procedures for knowledge (given the above division of epistemic labour) and so such reflectively-lacking subjects can have knowledge. So, personal reflective luck isn’t necessarily incompatible with knowledge.

Anyhow, the variety of knowledge-undermining luck that we are here interested in is veritic luck, since this is the kind of luck that seems at play in Gettier-cases (as the above “double-luck” description of the cases suggests) and the one that we would need to eliminate if our account isn’t to be subject to that sort of counter-examples. So, given that Gettier-cases exploit veritic luck (in particular, luck that “‘intervenes’ between the agent and the fact;” Pritchard 2010a:36), we need to consider whether our account can escape this kind of knowledge-threatening accidentality: whether knowers, according to our account, can’t be veritically lucky believers.

4.3.2 Gettier and Goldman-Ginet Cases

So, what does our account say about Gettier-cases? In order to answer the question we need to keep in mind that the procedures are designed by us to connect us to the fact that makes the target proposition true (§§2.4.1, 3.5.2). So, the procedures aren’t merely required to be truth-conducive and reasonably thought to be so too, but also to connect us to the fact that makes the target proposition true. But, Gettier-cases are, ex-hypothesis, cases in which no

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180 Roughly, if the reflective luck doesn’t run through the entire epistemic community, we can know.
such connection occurs because they are cases of “double-luck.” In these cases, the procedure fails to connect us to the fact (say, the sheep in the field) that makes the target proposition true. Now, Gettier-cases don’t give us a reason for not designing the procedures we happen to exploit in those cases unless these cases represent (given our worldview) significant error-possibilities (§3.2). And I take it they don’t, so these procedures needn’t be given up. So, in Gettier-cases, we employ legitimate rules (cf. the above purely statistical rule; §3.6). Having said that, in these cases, the procedures do fail to connect us to the relevant facts and so they don’t work as designed. Just like an artefact can fail, in certain cases, to work in accord with the way it was designed, so can the procedures and Gettier-cases are cases in which this is so. The Gettiered subject then doesn’t know since the procedure employed fails to work as designed by not connecting her to the fact that makes the target proposition true, hence agreeing with our intuitions (as one would expect, since the above requirement is a natural one for us to set on our procedures; §3.5.2). To repeat, in these cases of double-luck, the subjects employ procedures that fail to work as designed.

But, there are other cases, which one might at first think are Gettier-like, that don’t seem in fact to have the same structure as Gettier-cases. One such case is the fake-barn case, where although one believes, after seeing the only real barn among many fake ones, that it is a barn, one doesn’t seem to know (Goldman 1976). So, unlike the above sheep case where the subject isn’t looking at a sheep but the belief she forms ends up anyway being true, in the fake-barn case the subject does see the real barn about which she forms her belief. And the problem in the latter case seems to rest with the nature of the environment in which one comes to believe that it is a barn. Indeed, it is important to distinguish, at least, two different types of problematic cases (Pritchard 2009a,c, 2010a, Greco 2010). Firstly, those cases in which what seems to be exploited is some kind of veritic double-luck: a luck that “‘intervenes’ between the agent and the fact.” Gettier’s own cases and Chisholm’s sheep case are of this kind, so we can continue to call them Gettier-cases. Secondly, those cases in which what seems to be exploited is some kind of environmental veritic luck: a luck that concerns the environment in which the procedure generates the success. The paradigmatic example being the fake-barn case, so we can call them Goldman-Ginet-cases (given Carl Ginet’s involvement in Goldman’s fake-barn case).

So, what does our account say about Goldman-Ginet cases? Again, in order to answer the question we need to keep in mind that the procedures are responsibly designed by us to promote the truth given our worldview. Now, this development of procedures presupposes

181 These aren’t cases where the subject lacks knowledge because of some defeater. The subject is unaware of the situation and we can stipulate that there is no reason why she should be. If this weren’t so, the case would be explained by such defeater.
that certain conditions are in place (say, that it isn’t habitual for countrymen to build fake-barns or for zoo-keepers to cleverly disguise mules as zebras) and, given these conditions, the procedures are reasonably meant to be truth-conducive (since neither aforementioned error-possibility is taken to be significant). Indeed, these are the conditions that one naturally presupposes, given our shared worldview, to obtain when employing a procedure. And, it is these “background conditions” presupposed by the procedures (i.e. the conditions for which the procedure was designed) that allow us to handle the denials of knowledge in Goldman-Ginet-cases. After all, in these cases, it seems the procedures would be exploited in situations that they weren’t designed for, and so we can explain why knowledge isn’t to be had.

The procedures are designed to be followed in certain environmental conditions in which they are reasonably meant to be truth-conducive (hence allowing them to be legitimate) but, in Goldman-Ginet-cases, those environmental conditions are different if the subject is at the time exploiting a procedure which for her community (given its worldview and environment) is legitimate (after all, merely looking at something from a distance won’t do in an environment that is replete with fakes). The subject then doesn’t know since there is a mismatch of environmental conditions: a mismatch between the conditions for which the procedure was designed and the actual conditions in which it is used. So, the procedure to determine from a distance whether something is a barn is so designed, given our worldview, with a certain type of environment in mind, which isn’t, as the case states, one where there is an abundance of fake-barns (if the procedure is to be reasonably developed: since individuating barns that way in such fake-barn infected environment wouldn’t be truth-conducive), and so we don’t know in the fake-barn case.

So, our account can also capture our intuitions concerning the Goldman-Ginet cases. And, importantly, it is our independently motivated understanding of the procedures that allows us to do so (§§2.2-4). But, one might think that ours is a pseudo-solution since it still can’t deal with the real problem: that even if we aren’t in an epistemically inhospitable environment, we could have been in some such unfortunate environment (Pritchard 2010a). It is just a matter of luck that we aren’t, and this luck is meant to eliminate knowledge. Now, if this were so, then our account would be in trouble. After all, if the procedure is being applied in the environment for which it was designed, and even if it is just a matter of luck that we happen to be in such an environment (and barring defeaters), then such application of the procedure won’t eliminate knowledge. Fortunately, our intuitions don’t seem to clearly follow that pattern.

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182 If the subject wasn’t exploiting a procedure of her community that is legitimate, then we can easily explain the lack of knowledge. See also fn.181.
Let us adapt the fake-barn case so that the subject is in Normal County, where there are no fake-barns, and sees a real barn but she would, unbeknownst to her, instead be in Fake-Barn County if she had turned left at the junction 10 miles ago (as she could have easily done, since she is just cruising around). My intuition is that she knows. And, although I don’t expect everyone to share it, I do expect some to do so, since this just seems to be a case of benign luck: particularly, a case of capacity luck, when it is lucky that the agent is capable of knowledge by having the pertinent abilities (§4.3.1).\textsuperscript{183} Our strong intuitions about the subject in the original fake-barn case lacking knowledge are the result of \textit{actually} exploiting the ability or procedure in the wrong environment. And this then is a case of “environmental luck” because, although the environment in which the procedure is being applied isn’t the one for which it was developed, the procedure stills delivers in this instance the truth. Such environmental luck is knowledge-precluding and our account can do justice to this.

4.3.3 Harman Cases

But, notice Goldman-Ginet-cases aren’t alike another kind of cases, which we might call, \textit{Harman-cases}, such as the political assassination case, Donald’s letters case and Tom Grabit case (Harman 1973:142-4), which are sometimes (misleadingly) thought to exploit the “social aspect” of knowledge (Meeker 2004). In these cases, it seems, according to Gilbert Harman, that the subject doesn’t have knowledge and this seems to be the result of there being evidence that can easily be accessed by the subject, which isn’t anyway acting irresponsibly (i.e. being negligent with regard to the evidence) and which, if so accessed, it would count as a defeater. But, I am not sure most people would share Harman’s intuitions (I, for one, don’t) and, indeed, some claim that many don’t (Lycan 1977:121; see also Meeker 2004:157).

Moreover, according to our account, the subject does know in these cases. This is because the rules are silent about this possibility of luckily, but not irresponsibly, lacking some misleading evidence that is easily accessible and that would undermine knowledge, so no condition is being violated in these cases. And, this seems to be as it should, given the resemblance of this

\textsuperscript{183} Cf. Sosa 2007. In his account of (animal) knowledge as apt true belief, a belief is apt if it is accurate because it is competent or “adroit.” What matters is the ability of the epistemic agent and that this cognitive ability is responsible for the cognitive success. A belief isn’t apt if it isn’t successful “sufficiently” because of the subject’s adroitness (2007:79). It seems this account won’t fully capture our intuitions about Goldman-Ginet-cases, since environmental luck doesn’t seem to interfere with the aptness of a performance (Pritchard 2009c). In those cases, “the act fails to be safely successful, since it might too easily have failed, through lack of the required competence or conditions. It might still be apt, nevertheless, indeed attributably, creditably apt” (Sosa 2007:81). So, Sosa’s account give us the right results when considering the \textit{adapted} fake-barn cases because it ignores safety, but the wrong ones when considering the \textit{original} case because its aptness condition is satisfied (cf. Greco 2010). After all, in the original case, the subject isn’t using the right “tool” for those conditions, although she happens to get the truth. Nevertheless, the fact that she could have very easily used some other tool, without being epistemically irresponsible, when she actually used the right one doesn’t undermine the actual success.
case to cases of benign evidential luck: when it is lucky that the agent acquires the evidence that she has in favour of her belief. Although in these cases the luck doesn’t concern the evidence that becomes available but the evidence that doesn’t, still we are lucky, but not irresponsible, with regard to the total evidence acquired. And this kind of luck doesn’t seem knowledge-precluding.

Anyway, given the controversial nature of the intuitions behind Harman-cases, they seem to lack the counter-exemplary force that Gettier-cases and Goldman-Ginet-cases enjoy (Lycan 1977:125). And, so, Harman-cases are unlikely to trump theories. And, if we are right about these cases instantiating a sort of benign evidential luck, then we can understand why many would be wary of the denial of knowledge in these cases. And, importantly, our account captures these cases of benign luck as cases of knowledge.

4.3.5 Local and Global Reliabilism

Finally, notice that our account, as a form of global reliabilism, can eliminate cases of what we might call procedural veritic luck. This is the kind of knowledge-undermining luck that sensitivity and safety theories suffer from, because of their shared local reliabilism, where the method employed need only be reliable with regard to the targeted proposition (Goldman 1986, McGinn 1999). Let me explain.

A local reliabilist theory of knowledge, as McGinn says, “localizes the conditions for knowledge into a relation between the knower and a unique proposition [whereas a global reliabilist theory] speaks of the person’s propensity to believe the truth with respect to a range of distinct ‘relevant’ propositions” (1999:16-7). So, the main difference between a local and a global reliability theory concerns the range of propositions taken into account or, as Goldman says, “uses for which the process is reliable” (1986:44-5). Indeed, “Global reliability is reliability for all (or many) uses of the process, not just its use in forming the belief in question” (1986:45). Roughly put, the difference between these theories lies in the emphasis on the reliability of either processes (global reliabilism) or propositions (local reliabilism). More precisely, we need to distinguish between the reliability of a process with respect to a given proposition (local reliabilism) and the reliability of a process in general (global reliabilism).

The relevance of this distinction is that a local account, such as the sensitivity or safety theories, is then susceptible to counter-examples that exploit their locality. But, before making this clear, let me introduce these local theories. A sensitivity theory states that knowledge is sensitive true belief, where this sensitivity is understood as the satisfaction of the following subjunctive: not-p→not-B(p); which in a crude but intuitive reading states that “if p were false,
S wouldn’t believe that \( p \) and in evaluating this condition we consider only close possible worlds (Nozick 1981).\(^{184}\) A safety theory, on the other hand, states that knowledge is safe true belief, where this safety is understood as the satisfaction of the following subjunctive: \( B(p) \rightarrow p \); which again in a crude but intuitive reading states that “if S believed that \( p \), then \( p \) would be true” and, again, only close possible worlds are relevant to its evaluation (Sosa 1999).

Now, needless to say, both principles have been criticized for a variety of reasons.\(^ {185}\) But, regardless of the success of these criticisms, safety theories can’t rule out cases involving procedural luck. That is, even if these theories might naturally be seen as arising out of the need to be able to eliminate cases of malign luck (Pritchard 2005, 2008), because of their local nature, they can’t rule out the sort of luck that global theories can. After all, globally unreliable procedures that safely or sensitively deliver the truth, say by some quirk of nature, for the targeted propositions seem possible. Intuitively, it seems that the subject doesn’t know in these cases, precisely because the procedure (or method) employed isn’t globally reliable: it is in a sense lucky that the belief is true and safe, since the procedure isn’t globally reliable. So, the local reliability of a procedure shouldn’t be happenstance. Now, this sort of scenario hasn’t gone unnoticed. Indeed, Pritchard (2009a, 2010a) introduces a case where one can safely acquire the truth because some person makes sure that one does so with regard to the targeted proposition (by arranging the world accordingly) in most nearby (and in all very close nearby) possible worlds (hence locally reliable), but the procedure (or method) employed isn’t truth-conducive across a range of relevant propositions.\(^ {186}\)

So, in response to this deficiency of local reliabilism one might attempt to combine local and global reliabilism, as anti-luck virtue epistemologists do (Pritchard 2010a). In this case, one would give up the pure safety or sensitivity account for a hybrid account that exploits both local and global features: say, safety and virtue-reliabilist conditions, respectively. There is indeed no problem in mixing these two approaches since they aren’t mutually exclusive (Goldman 1986:47).\(^ {187}\) And, in fact, this sort of hybrid approach is already attempted by Goldman (1986), who endorses both local and global reliability (cf. McGinn 1999). But, if what I say above is correct, then no such hybrid is required. Our version of global reliabilism can

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\(^{184}\) Strictly speaking Nozick holds a stronger theory which requires a fourth (“adherence”) condition: \( p \rightarrow B(p) \). So his “tracking” theory requires subjunctive sensitivity to both truth and falsehood; while “sensitivity theories” require only subjunctive sensitivity to falsehood.


\(^{186}\) But, couldn’t we use this helper-scenario to create counter-examples to global accounts, including ours? Notice that, although a range of our beliefs would, in this case, be true (the helper makes sure they are), the procedure itself doesn’t connect us to the facts that make the targeted propositions true (that is indeed what the helper is doing for us); hence failing a requirement for legitimate procedures and depriving us of knowledge.

\(^{187}\) Although one might worry about the move being ad hoc; Pritchard (2010a:59-62) addresses this.
preclude the sort of veritic double-luck involved in Gettier-cases and the environmental luck involved in Goldman-Ginet-cases, as well as the above procedural luck. No supplementation from local principles, such as safety and sensitivity, is required. Having said that, the pure local alternative to understanding reliability is unsatisfactory if not supplemented by a global condition. That is, pure safety and sensitivity theories, where the subject’s belief is “subjunctively connected to the fact” (Nozick 1981:178), won’t do since they fail to rule out cases of procedural luck.

To sum up then, there are different kinds of epistemic luck and not all are knowledge-undermining. But, veritic double-luck, environmental luck and procedural luck are epistemically deleterious and reflective luck can be. Now, pure local reliabilist accounts can’t do justice to procedural luck, since a procedure can be locally reliable by accident, hence suggesting the adoption of hybrid theories that combine local and global reliabilism (if not ad hoc). But, this isn’t required since our global reliabilist account, as seen, can do justice to the different sorts of knowledge-threatening luck; hence satisfying, I suggest, the non-accidentality desideratum (§1.5.2). Still, even if our account can handle Gettier-cases and the like, doesn’t it anyway throw some counter-intuitive results when considering, in particular, the attribution of knowledge to infants and animals?

4.4 Infants, Animals and Other Cases

It would indeed be naïve to think that Gettier-cases and the like are the only thorny cases our account faces. In fact, we can expect a series of related challenging intuitive cases that exploit the hypothesised but plausible function of knowledge. So, below we consider this sort of cases and related ones, and by doing so I hope to pre-empt some doubts and make some aspects of our account clearer.

4.4.1 Infants and Animals

Our understanding of knowledge as the ability to successfully and Competently answer potential questions (§3.7) brings to the fore some difficult questions, the most pressing being: can infants and animals know? Now, White thinks that, “since the ability to provide the right answer to a possible question implies neither knowing that one has this ability nor manifesting it in any verbal way, there is no reason why young children and animals should not be said to know many things” (1982:121; cf. Craig 1990). But, even if White is correct that the ability claim per se doesn’t deprive infants and animals of knowledge (cf. Hyman 1999:436-7), we can’t agree with his claim they can know many things, given the nature of a central component

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188 We shouldn’t underestimate how fast young children can acquire these rules; so I speak of ‘infants.’
of this ability. That is, the ability that knowledge consists in involves the achievement of truth by means of certain rules, and these mainly socially inherited rules are developed and endorsed for the pooling of information. So, unless we have acquired such procedures, we can’t know. Infants and animals then can’t have knowledge as long as they can’t acquire these rules. Knowledge requires the apprehension of truth by means of certain rules that infants and animals aren’t likely to possess (and, perhaps, even can’t possess, in the latter case). But, as soon as they become part of the testimonial practice, they qualify as potential knowers.

So, is our account of knowledge overly intellectual? It isn’t overly intellectual in the sense that we can’t accommodate “low-grade” knowledge, such as perceptual knowledge, rather than “high-grade” knowledge, such as scientific knowledge. Some accounts might turn out to be overly intellectual for this reason, but ours isn’t: both reflective and unreflective knowledge is captured (§3.7).\(^{189}\) Indeed, notice that not much is here required to count as “overly intellectual,” given the nature of the subjects being ruled out. In fact, any account of knowledge that attempts to reconcile reliability with responsibility will be “overly intellectual” in this way (§4.1). That is, this is a consequence that any responsibilist account of knowledge faces, regardless of whether the responsibilism is instantiated at the individual or social level (or both). Perhaps then this is one of those costs which are inevitable if we are to achieve this desirable combination of responsibility and reliability. Indeed, we saw the benefits that such combination brings, and perhaps those benefits are enough to outweigh the costs. I think they go a long way to doing so. Moreover, this combination is a consequence of our independently motivated view of the norms of knowledge which in turn provides us with many other benefits. These then are good reasons for not adopting a “bottom-up strategy,” where in order to “find out what knowledge is, [we] look at what Fido has when he sees where his food bowl is or remembers where he buried his bone” (Dretske 1991:80). This is the kind of approach tailored for infants and animals to have knowledge. And, although ours isn’t a “top-down approach to understanding cognitive phenomena,” where “[white]-frocked scientists, not furry pets, are the exemplars, the models, the ideal” (1991:81), still we deprive infants and animals of knowledge and this is “a result that most people find highly counterintuitive” (Kornblith 2002:70). Indeed, we normally apply the term ‘know’ to them; we often say things like: “Fido knows where its bone is” and “Fido knows that we are going for a walk.” So, isn’t this a serious cost of our account? Here then I don’t want to focus on the benefits of our approach (some of which still need to be introduced) but on the costs. In particular, I want to show that, perhaps, these consequences of our account aren’t as costly as one might have originally thought.

\(^{189}\) Cf. Zagzebski 1996 (§§2.4, 4.1).
But, let me first make something clear. Given our attribution of knowledge to both infants and animals, our account would certainly be in serious trouble if its goal were purely descriptive. However, our account is in the business of prescribing (§1.2), and, although it is preferable to capture the endoxa (and these knowledge-attributions qualifies as such), failing to do so isn’t a problem per se (§1.6). It can become a problem when adjudicating accounts, since it is preferable, all else being equal, to accommodate the endoxa. But, all accounts are likely to face some such failure, since the endoxa is likely to be messy. So, as suggested, we can defend our account by pointing out its great many benefits and hope the reader agrees that they outweigh this cost. Anyway, as our reflective equilibrium method makes clear, revisions to the practice were always possible, and these revisions are intended as an improvement on our understanding. So, unless we are convinced that the account is wrong (which might be partly due to the fact that a competing account does better in all fronts) we should welcome the revisions. To paraphrase Craig (1990:102), we need a reflective well-founded tidy-up of everyday practice, and this is exactly what we are meant to be doing with this revision in line with our meliorative goal (§1.2).

This revision is also pre-theoretically motivated since it clashes with two of the desiderata, namely, the transmissibility and value of knowledge. In the case of infants and animals, much of their putative knowledge doesn’t seem communicable. And, this alleged knowledge doesn’t seem to be distinctively valuable: more precisely, it doesn’t seem to be either more valuable or distinctively valuable than true belief. So, we seem to have pre-theoretical reasons for denying knowledge to animals and infants (and indeed for not accepting this endoxa as a fifth desideratum, as some might suggest). Moreover, the fact that infants and animals also need truths in order to coordinate their behaviour with external conditions on which the behaviour’s success depends (§2.1) doesn’t force us to accept that they know. After all, that consideration would show “the same thing for bugs, plants, and bodily organs” (Dretske 1989:91). So, given the need for accurate information equally applies to organisms that we don’t normally attribute knowledge to, such consideration by itself can’t show that our knowledge-attribution to infants and animals is correct. And, given their likely conceptual limitations and attenuated awareness, we should perhaps “philosophize about knowledge with competent speakers in mind, and allow our conception of the cognitive powers of [infants and] animals to be decided by our epistemology, and not vice versa” (Hyman 1999:437). So, given

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190 This recognises the required rootedness of a prescriptive account on our practice.
191 There are dancing bees and meerkats raising alarms, but I’m not sure we want to say that bees know and we would want to say that the meerkats know more than there being some predator around. Still we can learn from them (i.e. acquire knowledge) even if they aren’t transmitting knowledge (§2.6). Similarly for infants.
the above considerations, these attributions to infants and animals shouldn’t be the main reason for rejecting our account: they can’t be a decisive consideration.

Fine, but couldn’t we do better than that? Perhaps, there might be a way of understanding such endoxa that doesn’t generate any discrepancies: that is, by introducing a distinction between two senses of ‘know.’ Goldman (1999) thinks that there is a weak (or minimal) sense of ‘knowledge’ that focuses only on true belief (or information), and not also on the means by which it is achieved. He also thinks that there is a strong sense that consists of “true belief plus some additional element or elements, such as justification or warrant for the belief, and the exclusion of alternative possibilities” (1999:23-4). Furthermore, Goldman (2002) calls these two senses or uses of ‘knowledge’ “strict,” where a strict sense is “one that conforms to some standard, ordinary sense of the term in colloquial English” (2002:183).

The strict stronger sense then is clearly what we have been considering, and we saw that, given our account, this sense of ‘know’ is misapplied in the case of animals and infants. But, perhaps all we are doing when saying “Fido knows that there is someone at the door” is that it possess (accurate) information; that is, we are using the strict weak sense of ‘know,’ in which case we wouldn’t necessarily be speaking falsely when attributing knowledge to infants and animals. Moreover, we can explain why we would use the same term for both uses, which increases the plausibility of the distinction. We use the term for the social, human concept to apply to infants and animals because they, just like humans participating in the strong-knowledge-practice, need truths and so we use our success term to pick out those cases in which infants and animals possess the relevant information. Our account then not only can be seen as providing a specific understanding of the strong sense, but also allowing us to make sense of the other strict sense, one that can be used for animals and infants. And it is this sense that allows us also to say that animals and infants know. They can have, after all, information. So, the sense of knowledge that is being applied to them is the weak sense that focuses only on truth. And, if this description of the endoxa is correct, our account then accommodates and explains the endoxa, contrary to first impressions.

But, it is, to say the least, controversial that this is the right characterisation of the endoxa. The main problem being that the distinction between the (strict) weak and strong sense of knowledge seems unsupported. The paradigmatic case employed to support the distinction is that of a student who answers the exam question correctly but doesn’t know, in the strong

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Here ‘information’ might conveniently be understood as requiring truth but not belief (after all, some deny them to animals; McGinn 1999:31).

Goldman also identifies two “loose” senses or uses (“an extended, technical use that departs from the standard, colloquial senses;” *ibid.*): knowledge as belief and as institutionalised belief.
sense. Still, we are told, and correctly so, the teacher would normally want to say that the student knows the answer (Goldman 2002). This opens the possibility of the introduction of the weak sense, where true information only is required to have knowledge. The problem with this is that there is also another way of explaining the teacher’s attribution of knowledge in these cases: namely, the teacher assumes that the correct answer is the result of the justification, evidence or what have you that is required for knowing in the strong sense in this case. But, Goldman says, “The teacher would classify the pupil as one of those who know without inquiring into the basis of his/her belief, and even in the face of evidence that it was a poor basis” (2002:186). But, I don’t think the folk would refer to the student as knowing in this case, and if they did then we could simply say that they were speaking loosely; just as we would do if someone attributed knowledge to a detecting device, such as an automatic door.

But, a slightly different distinction might also help us make sense of these knowledge-attributions to infants and animals without making us to speak falsely. I have in mind the distinction Sosa (1991) makes between animal and reflective knowledge. Animal knowledge isn’t merely true belief; responsiveness to the world, say, due to the reliability of the belief-forming process is also an important aspect of this kind of knowledge. The difference with reflective knowledge is that this kind of knowledge further requires reflection: that is, not merely “direct response to the fact known but also understanding of its place in a wider whole that includes one’s belief and knowledge of it and how these come about” (1991:240). So, reflective knowledge requires high-grade metacognition. Now, since neither animals nor infants can engage in this, this is why they can’t have this knowledge; but there is nothing depriving them of animal knowledge.

But, as Sosa points out, “no human being blessed with reason has merely animal knowledge of the sort attainable by beasts [since a] reason-endowed being automatically monitors his background information and his sensory input for contrary evidence and automatically opts for the most coherent hypothesis even when he responds most directly to sensory stimuli” (1991:240). This then correctly suggests that normal adult human beings will, even in cases of perceptual knowledge, possess reflective knowledge, as opposed to animal knowledge; whereas infants and animals will only be capable of animal knowledge. But, if this is correct, then we need to explain why we say things like “They know that I am back” when referring to both a normal adult human and an infant/animal. This is a case where the animal-reflective knowledge distinction doesn’t seem to help (since ‘know’ applies to both a normal human and an infant/animal), so it can’t explain all attributions of knowledge to animals and infants. Again, perhaps in this case we can say that we are speaking loosely when attributing

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194 See also fn.183.
knowledge of the same kind to both parties. So, since this distinction alone won’t help us explain all cases, if there is a simpler explanation, then it is preferable to this one.\textsuperscript{195}

Anyhow, these distinctions between weak and strong knowledge and animal and reflective knowledge would certainly help us handle these cases, but I doubt that a strong, independently motivated case can be made for either of them. So, the best we might be able to do is to explain away the attributions in these cases. But, although this is much desired, especially for dialectical reasons (§1.6), we needn’t be required to do so. After all, if we already have good reasons to reject those attributions, then we don’t seem to be required to explain those attributions away (just like we don’t need to explain away racist intuitions, if we have good reasons to think that racism is wrong). Anyway, one way of doing this is by means of projection. This alternative explanation of the knowledge-attributions to infants and animals then makes them false, since here we take it that the folk are intuitively attributing knowledge in the strict strong sense, but we can easily make sense of the error. Let me explain.

We evaluate situations using our own rules (and concepts; §§2.4.2, 3.1).\textsuperscript{196} So, when the baby looks at the mother (in certain conditions), we take it that the baby knows that mummy is there because we project our procedures onto the baby, which, naturally, we normally and correctly do when dealing with members of our epistemic community (i.e. those members that can engage in the testimonial practice). And, it is easy to explain why we don’t realise that something important is missing in this case: namely, the acquisition of the relevant rule to gain the relevant knowledge. It is simply difficult for the folk to realise that that is so. Indeed, it would be unreasonable to expect the folk to pick on it, especially given that we only passively inherit the ordinary rules to be applied when attributing knowledge to these creatures. So, there is no reason why most of us wouldn’t fail to notice that an essential element in these cases is missing. Therefore, although the attribution of knowledge in these cases is wrong, we can explain why the folk would make it.

Moreover, the sort of ordinary propositions that infants and animals are said to know (that mummy is there, that we are going for a walk, etc.) are allegedly known normally via an ordinary (perceptual) rule that exploits reliable natural powers, which require no correction in the circumstances employed. So, they just happen to be using the procedures that we endorse for employment in those circumstances, but they lack the ability to use those powers selectively (i.e. in those situations in which they are truth-conducive and reasonably thought to be so). That is, assuming they haven’t yet been trained to exploit such faculty selectively, they

\textsuperscript{195} Plus this view faces difficulties when considering pair of cases of naïve adults who exploit procedures which are endorsed in one case and not in the other; see Kappel ms:10-1.

\textsuperscript{196} Indeed, it isn’t clear they have certain concepts.
can’t be thought of as having acquired the legitimate procedure. They are simply using their
natural powers which in these circumstances are truth-conducive: they just happen to form
true beliefs in accordance to the rules, not by following them (§§2.3-4). But this then should
make it clear why it is difficult for us to realise that they don’t satisfy the conditions for
knowledge. And it should also make it clear that if some natural power didn’t require any
restrictions but merely endorsing (however unlikely this is), and since such endorsing needn’t
be done at the personal level, then knowledge can in these cases be had.\footnote{Assuming the ability to provide the right answer needn’t be manifested in a verbal way.}

Another way of explaining away these attributions, which isn’t incompatible with the previous
one, is by means of, as hinted above, loose talk. The idea is that there are enough similarities
between the cognitive states of infants and animals and the cognitive states of knowing
individuals that we loosely talk about the former also knowing. The similarities revolve around
the other two desiderata: namely, factivity and non-accidentality. We take it that the infant or
animal not only has achieved the truth but also, as just seen, that they have done it by some
reliable means given the relevant conditions. That is, from our perspective, they possess the
truth in a somewhat non-accidental way (though I am not suggesting that \textit{de facto} reliability is
all that is needed to accommodate the non-accidentality desideratum, as §4.3 make clear).
These similarities then license such loose talk, where “knowledge” picks out a success case
(achieving the truth) by means which can be seen, from our perspective, to be non-accidental.
But, strictly speaking, infants and animals don’t know. As Dretske describes this position, “If
animals and infants know anything, it is only because we charitably adopt toward them (as we
do with some machines) a “cognitive stance”: we say (with an indulgent wink) that they know
[... ] but we do so in a figurative way” (1991:82).\footnote{Of course, Dretske disagrees, since he is a “bottom-upper.” This sub-section attempts to show “bottom-uppers” that the costs of such denial aren’t decisive and certainly shouldn’t dismiss theory.} So, we can loosely talk about them
“knowing” in the same way as normal adult humans, hence we can make sense of utterances
such as “They know that I am back” when referring to both an adult and an infant/animal. And,
when applying the “Really and Truly” test (Conee 2005:52) to these loose knowledge-
attributions (e.g. “Does Fido really and truly know that it’s dinner time?”) we would take them
back, since the honorific term ‘know’ isn’t, strictly speaking, applicable to infants and animals.
But, I don’t expect most people to take them back if instead they are projecting (or, at least,
not giving them up faster than legitimate knowledge-attributions).

So, I have suggested two explanations as to why we, strictly speaking, wrongly attribute
knowledge to infants and animals. They are meant to allow us to explain away these
attributions that, given our account provides the best explanation available of the target
phenomenon, are wrong. For example, in the case of projection, we are attributing knowledge
to animals and infants because we aren’t aware that we are wrongly projecting our rules onto them since they haven’t acquired the relevant fine-grained dispositions. But, this correction, as mentioned, should be seen as a positive result, if indeed our account provides the best explanation available. And, given the above, at least this much can be said: although one mightn’t want to insist that this denial of knowledge to infants and animals is the right verdict, it isn’t obviously wrong.

So, these knowledge-attributions aren’t the kind of consideration that should dismiss our account. And, given that these cases exploit our plausible hypothesised function of knowledge, we shouldn’t be concerned about our explaining them away being ad hoc, since such functional considerations help us determine which attributions can be targeted for such treatment (§1.7). This then concludes what I have to say about these knowledge-attributions.

4.4.2 “Congenital” Crusoe and Wolf-Boy

It would however be wrong to expect those cases to be the only challenging ones our account faces due to the hypothesised function of knowledge. But, the above explanations are also applicable to other prima facie problematic cases, such as “Congenital” Crusoe and Wolf-Boy.

“Congenital” Crusoe is an individual who is left on his own from infancy in an island, whereas Wolf-Boy is an individual who is raised by a pack of wolves.\(^1\)

The problem in these cases seems to be that they can’t know anything at all since there is no epistemic community from which they can inherit the relevant rules (without which they can’t know). Indeed, there is no place for testimony, let alone need for a knowledge-practice that aims to provide us with a social reservoir of standardised truths. Nevertheless, we intuitively want to say that Crusoe and Wolf-Boy can know.\(^2\) But, these cases are problematic only if we require the rules to be socially inherited. Now, although it is normally the case that most rules are so acquired by most of us, they needn’t be. After all, given the possibility of them developing rules we can explain how they can know. However, this can at most show that they can have knowledge, but one might complain that we would say that when they see the birds and trees, they know that there are birds and trees (conceptual issues aside). The problem then is that our account doesn’t allow for these knowledge-attributions unless the relevant rules are actually in place and we just seem to be making the attributions regardless of that.

So, why would we say that they do know even when no such rules are in place? Here then the above considerations about projection and loose-talk become relevant, since they can also help us explain away these knowledge-attributions. For example, when congenital Crusoe

\(^1\) Make all the relevant assumptions to make the cases as plausible as possible.
\(^2\) Note there is no problem with non-congenital Crusoe (§2.6).
looks at the sea (in certain conditions), we assume he knows that there is a sea. In this case, if Crusoe is imagined as an adult, the relevant projection would seem even more natural. And, again, there is no reason why many, or even most, of us wouldn’t fail to notice that something is missing in his case (viz. the relevant rule). So, although the attribution of knowledge can be wrong, we can explain why the folk would make it. Moreover, it is important to notice that these are bizarre cases and so our intuitive judgements about them needn’t worry us as much as the above attributions to infants and animals. This is because these intuitive judgements aren’t likely to enjoy the evidential and grounding roles that more ordinary knowledge-attributions do (§1.4). In other words, their counter-intuitive force doesn’t seem to be as threatening as the previous cases.

Nevertheless, we can learn from these cases. For example, they make clear that a society isn’t necessarily required in order to acquire the rules. So, importantly, our account doesn’t imply that either congenital Crusoe or Wolf-Boy cannot have knowledge or that the idea of them having knowledge is senseless (cf. Welbourne 1983:84). However, this kind of solitary-person scenario shows us that there would be no real need for our knowledge-practice, even if there is a need for truth. In fact, without a group of cooperative individuals the need for a knowledge-practice seems to vanish. This then prompts a related case.

4.4.3 Non-Cooperative Humans

This case involves humans that are non-cooperative, hence there is no chance for the testimonial practice to arise. So, given our account, there is no knowledge in such a case. After all, although it is our nature to be social creatures, we needn’t be in all possible worlds. And, when that is the case, then there won’t be a need for a knowledge-practice arising out of the testimonial practice. But, it seems that we would still attribute knowledge to those individuals. And, in this case again, we can use the above two strategies to explain away the relevant attributions. In fact, since we can know and normally do know without testifying (given that knowledge picks out the successful Competence in the testimony; §2.5), we shouldn’t expect the folk, for example, when projecting to find these non-cooperative humans to be epistemically lacking.

And, the lesson to be learnt from these cases is that our knowledge-practice is contingent. It is ultimately the consequence of some fundamental human needs but such needs don’t seem to be metaphysically necessary (§2.1). So, the contingency of the knowledge-practice extends beyond the different systems of rules that could be instantiated given the different circumstances of the epistemic community (§3.7). But, I don’t think that such consequence undermines our account: after all, we are in the business of explaining our ordinary human
knowledge (§§1.1, 1.4). And since these knowledge-attributions to beings with a radically different nature from ours qualify, I take it, as bizarre cases, their counter-intuitive force, again, is undermined. But, not all bizarre cases need to prompt intuitions that are in conflict with our account. Here are a couple of them.

4.4.4 Swampman and Ex-Nihilo Community

These cases involve a swampman and a whole epistemic community that materialise out of nothing, with legitimate rules of knowledge, worldview and concepts (among other things). In this case we assume that there is a need for the knowledge-practice (contrary to the previous case), but such practice is “gifted” to them. Notice, moreover, this case is bizarre not merely because they aren’t normally to be found (as in Congenital Crusoe and Wolf-Boy), but because they aren’t nomologically possible (even if there are possible worlds in which such things are normal occurrence). Now, assuming that many, perhaps even most, people would say that the swampman and the members of such community can and normally do know, what does our account say about them?

Well, our account at no point requires that the rules we follow to achieve the truth must be designed by those particular individuals who follow them. In fact, in a sense, the rules are gifted to most of us, since we mostly passively inherit them, even from past generations. So, it seems that the fact that such community didn’t have a say in the designing of such rules needn’t rule out the possibility of knowledge. But, haven’t we said that the rules are developed by us, humans? Yes, because that is the way it is for us: in our case, the rules aren’t gifted to humans. But, what about the responsibilism required for the procedures? Well, this consideration doesn’t seem to affect the swampman, since, as noticed, we are very much like him. As long as swampman materialises with his community’s (legitimate) rules, he can know. But, in the ex-nihilo community case, assuming the gifted rules aren’t the product of responsible development (say, by some benevolent demon), then it might seem that the community can’t know. However, I am not sure this is correct. After all, the social positive responsibilism can be met by the epistemic experts that are materialised with the rest of the epistemic community and the personal negative responsibilism, like in the swampman case, can be met by each member of the community.

Anyway, these last two cases aren’t certainly paradigmatic cases of knowledge and there might even be regarded as borderline cases that are the product of a kind of vagueness in the concept of knowledge. But, the fact that our notion of knowledge is to a certain extent vague

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201 So, these cases needn’t force us to change our account. In fact, such change would be completely ad hoc (just like most “analyses” of knowledge responding to intuitions).
is no reason to reject our account (§3.7). As long as this indeterminacy doesn’t spread to more normal and paradigmatic cases of knowledge, this needn’t concern us.

4.4.5 Ancient Greek Doctor

Finally, let us consider a case where the procedure by which the truth is achieved by a certain individual isn’t endorsed by the epistemic community. So, consider an Ancient Greek doctor who responsibly designs a truth-conducive rule to find out whether a medicine is effective. Now, although there is no such rule already available in his epistemic community, this needn’t deprive the doctor of knowledge. He is in fact the one introducing the rule into the community and, as long as it is a legitimate rule, he can know. So, in this case, it seems that our account isn’t in conflict with our intuition that he knows.

Notice, moreover, that this case is significantly different from the above cases involving strange procedures (§4.2.2). In those cases, the subject exploits a procedure that she is ignorant of its reliability (in fact, she mightn’t even be aware of which procedure she is exploiting—as in the naïve chicken-sexer case). So, assuming the novelty of the procedure (such as Norman’s clairvoyant one), these subjects couldn’t be thought as introducing any rules in those cases. They don’t qualify as responsible designers of the relevant procedures.

This then concludes the *prima facie* challenging cases we shall presently consider, although I expect there to be more. Anyway, the above cases should have helped to pre-empt some concerns about the plausible hypothesised function of knowledge and made some aspects of our account clearer. But next we need to consider the last desideratum that we still need to account for: the value of knowledge.

4.5 The Value Problem

We would prefer our account of knowledge to explain the distinctive value of knowledge that in turn explains why knowledge is more valuable than true belief (§1.5.3). Now, the claim isn’t that any plausible account of knowledge must entail that knowledge is distinctively valuable. This desideratum isn’t non-negotiable (§1.6). Having said that, it is preferable, given the widespread intuitions behind this desideratum, to explain why knowledge has such value rather than explain our intuitions away (cf. Pritchard 2010a:46). In this final section we shall see that our account can capture the value-desideratum, while noticing that some competitors fail to do so. But let us first set the terrain for our explanation.

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202 Consider also those designing the air-spotter’s procedures.
203 See also Kappel *ms*:17.
We ordinarily think knowledge is valuable and this can be easily explained by the fact that we value truth given that knowledge requires it (§2.6). So, knowledge is at least instrumentally valuable because it delivers truth. But, knowledge, we think, is also more valuable than true belief. And, in the *Meno*, Plato challenges us to explain why this is so given true belief is just as useful as knowledge (given they seem equally instrumentally valuable with regard to truth).

We can respond to this challenge by either (1) claiming that knowledge, which is merely instrumentally valuable because it delivers truth, doesn’t have greater value than mere true belief, or (2) claiming that knowledge, which is instrumentally valuable because it delivers truth and “stability” or “resilience” over time, actually has greater instrumental value than true belief, or (3) claiming that knowledge is also non-instrumentally valuable.

I take the first strategy to be the least promising, given that it consists in denying a widespread commonsensical intuition about knowledge (Greco 2010, Sosa 2010). Now, some disagree about the generality of the intuition, suggesting that this isn’t an exceptionless generalization (Baehr 2009, Fricker 2009), and we shall come back to this below. But, granted that such denial of our ordinary thinking about knowledge is least desirable, the two main options are (2) claiming that knowledge has greater instrumental value than true belief and (3) claiming that knowledge is also non-instrumentally valuable. The latter is the response our account promotes, so let us first consider whether the former one is a viable competitor to ours.

(2) is in fact Socrates’ strategy in the *Meno*. He claims that knowledge, as opposed to mere true belief, is, metaphorically speaking, “tethered” and so it doesn’t “run away,” like the statues of Daedelus. And this strategy has been adopted by others (Williamson 2000, Fricker 2009). Perhaps the most natural way to develop it is by suggesting that “mere true beliefs are typically more vulnerable to being lost in the face of misleading counter-evidence” (Fricker 2009:129). This “stability” or “resilience” of knowledge (i.e. “the tendency to survive misleading counter-evidence owing to the subjects being in the position to weight it against positive evidence already possessed,” *ibid.*.) then is meant to explain the added instrumental value over mere true belief, since one is more likely to hold on to the truth over time if one knows (and so relatedly achieve one’s goals).

As Fricker (2009) points out, this explanation of the extra value of knowledge becomes available as soon as one gives up the “synchronic presumption” normally (implicitly) accepted in the current debate. This is the presumption that “the value question is [...] a question about the comparative values of mere true belief and knowledge at a snapshot in time [or, at best,] in a very short time frame” (2009:127). I am sympathetic to Fricker’s approach; in particular to a change in perspective: in this case, from a synchronic to a diachronic one. And, as we shall see, our change of focus, from an individualist perspective to a social one, allows us capture
the value of knowledge (cf. Fricker 2009:136-7). Anyway, I also think this “resilience” can explain why sometimes knowledge can have more instrumental value than mere true belief.

But, as Fricker (2009) is aware, if that is the full story, then the intuition (if correct) can’t be general: that is, knowledge isn’t always more (instrumentally) valuable than true belief. This is because having evidence for belief isn’t a necessary condition of knowledge (§3.1). We don’t always have evidence for our knowledge and so such knowledge lacks the added instrumental value which resides in resilience. That is, we don’t always enjoy, in cases of knowledge, the ability to retain truths over time in the face of misleading evidence. Now, I think this isn’t the full story for two reasons. First, the independent reasons for thinking that the intuition isn’t general don’t seem compelling to me. Second, it isn’t clear that this story can explain why we would have a widespread intuition that knowledge (even typically) is more valuable than mere true belief. Let us take them in that order.

So, let us consider whether the reasons for thinking that the intuition isn’t general are compelling. Baehr (2009) and Fricker (2009) provide some independent reasons for holding the non-generality of the intuition. Firstly, “there is nothing independently or inherently counterintuitive in the suggestion that there might exist, say, at least one item of knowledge the value of which fails to exceed that of the corresponding item of true belief” (Baehr 2009:48). Secondly, trivial knowledge and immoral knowledge are meant to be in fact cases where such possibility is actualised (Baehr 2009:49-50, Fricker 2009:135).

Now, in response to this, one can say that, given that something’s value can be outweighed or defeated, there is no reason to think that knowledge is always valuable all-things-considered. So, for example, the moral disvalue of a certain belief could defeat any (instrumental or otherwise) epistemic value it may have and so bring the value of it as true belief and as knowledge to nought. In this case then, we would have a case where the item of knowledge isn’t more valuable all-things-considered than the true belief. So, given that epistemic value (instrumental or otherwise) can be defeated, we can agree that there is nothing inherently counter-intuitive with the idea that an item of knowledge can fail to be more valuable all-things-considered than the relevant true belief. But this doesn’t rule out the possibility that knowledge is more valuable than true belief within the epistemic realm, which is the content of, what we might call, our Meno intuition (or so I take it).204

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204 What I’m calling the “Meno intuition” isn’t the claim that knowledge is more valuable all-things-considered than true belief. I take it there is a widespread intuition that knowledge is more valuable as an epistemic good than true belief. And Plato can be seen as claiming that if such value derives exclusively from the value of truth understood from a synchronic perspective, then knowledge can’t be more valuable as an epistemic good.
But, what can we say about cases of trivial knowledge where, say, no moral disvalue defeats the epistemic one? The thing to say is that it isn’t clear (at least to me) that trivial knowledge isn’t more valuable (even all-things-considered) than the corresponding trivial true belief. That is, intuitively, trivial knowledge doesn’t seem to actualise the possibility that the item of knowledge doesn’t have more value than the true belief. But, Baehr (2009) might protest. Indeed, he wonders why it would be better off knowing that \( p \) rather than merely truly believing it if the subject-matter isn’t of any epistemic interest to me (2009:49-50). At this point, let me just briefly say that when considering the value of knowledge without only acknowledging the individual’s benefits and interests, Baehr’s concern seems misplaced. The extra value of knowledge needn’t be explained only in terms of the value it has to the individual. If one gives up the individualist presumption that is behind this concern, it isn’t clear that there is a problem. And the explanation offered below shows there is none.

Let us now turn to the second reason why the resilience story doesn’t seem to be the full story, namely: that it isn’t clear that the resilience story can explain why we would have a widespread intuition that knowledge (typically) is more valuable than mere true belief. Given we do have such intuition, it is difficult to see how resilience can explain why we have it unless such resilience is, at least, a typical feature of knowledge. But, the possession of evidence required for resilience doesn’t seem to be a typical feature of knowledge (§3.7). Indeed, much knowledge doesn’t seem to require such reasons. Having evidence is neither a necessary nor a typical condition of knowledge (and there is no reason to suppose we would think so), which makes one wonder why we have the intuition that knowledge is (typically) more valuable than mere true belief. So, we don’t seem able to explain away the generality of the Meno intuition this way. That is, the extra truth-dependent value that resilience affords us by adopting a diachronic perspective isn’t enough to explain away the generality of the Meno intuition.

These considerations suggest that the resilience story isn’t the full story. And, it seems that if we are to capture the endoxa on the matter, we need to explain why knowledge is more valuable than true belief not merely as a matter of degree but also as a matter of kind: we need to explain how knowledge can also be non-instrumentally valuable (3). Our account, which isn’t incompatible with the resilience story, suggests an answer to Plato’s challenge that exemplifies the third strategy by exploiting our social perspective and so can do justice to our intuitions. That is, our account provides us with an explanation that gives knowledge a non-instrumental kind of epistemic value that is enjoyed by all knowledge over mere true belief. So, this story allows us to explain why knowledge is distinctively valuable: where the difference in value between knowledge and true belief isn’t just a matter of degree but of kind (Pritchard
2010a:7). This is also thought to be a widely held conviction (Pritchard 2009b, 2010a, Greco 2011), and if it is so (as I think it is\(^{205}\)), our account can capture it too.

But, before I introduce our explanation, let us make clear the different value problems that we would prefer an answer to. First, we would like an answer to the “General Value” problem: Why is knowledge valuable? (Greco 2011:221). Second, we would like an answer to the “Meno” problem: Why is knowledge more valuable as an epistemic good than true opinion? (Sosa 2010:15, Kappel 2010b:185).\(^{206}\) Third, we would like an answer to the “Distinctive Value” problem: Why is knowledge distinctively valuable? (Greco 2011:221). This is the challenge to explain why knowledge has non-instrumental value or “final value” (Pritchard 2010a:8). Now, importantly for our purposes, final value doesn’t entail intrinsic value, since final value can be had due to relational, as opposed to intrinsic, properties (Kappel 2010b:190). As Pritchard says, “intrinsic value concerns only the value generated by the intrinsic properties of the target item, and yet something can be finally—i.e. non-instrumentally—valuable because of its relational (and hence non-intrinsic) properties” (2010a:30fn.). So, we want to explain how knowledge is finally valuable, so understood. These then are the three challenges to which we want an answer and which, as we shall now see, our account satisfactorily addresses.

4.5.1 The Final Value of Knowledge

As suggested, our social perspective on knowledge allows us to handle the above value problems: that is, to make sense of the value of knowledge including its distinctiveness and its extra value when compared to mere true belief. More precisely, our account promotes an answer to the “Distinctive Value” problem which in turn allows us to address the other ones. After all, if knowledge has final value, then knowledge is valuable and it is so finally and instrumentally, so it is more valuable than mere true belief given that such belief enjoys only instrumental value. Moreover, the fact that our account prompts us to posit some such final value is welcomed since, as seen, the “Meno” problem seems to require an explanation that gives knowledge a non-instrumental kind of value.\(^{207}\)

Now, the extra value of knowledge over true belief can derive from relational properties that the true belief in question enjoys as an item of knowledge but not as mere true belief. I want to suggest that such relational property, given that our account states that the constitutive norms of knowledge are rules of the testimonial practice, is that the true belief as knowledge

\(^{205}\) But not everyone agrees (Fricker 2009:127-fn.9) and some have doubts (Kappel 2010b:190-1). Notice anyway our account isn’t tailored to answer this challenge, so if there is no such intuition, it wouldn’t have moulded our account.

\(^{206}\) Cf. Pritchard 2010a:8-11, Greco 2011:221.

\(^{207}\) But see Goldman and Olsson 2009.
is fit for social consumption. In other words, an item of knowledge is finally valuable as a suitable item of the testimonial practice: an epistemic cooperative practice that is of fundamental importance in our lives (§2.1). Indeed, this is a social practice that we certainly value (Kusch 2009:76): after all, it seems required for both personal and communal flourishing, and so we value it both as individuals and as a community. And, the fact that a true belief as an item of knowledge is fit for such practice (i.e. it is the kind of true belief that is appropriate for sharing) renders it finally valuable. That is, just like a dress can enjoy final value because it was worn by Diana (a relational property of the dress), similarly a true belief can enjoy final value because it is fit for transmission by the members of the epistemic community.

So, given our account, all knowledge is essentially related to testimony and this relation is what makes a true belief which is knowledge distinctively valuable. And, importantly, all knowledge enjoys such distinctive value. So, by focusing on this relational social property of all true beliefs as knowledge, we can handle both the Meno and the Distinctive Value problems. This is then how we exploit our social perspective on the issue: by focusing on the essential connection between knowledge and testimony, which moreover motivates us to give up the exclusive concern with the individual’s benefits and interests in order to handle these problems (see §4.5.2). The extra and distinctive value of knowledge is explained by reference to testimony.

This is then our explanation of knowledge’s extra and final value, which, moreover, allows us to suggest that knowledge is a collective or common good (which is in line with our commonsensical idea of a social reservoir of knowledge: a common fund to be exploited by anyone; §1.5.4). Indeed, knowledge is a collective or common good that is crucial, although contingently so, to the well-being of humans and communities: a fundamental exercise of our social nature (cf. Kusch 2009). And, thinking of knowledge as a commons or a public good like shared natural resources (such as water, air, forests and fisheries) allows us to easily pump the intuition that it enjoys some final value.

So, we can handle, due to the nature of our explanation, all three value problems. By explaining how knowledge enjoys final value, and so address the Distinctive Value problem, we can also explain the Meno problem: the extra value is this final value. And so, as required by the General Value problem, we can say why knowledge is valuable: it enjoys both instrumental and final value. And, consequently, our account is to be preferred (all else being equal) to any account that fails to explain either why knowledge is valuable, or more valuable than true belief, or distinctively valuable. And, it seems that not all accounts of knowledge can do so. More specifically, one major competitor, which is “the most promising account available of
why knowledge [...] is finally valuable” (Pritchard 2010a:48), seems unable to do so. So, next I want to briefly consider this competitor by focusing on Greco’s (2010) virtue account.

This account understands knowledge as a cognitive achievement of the subject through her virtues. Now, in order for this achievement to be Gettier-proof, Greco suggests that S knows that $p$ iff “S believes the truth (with respect to $p$) because S’s belief that $p$ is produced by intellectual ability,” where the “because” is “intended to mark a casual explanation” (2010:71). The idea is, roughly, that if the true belief isn’t mainly the product of one’s cognitive ability or virtue, one doesn’t know. This is of course vague, but it needn’t worry us. Importantly, however, this “because” introduces a sort of context-sensitivity due to the nature of causal explanations which “intend to pick out an important or salient part of the causal story” (2010:74). So, whether one’s ability explains why one has a true belief depends on what is normal as well as our interests and purposes (ibid). Significantly, in Gettier-cases, the default salience of our abilities (due to our interests and purposes as information-sharing beings) is trumped by something abnormal in the way S gets the true belief (2010:75). So, in Gettier-cases, one doesn’t believe the truth because of one’s ability, since the ability’s usual explanatory salience is trumped: in these cases, believing the truth isn’t the subject’s cognitive achievement. So far, so good.

Importantly, given that knowledge is a cognitive achievement and that achievements are finally valuable, then this account can explain why knowledge is finally valuable and so also handle the other two value problems. So, Greco’s account seems able to do justice to the value-desideratum (as well as the other three desiderata, we shall assume). But, one problem for this account is that it isn’t clear that all knowledge qualifies as a cognitive achievement, in the relevant sense, of the subject. In fact, it seems that much knowledge doesn’t. Consider knowledge gained through testimony (Lackey 2007, 2009). In these cases, it seems that the true belief of the hearer isn’t mainly the product of hearer’s ability. The speaker’s ability, instead, seems to best explain why the hearer has the true belief, especially when considering that, in some cases of testimony, not much might be required of the hearer. Moreover, weakening the above notion of cognitive achievement isn’t an appealing option since that would then introduce Gettier-related difficulties. That is, if we shift the focus from the most salient causal factor to merely a salient one, we can certainly avoid problems

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208 I’m brief because much has been written about its deficiencies, to which I don’t have anything to add. Another prominent exponent of this sort of account is Sosa (2007); see fn.183.

209 But consider the apparent susceptibility to transmissibility problems (cf. Greco 2010:116).

210 Cases in which one’s Acceptance might require the monitoring for negative evidence only (§2.3).
with testimonial knowledge since the hearer’s ability is a salient factor in the explanation as to why she holds a true belief, but so is one’s ability in the Gettier-cases.\footnote{Greco’s response is that “credit for success, gained in cooperation with others, is not swamped by the able performance of others. It is not even swamped by the outstanding performance of others” (2010:83). But if the issue was that “my own abilities are not “important enough” in the explanation why I believe the truth” in testimonial cases (2010:82), the fact that my abilities’ modest role isn’t swamped by someone’s abilities’ saliently important role in the explanation won’t help us.}

Moreover, even if we could make sense of these cases of knowledge as cognitive achievements of the subject by weakening the notion (while still avoiding Gettier-problems), it isn’t clear whether we would still think these weakened cognitive achievements are finally valuable (Pritchard 2010a). So, it seems we would still fail to explain why all knowledge is finally valuable. Now, Greco could hold on to his account and suggest adopting a revisionary strategy with respect to the value-desideratum, along the lines of Pritchard’s (2010a) anti-luck virtue account. The idea then is to deny that all knowledge is more valuable than true belief and has final value but explain away the relevant intuitions. And, assuming that knowledge typically involves a cognitive achievement of a robust sort (i.e. one which we regard as having final value), then we can explain the intuitions.

But, we prefer an account that can capture the value-desideratum (all else being equal). So, I suggest that our account should be preferred to these competitors since it can do justice to the value-desideratum. But it isn’t a further advantage of our story that it avoids a substantial revisionism with regard to the focus of epistemological inquiry, as Pritchard’s (2010a) account suggests. That is, the fact that knowledge has final value is able to explain why it has enjoyed and still enjoys the central focus it does in epistemology and not demand a (radical) change in such focus (although some change would be required if thought of as the only cognitive success worth focusing on; §1.1). The revisionist strategy can explain why epistemologists throughout the times have cared so much about knowledge but demands the above meta-epistemological revision. This of course shouldn’t be regarded as a cost of the strategy. If a value-revisionist account is the best available account of knowledge, then the prescribed meta-epistemological correction shouldn’t be seen as a disadvantage (§4.4.1). What can be a problem is that a value-revisionist account fails to accommodate the value-desideratum, which we would prefer to capture. And, I suggest, it is one, since our account captures this desideratum, so it should be preferred, all else being equal, to value-revisionist accounts.

4.5.2 Fundamental Epistemic Goods and the Swamping Problem

Now, given that a fundamental epistemic good is “any epistemic good whose epistemic value is at least sometimes not simply instrumental value relative to a further epistemic good”
(Pritchard 2010a:11-2) and granted that knowledge has final (non-instrumental) value, knowledge then is a fundamental epistemic good. That is, since an epistemic good with final value also qualifies as a fundamental epistemic good due to the non-instrumental nature of its value, knowledge qualifies as some such good.

But, knowledge isn’t the only fundamental epistemic good, not even within narrow epistemology (§1.1). Truth is another such good that isn’t simply valuable relative to a further epistemic good. And, as seen, this is the good that promotes the testimonial practice. Moreover, our social perspective can help make sense of the unrestricted nature of this goal. This is important because, on the one hand, if this fundamental goal is restricted (say, truths that one is interested in), then truths that one finds trivial aren’t meant to be appropriate candidates for epistemic appraisal, but they are. And, on the other, if this fundamental goal is truth simpliciter, then trivial truths (e.g. the number of grains of sand in the beach) are meant to be valuable to oneself, but they don’t seem to be so, as Baehr’s concern indicates. Therefore, whether we restrict the goal of truth or not, we seem to face a problem.

But our social perspective allows us to make sense of the fundamental good of truth in an unrestricted way without committing us to the implausible claim that trivial truths are valuable to oneself. Let me explain. The testimonial practice is developed in order to satisfy the fundamental human need for truths by means of other people. So, Competence aims at the truth that is then passed on to someone else who needs it. What matters then, when designing the rules, is whether someone else can need the truth. And one needn’t be a philosopher to think of cases in which even the most trivial or unbeneficial truth, from someone’s perspective, can serve such purpose, for someone else (or how rules can be applied to acquire truths which weren’t the reason for introducing them). So, the rules apply to all truths since, in principle, they are all possibly needed by someone. Any truth, however trivial or unbeneficial for one, can be required to satisfy someone else’s need (Grimm 2009). But, this doesn’t mean that truths that are, from one’s perspective, trivial and unbefeficial are practically valuable for oneself. Those truths, although potentially practically valuable to someone else (hence their being candidates for epistemic appraisal), aren’t practically valuable to oneself. Our view then has the resources to avoid the above dilemma and it does because of its social perspective on this fundamental epistemic good.

Moreover, given that knowledge is also a fundamental epistemic good, it should be clear why our form of reliabilism doesn’t face a “swamping problem.” This is the problem to find an extra value for true belief as knowledge that “is not swamped by the value of truth itself” (Kvanvig 2003:46). Now, we certainly don’t suffer this problem, since we answered the Meno problem. But here I want to make clear why we don’t, since this is normally thought to be an especially
difficult problem for reliabilism to handle (Zagzebski 1996, Jones 1997). And in order to do so we need to introduce to crucial assumptions behind it (Pritchard 2010a:15). The first is that the end, and not the means, is all that matters: “there is no further value in the fact that some particular true belief was produced by the reliable mechanism” (Zagzebski 1996:302). A common way of developing the point is by means of analogy: just like a reliable espresso machine doesn’t add value to a good cup of coffee, neither does a reliable process to a true belief (Zagzebski 2003). In other words, the end (true belief) swamps the means (reliable method) of any value. The second assumption is that truth is the only fundamental epistemic good (Kappel 2010b:187).

Given these two assumptions, simple process reliabilism seems to lack the resources to explain the Meno problem because, given that a true belief has already achieved the only fundamental epistemic goal, the fact that it is achieved by means of a reliable process won’t add any extra value. That is, since knowledge isn’t “closer” to the goal of truth than mere true belief, there is no extra value to be had. This then is the problem but, of course, there is room for the reliabilist to manoeuvre. Mainly, she can reject either the first assumption (by introducing an extra value that is instrumental relative to the truth say, along the lines of the above diachronic move212) or the second one, just like we have done. Knowledge is a fundamental epistemic good: the property of being knowledge adds value to mere true belief. And, the final value of knowledge, which exploits the relation between the true belief as knowledge and our testimonial practice, explains then why the swamping worry doesn’t apply to us. Moreover, this value allows us, to repeat, to capture the value-desideratum.

So, in this chapter, we have seen that our account not only manages to capture the final two desiderata, the non-accidentality and value of knowledge, but also doing so while satisfactorily combining reliabilism and responsibilism. Indeed, our social strand of responsibilism helps us deal with some issues that seem problematic for reliabilist accounts. Moreover, along the way, we noticed that some major competitors seem to fail to combine reliabilism and responsibilism in a plausible way or to fully capture one or the other desiderata. And, although I don’t take the arguments against those competitors to be exhaustive, they seem to be compelling enough to suggest that our account is preferable, given its many benefits, including its ample explanatory power and importantly also capturing the other two desiderata, the factivity and transmissibility of knowledge.213 In the next chapter, as a means of conclusion, we shall consider the kind of social epistemology espoused by our account.

212 See Goldman and Olsson 2009.
213 These are, moreover, benefits which far outweigh its costs. And, although I anticipate more costs, I still expect our account to come on top, given the centrality of the desiderata.
Chapter Five

A Real Social Epistemology

5.1 Meliorative Epistemology

5.1.1 Epistemic Internalism and Externalism

5.2 Social Epistemology

5.2.1 Epistemic Individualism and Anti-Individualism

5.3 Conclusion
In this chapter, we close by pointing out the kind of social epistemology that our account of knowledge promotes due to the socio-historical nature of its norms: a narrow epistemology that is social through and through. That is, the social-historical component of the norms that are constitutive of all knowledge gives us a more wide-ranging social epistemology. This sort of social epistemology, I suggest, is much more in the spirit of a truly social epistemology, which expands across social space and time but doesn’t deny key tenets of traditional epistemology.

Relatedly, we start by considering the role our account gives to meliorative epistemology. Our social responsibilism makes this role clear and helps us appreciate that epistemic internalism doesn’t follow from a commitment to the meliorative project. We then consider different strands of social epistemology and show that ours, which doesn’t anyway commit us to all sorts of anti-individualisms, doesn’t suffer from the excesses of some social epistemologies or deficits of some individualist epistemologies. Some concluding remarks are also offered.

5.1 Meliorative Epistemology

I take it that a central task of epistemology is meliorative. Indeed, in line with the meliorative goal of philosophy, regulative epistemology aims to improve our epistemic practices (§§1.1-2). And, this traditional project has been taken up by many epistemologists who have recommended throughout the times different methods and methodologies to society (§§2.2, 2.4.1). So, a further advantage of our account is that it promotes a legitimate and crucial role for this “meliorative epistemological project:” the project of assessing and improving the reliability of human cognitive efforts and practices (Goldman 2010:18, Kitcher 1992:64-5). This shouldn’t come as a surprise since from the very beginning we found an important connection between the explanatory and regulative projects that we vowed to respect (§1.2).

But, if we are to serve epistemology’s meliorative purposes, then it seems we need to embrace a combination between reliabilism and responsibilism. That is, the ways of knowing must be both reliable and recognised to be so. But, such recognition isn’t required of the knower. This is because the reflective access to positive grounds required for the recognition can be met by a social responsibilism that frees the knower from such duty (§4.1). Indeed, it is the epistemic experts who normally develop or correct procedures, which are then inherited by the other members of the epistemic community. And, they are the ones who are meant to provide guidance as to how to improve one’s cognitive encounters with the world. So, our account combines different sorts of normative components in order to connect epistemic responsibility with truth-conduciveness and this combination provide us, as seen, with many advantages while not over-intellectualising the practice since much responsibility is socially implemented,
hence not setting unrealistic demands on the knower. Importantly then, in finding this central place for meliorative epistemology we didn’t over-intellectualise the practice.

Given a division of epistemic labour, most members of the epistemic community needn’t be involved in such meliorative process. All they need to do is to learn the procedures, either actively or passively (through social enculturation), that others have responsibly developed. And, this then allows us to appreciate the central role of epistemological education in our account: indeed, it isn’t something extraneous to theory. Neither of course is it the history of knowledge-practices, which is indispensably incorporated into the theory of knowledge. But, our combination of reliabilism and responsibilism seems to have consequences for an important contemporary debate about epistemic internalism. Let me explain.

**5.1.1 Epistemic Internalism and Externalism**

Epistemic internalism about knowledge is the view that (at least) some factors contributing to the positive epistemic status that render a true belief knowledge must be (in some sense to be specified) internal to the subject. Epistemic externalism denies epistemic internalism. Let me then elucidate this characterisation of internalism, by explaining, firstly, why *some* factors only and not all need to be internal and, secondly, what it is meant by *internal to the subject*.

It is clear that some externalist condition on knowledge, such as a reliability condition, is required (Greco 2010).\(^{214}\) Indeed, even self-proclaimed internalists accept this (BonJour 1985, Steup 2001a, Zagzebski 1996). For example, Zagzebski’s virtue responsibilism combines internalist and externalist features (§4.1). Her responsibilist approach is combined with an externalist success condition introduced by the virtues: one must be reliably successful in acting out of a virtue. In fact, Zagzebski’s view combines an externalist reliability element with internalist motivational and responsibilist elements.\(^{215}\) The disagreement between internalists and externalists then seems to concern, if it is to be interesting at all, the introduction of the internalist conditions (rather than the externalist ones). And, if Zagzebski’s virtue responsibilism qualifies as internalism about knowledge, it seems then that what makes an account internalist is whether *some* internalist condition ought to be satisfied in order to know or, to be more demanding, whether *most* conditions are internal.

So, we aren’t employing the common terms of engagement between internalists and externalists about justification (fn.214): not *all* factors contributing to the positive epistemic status need to be internal in order for the account to be internalist. That is, not all the

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\(^{214}\) Compare the internalism-externalism debate about justification, which isn’t required for knowledge. Here the appeal to a benevolent Cartesian demon is meant to show that reliability isn’t necessary.  
\(^{215}\) Cf. Greco 2010.
normative conditions for knowledge need to be internal. Indeed, as Goldman (2009a:310) points out, this “existential configuration makes things too easy for externalism” (since as long as there is one external condition for knowledge, the externalist wins). We mightn’t want to make things easy for the internalist either, and claim that only some condition for knowledge need to be internal in order for the account to be internalist. Perhaps then, the “majoritarian configuration” of the terms of engagement is the fairer one: whichever camp has a majority of conditions that it promotes wins (ibid.). But what really matters when considering this debate about the right account of the normative component of knowledge isn’t whether we are willing to call some account internalist or externalist, but what the right combination of conditions is. So the interesting question (which might, as we shall see, need to be amended) becomes what, if any, combination of internalist and externalist conditions is desirable.

Before we dive into this issue however, we need to be clearer as to what an internal condition is. Unfortunately, there has been little consensus in the literature as to how such a condition or factor is best portrayed, but there are two main alternative ways of understanding it. Accessibilism holds that the kind of factors that are relevant to determining the positive epistemic status are accessible on reflection to the epistemic agent (BonJour 1985). Mentalism holds that said factors are internal to the agent’s mind: it appeals to both occurrent and dispositional mental states and events of the agent (Feldman and Conee 2001).

Now, it is clear mentalism doesn’t entail accessibilism. After all, mentalism only requires that the factors be internal to the mind of the subject, and so not necessarily accessible to the agent. According to mentalism, a factor relevant to determining the positive epistemic status of a true belief can be part of the sub-conscious and undetectable mental life of the agent. Given mentalism, positive epistemic status supervenes on (present) mental states and events of the subject whether they are detectable or not. But, the more traditional strand of internalism (inspired by Descartes) is accessibilism. It is also the one that seems to better address the demands of epistemic responsibility which internalism is normally linked with and motivated by (BonJour 1985, Fogelin 1994, Pritchard 2005). After all, the positive and negative reflective control to capture the desired epistemic responsibility requires accessibility (§4.1). So, one might think the relevant sense of internal is the accessibilist one. But, we don’t need to commit to either notion here, since nothing hangs on it. We just need to be able to understand what internalists have in mind when referring to a condition or factor as being internal.

So, what, if any, combination of internalist and externalist conditions is desirable? Our (short) answer is, of course, the combination that our account of knowledge is committed to. But, this

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217 See also Bergmann 2006:45ff, Pritchard 2009a:96-7.
combination isn’t a straightforward one and suggests a revision to the debate’s individualist presumption. The externalist element is clearly present in the requirement for *de facto* reliability, but our social positive responsibilism doesn’t seem to give us an internalist element. After all, it isn’t the case that the knower needs to have positive grounds for the procedures. So, the grounds for the reliability of a given procedure needn’t be internal (in either the accessibilist or mentalist sense) to the knower. It is sometimes internal (in both senses) to some members of the epistemic community, but it needn’t be to a given knower. So if internalism requires that the knower has self-reflective access to those grounds or that they be merely mental states of the knower, then our social responsibilism isn’t internalist. Having said that, we might want to say that it is internalist “in an extended sense.” Although the grounds aren’t internal to the knower, they are to some member(s) of her epistemic community. In fact, we might want to refer to this as “Community Internalism” (Shogenji ms). But, it is clear that such a view isn’t internalism *proper*, and this shouldn’t be a surprising result, since the internalist-externalist debate is framed within an *individualistic* background. What matters in this debate is whether some factor is internal to the individual who knows, but our positive responsibilism is social (in the sense that someone at some point, but not necessarily the knower, needs to satisfy it) and so the “internalism” it promotes holds at the community level, not at the personal one.

But, when it comes to the personal negative responsibilist element of our account, it seems that we get an internal condition, since all outputs from the procedures are susceptible to defeating conditions that one is to monitor for. And, even if such monitoring is passive (i.e. we aren’t actively searching for defeating conditions), either the absence or presence of such defeating conditions seems reflectively accessible to the individual knower and so internal in both senses. So, if this is correct, we have three different kinds of elements of the normative component of knowledge: namely, one external reliabilist element, one internal responsibilist element due to this personal negative responsibilism and one social element due to the social positive responsibilism, which, given internalism proper, qualifies as externalist but can also be seen as an extension of internalism. Moreover, so far, our account, given the majoritarian configuration of the terms of engagement, is neither clearly internalist nor externalist.

Finally, notice that, given the functional nature of the procedures, they needn’t require the subject to possess any evidence concerning *p*, let alone the source. These procedures need to be truth-conducive and reasonably regarded as being so by the epistemic community but meeting these conditions doesn’t require the possession of any evidence by the knower (§§3.1, 3.7). Although responsiveness to the world is required for knowledge, responsiveness
to reasons isn’t. So, following the different procedures needn’t give us, although sometimes as a matter of fact does, any kind of internalist justificatory element.

So, there is no clear winner. Perhaps, we could try to work out whether the majority of procedures involve this internal justificatory element. If we could do such a thing, one camp is likely to come up as the winner. But that would be a shallow victory. The fact of the matter would remain that for some kinds of knowledge, achieved by means of certain “evidentialist” procedures, the nature of the normative component would be internalist and, for other kinds it would be externalist (given a majoritarian configuration). So, contrary to common opinion, it seems that epistemic responsibility needn’t motivate epistemic internalism about knowledge after all. Particularly, if, like our account, one attempts to accommodate the responsibilist element mainly within a social perspective, then there is no reason to think that some kind of internalism follows, let alone think of the responsibilist condition as internal to the knower. One can have a responsibilist account without it being internalist.

But, if what we are interested in is the role responsibility plays in knowledge and the internalism-externalism debate is to latch onto that interest, then internalism is to give up its individualist standpoint: the concern with the “access” of the knower to the normative factors. So, there might be a need to rephrase the central question of the current internalist-externalist debate given its individualism. The interesting question instead might be what, if any, combination of internal and external normative components applicable to the knower and her epistemic community is desirable. But, regardless of this, our social perspective certainly seems to have implications that challenge traditional epistemology: more precisely, it affects some individualist tenets of traditional epistemology while leaving most other tenets intact. Before considering this however, let us characterise the kind of social account that ours is.

5.2 Social Epistemology

Social epistemology is “the study of the social dimensions of knowledge” (Goldman 2006:1). The significance of social epistemology is sometimes seen as deriving from the fact that traditional or classical epistemology is too narrowly concerned with “non-social” knowledge-yielding methods. Social epistemology is then welcomed because it emphasises and studies the “social” methods, such as testimony (and peer disagreement). But, if anything like our account of knowledge is correct, then all such methods (or procedures) are in an important sense social. So, our account is an instance of social epistemology but, as we shall see, isn’t merely a useful extension of traditional epistemology.

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218 Well, strictly speaking, the winner is externalism, since the social element isn’t internalist (individualistically understood); but see below.
219 Assuming there aren’t other factors which are relevant to determining the positive epistemic status.
Goldman (2010), reacting to a comment of Alston (2005:5) that the material in Goldman’s *Knowledge in a Social World* (1999) “would be rejected by many contemporary epistemologists as ‘not real epistemology’,” argues that social epistemology is “real epistemology.” More precisely, that social epistemology, as practiced in such work, is a form or extension of traditional epistemology, where the latter is understood as being committed to a set of core tenets. These are the claims that (A) the epistemic agents are individuals, (B) the focus is on the study of epistemic evaluation or normativity, (C) the normative standards aren’t merely conventional or relativistic but have some sort of objective validity, (D) the central notions of epistemic attainment either entail or are closely linked to truth, (E) truth is an objective, largely mind-independent, affair, and (F) the central business of traditional epistemology is the critical examination of doxastic decision-making: adopting, retaining or revising one’s beliefs and other doxastic attitudes (Goldman 2010:2).

And, since the social epistemology practiced in Goldman (1999) holds on to those core tenets, Goldman suggests that it is “real epistemology.” But, Goldman (1999) is concerned with the kind of social epistemology interested in the evaluation (and improvement) of different types of social processes (here understood as processes requiring inter-personal interactions). So, the label “social epistemology” in this case applies to those investigations concerning the reliability of “inter-personal” processes, such as testimony. This kind of social epistemology is much welcomed, since an epistemology that neglects these (pervasive) social knowledge-yielding processes can only be an incomplete epistemology. So, according to this picture a complete epistemology consists of an individualistic epistemology (much along the lines of mainstream epistemology), which is concerned with “intra-personal” processes, and a social epistemology, which is concerned with the “inter-personal” ones. Goldman refers to this kind of social epistemology as “preservationist,” since it is an extension that “preserve[s] the core assumptions of traditional epistemology,” such as the central role and objectivity of truth and normativity (2010:5-6).

But there is a further kind of social epistemology that Goldman thinks is also “real epistemology.” This is “expansionist” social epistemology, which is “sufficiently continuous with traditional epistemology” (2010:15). But, expansionist social epistemology involves further expansion in the sense that some, but not most, of the core assumption might need some revision. Most notably perhaps, it is concerned with collective knowers (as well as individual ones), hence the need to revise (A). And although Goldman thinks that expansionist social epistemology should still be considered real epistemology, he doesn’t think all revisionist social epistemologies are real epistemology. Goldman doesn’t count social epistemologies that involve much revision of the traditional core tenets as real epistemology. And so he labels this
kind of social epistemology that rejects most or all of the core tenets “revisionist,” under which he includes “postmodernism, deconstructionism, social constructionism, and various social studies of science, including the ‘strong programme’ in sociology of science” (2010:3).  

So, two strands of social epistemology, “preservationism” and “expansionism,” are real epistemology, given that most of the traditional core assumptions are withheld, but “revisionism” isn’t. Now, one needn’t agree with this. First, one might disagree with his characterisation of “real epistemology” as epistemology which is in agreement with traditional epistemology: more specifically, as epistemology that holds on to, at least, most of (A)-(F). But, revisionist theories, one might argue, can be real epistemology. Second, one might want to reject the characterisation of traditional epistemology in terms of core tenets, and instead talk of core projects, as we have done (§1.1). The idea then would be that “real epistemology” is epistemology that addresses one or more of these traditional projects.

Anyway, since our account is both committed to all but one of those tenets (see below) and engaged with those projects, it counts even by Goldman’s lights as “real epistemology.” This then might give one the impression, since real epistemology for Goldman is very much continuous with traditional epistemology, that our account is conservative, as opposed to revisionist. But this to a certain extent is wrong. There certainly is a sense in which our account is conservative, since it accommodates those tenets (and projects). But, in some respects it is importantly revisionist. The reason we can’t straightforwardly see this, given Goldman’s characterisation of the subject-matter, is that he leaves out much of a widespread commitment of traditional epistemology, namely: its commitment to epistemic individualism in its different forms; which we shall now introduce.

### 5.2.1 Epistemic Individualism and Anti-Individualism

To be fair to Goldman, one strand of individualism is represented in the core tenets of traditional epistemology. For example, he says that (A) “the epistemic agents of traditional epistemology are *exclusively* individuals” (2010:2; my emphasis). That is, the primary epistemic subject is the individual. So, for traditional epistemology, knowledge-attributions to groups are reducible to knowledge-attributions to their members. This, as we might say, “Subject-of-Knowledge Individualism” is taken into account and Goldman thinks that epistemologies that reject it, such as expansionist social epistemology, still can be real epistemologies. Now, our account can certainly make sense of the fact that the vast majority of knowledge attributions are to individuals and of the claim that the individual is a subject of knowledge. But it isn’t

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220 But see Kusch 2011:875-7.
221 See Kusch 2011:877-82. Even if one doesn’t think so, one might anyway disagree with Goldman’s characterisation of the core tenets (although I find this a less plausible alternative).
committed to (A), since an expansion of the practice might allow for groups to become subjects of knowledge. So, although there is nothing in our account that denies that the individual is the primary knower (as opposed, say, to the community), all our account is committed to is that the individual is a subject of knowledge. So, since our account is neutral with regard to subject-of-knowledge individualism, this can’t be one the strands of individualism it revises.

And there is another strand that Goldman’s characterisation of the subject-matter is concerned with, which we might call “Cartesian Individualism.” After all, for Goldman, social epistemology is certainly welcomed because it emphasises and studies the “social” knowledge-yielding processes, such as testimony. These are “inter-personal” processes that traditional epistemology often ignores. Indeed, as Goldman (2009c:1) says:

Epistemology has had a strongly individualist orientation, at least since Descartes. [...] Achieving [...] knowledge is an individual, rather than a collective, enterprise. Descartes’s successors largely followed this lead, so the history of epistemology, down to our own time, has been a predominantly individualist affair. There are scattered exceptions. A handful of historical epistemologists gave brief space to the questions of knowing, or believing justifiably, based on the testimony of others.

Two of those epistemologists that Goldman notes are Hume and Reid, whose views on testimony were briefly touched upon above. But, whatever the differences between their views (to which we come back below), what matters for Goldman is that they were at least concerned with this “inter-personal” knowledge-yielding process (which is incidentally the most pervasive of them all). They didn’t then completely neglect these “social” processes, unlike his contemporaries and most successors. And, Cartesian individualism is, often enough (I suggest), behind this deliberate neglect. This individualism is the view that the pursuing of knowledge ought to be carried out in a solitary way, without the aid of others. And, this might be seen as an expression of the Cartesian ideal of epistemic autonomy, metaphorically put: that the individual epistemic agent ought to stand on her own epistemic feet. For example, in the Discourse, Descartes tells us that he found himself forced to become his own guide, emerging from the control of his teachers and texts, and resolving to seek “the true method of attaining the knowledge of everything within my mental capabilities” (Il:17; also I:9).

Knowledge is taken to be an essentially private and personal achievement. One is the sole competent epistemic agent: one is to trust only oneself, and so become a solitary Cartesian inquirer (“like a man who walks alone in the dark;” Il.17). So, this Cartesian subject, like

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223 Now, given the intellectual crisis of the 16th and 17th Centuries, many thinkers of this period were wary of testimony (see §2.2). Indeed, the awareness of the inanity or falsity of most of what had passed previously for knowledge dominated 17th Century epistemology. So, they were reacting to what they thought were excesses of the anti-individualism present in the medieval period.
Descartes (in some of his moods), when inquiring about \( p \) would engage himself in the relevant investigation, rather than require the relevant testimony. Frivolously put, this Cartesian subject, unlike a Baconian one, would ask to be sent the money rather than the reports.

However, this individualism, which ignores testimony and other social sources as knowledge-yielding processes, can be disregarded since it would rule out both the transmissibility of knowledge (§1.5.4) and the possibility of knowledge in some domains (such as the historical) that depend essentially on testimony (§1.1). And, since it isn’t clear what can legitimately motivate this individualism, we would consequently do better rejecting it. Indeed, I don’t think anyone would want to hold such Cartesian individualism, not even Descartes (although in some of his moods he seems to suggest this view, hence the name; but consider the context in which he wrote this—fn.223). Moreover, it won’t work to suggest that if we had an infinite amount of time, resources and so on, then we could do without testimony.\(^{224}\) Even if this were true, it is uninteresting, since we are in the business of understanding human knowers, and not some ideal knower (§1.4). As Tyler Burge says, “[relying] on others is perhaps not metaphysically necessary for any possible rational being. But it is cognitively fundamental to beings at all like us” (1993:466).\(^{225}\) So, any investigation into human knowledge should be at odds with Cartesian individualism.

And, of course, our account is, but even Goldman’s preservationist social epistemology, which is the most conservative form of social epistemology, rejects such individualism. So if this were the only way we weren’t accepting individualism, our account wouldn’t be especially revisionist. After all, as Kornblith (1994:94) suggests, “an account which will leave important room for input from the study of group processes and institutions, but will leave the overall structure of our epistemological theories substantially unchanged” instantiates a “conservative approach to social epistemology.” But, this isn’t the only form of individualism our account rejects. To see this, let us first introduce Kitcher’s (1994:113) useful characterisation, exploiting the simple process reliabilist view of knowledge, of minimal social epistemology:

1) Individuals are the primary subjects of knowledge.
2) S knows that \( p \) iff (a) S believes that \( p \) and (b) \( p \) and (c) S’s belief that \( p \) was formed by a reliable process.
3) The reliability of the process that produces S’s belief that \( p \) depends on the properties and actions of agents other than S.

So far then, we have considered an individualism that clearly concerns (1) and one that concerns the range of processes that can yield knowledge, which can be seen as denying (3). And we have said that we remain neutral about the former subject-of-knowledge

\(^{224}\) But consider, say, compensating for other’s positional advantage (both spatial and temporal).
\(^{225}\) See also Fricker 2006.
individualism, but reject the latter Cartesian individualism. But we can reject Cartesian individualism while still not accepting (3), very much in the spirit of the above Cartesian ideal of epistemic autonomy. Reductionism about testimony, the view that positive evidence that isn’t testimonially grounded is required for the acceptance of testimony, shows this. In this case then, “we can ultimately calibrate informants, much as we calibrate instruments, so that all that we claim to know comes to be based upon the exercise of our individual judgement” (Kitcher 1994:111). So, although testimony isn’t being ignored, we still require the individual to stand on her own epistemic feet: in other words, for knowledge to be a personal achievement. And, Hume is normally seen as endorsing this sort of individualism, while Reid clearly denies it: we can legitimately accept testimony even if we lack positive reasons for it. Reductionism about testimony then is an instance of a weaker kind of individualism, what we might call “Procedural Individualism:” an individualism concerned with the type of epistemic demands set by the procedures, particularly “inter-personal” procedures. And, procedural individualism fosters the type of demands that accord to the above Cartesian ideal, hence the requirement for positive grounds not gained through reliance on others.

Now, we haven’t here been concerned with particular procedures. For example, when dealing with Acceptance procedures we remained neutral with regard to the reductionist debate, which is certainly an advantage given its controversial nature (although, I did express my sympathy for a hybrid account of testimonial acceptance, where no positive evidence of any kind is sometimes required; but for all that I have said it might turn out that the right rules of acceptance are reductionist). So, we haven’t here argued for procedural anti-individualism, even if much of what we have said would suggest it (in fact, it is difficult to imagine that an epistemic community, which relies on others for the responsible development of the procedures, doesn’t allow its members to rely on others when exploiting those procedures). So, this again isn’t a kind of individualism that our account is committed to rejecting.

But, one’s epistemic reliance on others needn’t be limited just to instances in which one employs a non-reductive procedure. Indeed, our account makes this clear with its combination of reliability and responsibilism. Roughly, in order for S to know, S needs to follow the rules that are responsibly developed to be truth-conducive by S’s community, as well as those rules actually being truth-conducive. So, in our case, (2) and (3) need to be amended to capture our combination of reliability and responsibilism and, once the relevant changes have been made, we end up with an altered (3) along the lines of (3’) “the knowledge-constituting status of the belief that ρ depends on properties and actions of agents other than S.” This is the product of

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\[227\] See §§2.2-4, especially fn.50.
our social responsibilism and suggests a more comprehensive kind of anti-individualism that isn’t merely concerned with the type of epistemic demands set by procedures but rather with all normative conditions on knowledge. So, let us introduce, following Sanford Goldberg, “Knowledge Individualism:” the view that “all of the epistemic conditions on knowledge pertain to (states of mind and/or cognitive processes in) the knowing subject herself” (2010:3). And, not only is this individualism a widespread commitment of traditional epistemology, but also our reasonableness condition on the procedures for knowledge, which is met by our social responsibilism, rejects it. So, it is with respect to this knowledge individualism that our social epistemology is revisionist.

So, although our account is largely conservative with respect to (A)-(F), it revises a widely assumed individualistic presumption, which both preservationist and expansionist social epistemologies, as characterised by Goldman, needn’t oppose to. To borrow a building metaphor from Kusch (2011), our social epistemology shouldn’t be merely understood as adding a new storey to the epistemological house (but not laying any new foundations), as preservationism does, or building a new wing to the house, as expansionism does. Instead, the whole epistemological edifice is social epistemology. This is because of the way our knowledge anti-individualism is achieved: not through procedural anti-individualism (such as anti-reductionism about testimony) but by means of the socio-historical development of the norms of knowledge. This then afford us a more wide-ranging social epistemology, but one which, even by Goldman’s (stringent) lights, still is “real epistemology.”

So, according to our account, real epistemology doesn’t (merely) become social because some doxastic decision-making is “squarely based on the use of social evidence” (Goldman 2010:6). Such a conception of social epistemology would be too restrictive (it would certainly ignore the possibility of a social responsibilism about the procedures exploited). But Goldman wouldn’t agree since he thinks that “[in] general there is nothing social about [doxastic decision-making]. Belief-forming and belief-revising processes are not themselves inherently social, and evidence used as a basis for forming and revising beliefs need not involve subject matter (i.e., content) concerning other people either” (2010:6). I hope the foregoing chapters show the plausibility and fruitfulness of the claim that the knowledge-yielding procedures are inherently social. Indeed, they all are social in the sense that they are regulative rules of the testimonial practice and they are both mainly inter-subjectively developed, through time and a division of labour, and socially inherited (§§2.1-4). So, according to our account, we get social epistemology through the use of all knowledge-yielding

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228 For another, not incompatible, way of establishing knowledge anti-individualism, see Goldberg 2010.
229 This claim can be understood as denying Cartesian or procedural individualism.
procedures. Social epistemology isn’t merely an extension: we aren’t merely expanding traditional epistemology into the social arena. We are socialising and historicising the knowledge-yielding procedures. So, the whole practice is the product of expansion through social space and historical time (cf. Fricker 2010). And, as seen, our epistemic interdependence doesn’t merely create a branch within epistemology, but is responsible for the whole epistemological practice (narrowly understood). In this way then the nature of our epistemic reliance on others is much more pervasive than Goldman (2010) seems to allow.

Indeed, (narrow) epistemology is through and through social. So, like the ‘strong programme’ and other “revisionist” social epistemologies, “the social component is always present and always constitutive of knowledge” (Bloor 1991:166). But, we can make sense of this (oft-perceived) radical claim (as well as not distancing from the contingencies of real historical cases) without the (oft-perceived) excesses of these “revisionist” social epistemologies: the denial of the traditional (A)-(F) tenets (which I, conservatively, think should be mostly retained). And we clearly also avoid the deficits of “Cartesian epistemologies,” which hold on to Cartesian individualism and the accompanying asocial conception of epistemic agents. Ours then is a more radical conception of social epistemology that Goldman (2010) allows but which is much more in the spirit of a truly social epistemology. Indeed, we might even say that ours is a real social epistemology.

5.3 Conclusion

To conclude, the account of knowledge offered has much plausibility and explanatory power. And, it seems to enjoy different advantages over some major competitors. Indeed, I think we arrived at a comprehensive reflective equilibrium, which aims to promote both accuracy and understanding, as well as the traditional meliorative goal to improve our epistemic lives, and which in turn vindicates our starting points. Minimally, I take it we have placed our account as a strong competitor itself and shown that further investigation is warranted. Understanding knowledge as involving a crucial and pervasive socio-temporal dimension seems to have much to offer by way of answering some core questions in (narrow) epistemology. Indeed, an important lesson from the above is that one can make progress in epistemology if one starts from a social perspective.

230 But, it isn’t the only component (ibid.).
231 See also Fricker 1998, Talbott 2002.
232 Although this examination was limited (since not all competitors were examined for the usual reason of space limitation) and so our final verdict needs to reflect that: it certainly can’t be that our account is the best one around (which I doubt will disappoint many).
233 But, to echo Hawthorne (2004:188), this opinion regarding the equilibrium achieved “should not matter much at this stage.”
Our account is an attempt to do justice to those realities of social interaction, which are sometimes neglected in mainstream epistemology. Indeed, since knowledge is partly the result of a social enterprise, we can give social epistemology centre-stage in its study. And, our account, while avoiding excesses normally associated with some revisionist social epistemologies, certainly is an instance of a thorough social epistemology, which is a more social social epistemology. And all of the above has been achieved because from the beginning, in line with Kvanvig’s advice that “we should never begin to think that the deepest epistemological questions concern the isolated intellect” (1992:177), we considered knowledge from a social perspective.


—— (2010c) “Relevant Alternatives, Perceptual Knowledge and Discrimination,” *Nous* 44:245-68.


