Philosophia (2009) 37:169–181
DOI 10.1007/s11406-008-9141-9

Epistemological Contextualism and the Knowledge Account of Assertion

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Received: 12 December 2007 / Revised: 7 May 2008 / Accepted: 13 May 2008 /
Published online: 6 June 2008

Abstract In this paper, I take up an argument advanced by Keith DeRose (*Philosophical Review*, 111:167–203, 2002) that suggests that the knowledge account of assertion provides the basis of an argument in favor of contextualism. I discuss the knowledge account as the conjunction of two theses—a thesis claiming that knowledge is sufficient to license assertion KA and one claiming that knowledge is necessary to license assertion AK. Adducing evidence from Stalnaker's account of assertion, from conversational practice, and from arguments often raised in favor of the knowledge account, I suggest that neither the AK nor the KA theses are plausible. That is, I argue that the knowledge account of assertion to which DeRose appeals is in fact not suitable as an account of assertion. Given that DeRose's argument stands and falls with the knowledge account, I claim that the argument therefore fails.

Keywords Epistemology · Assertion · Knowledge · Epistemological contextualism

Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in the norms governing links between knowledge and assertional practice. Thus, e.g., Williamson (2000) has suggested that "Only knowledge warrants assertion." Furthermore, recent work in the debate between contextualists and invariantists in epistemology has attempted to muster evidence from the knowledge account of assertion in favor of both contextualism and invariantism.

In this paper, I take up an argument advanced by Keith DeRose (2002) that suggests that the knowledge account of assertion provides the basis of an argument in favor of contextualism. I argue that the knowledge account of assertion to which DeRose appeals is in fact not suitable as an account of assertion and that the argument therefore fails. In The Knowledge Account, I discuss the knowledge account as the conjunction of two theses—a thesis claiming that knowledge is sufficient to license assertion KA and one claiming that knowledge is necessary to license assertion

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AK—and, continuing in More on the AK Norm, discuss the plausibility of the AK thesis, adducing evidence from Stalnaker's account of assertion to register concern with respect to the AK thesis. I take up the relation between the knowledge account of assertion and contextualism in Invariantism and the Knowledge Account, noting that invariantists need reject neither the AK nor the KA norms. After this, in DeRose's Argument, I introduce and discuss DeRose's argument intended to demonstrate that the knowledge account of assertion supports contextualism. Then, in The Radical Response Considered, Introducing the Modest Response and Motivating the Modest Response, I consider two ways in which the invariantist might respond to DeRose's argument, before offering some concluding remarks in Conclusion.

The Knowledge Account

What are the norms linking assertion to knowledge? Hawthorne (2004, p. 217) seems to suggest that they are twofold. I will term these norms the KA and AK norms:

KA One knows *p* at *t* only if one may properly assert *p* at *t*.
AK One properly asserts *p* at *t* only if one knows *p* at *t*.

I will reserve discussion of the KA norm for later. At this juncture, however, it would be worthwhile to consider the AK norm in greater detail, particularly the claim made by Williamson (2000)[1] that the AK norm provides, in Williamson's terms, a "simple" account of asserting, according to which "all other norms for assertion are the joint outcome of the AK rule and considerations not specific to assertion." (Williamson 2000, p. 241)

Here's a quick and dirty argument that provides some motivation for acceptance of AK via widespread convictions concerning the nature of assertion. Consider that those who would initially deny a norm like AK as being too strong a norm generally do so in favor of the weaker condition:

AB One properly asserts *p* at *t* only if one believes *p* at *t*.

There is, however, a direct route from the AB norm to the AK norm that provides some initial support for the acceptance of AK as a further norm governing assertional practice.

It is widely held that the overarching norm governing belief itself is that of believing that *p* only if *p* is true. This is the point of distinguishing belief from desire in terms of its direction of fit; beliefs aim at fitting the world, whereas desires aim at bringing it about that the world fits them. Certainly, however, if one should believe that *p* only if *p* is true, then one should believe that *p* only if one has adequate evidence that *p* is true. And, in the case of belief—even more so, perhaps, than in the case of assertion—it would seem that the level of adequacy of evidential support at which beliefs should aim is support sufficient to underwrite knowledge. Thus, it is a norm of belief that one should believe that *p* only if one has evidence sufficient to

[1] Cf. DeRose (2002)

underwrite knowledge that *p*. (cf. Bernard Williams 1978, pp. 32–46) Combining this with AB, however, one derives AK. Thus, this discussion allows us to recognize some support for the notion that the AK norm, though perhaps not the *primary* norm governing assertion, is at the very least a derivative assertional norm.[2]

Though this argument might, on first blush, seem compelling as a motivation for accepting the AK norm as, at the very least, a derivative assertional norm, there are some reasons for doubting the argument's effectiveness. Thus, some might object that the argument seems to conflate the conditions required for satisfying a given norm with effective ways of satisfying these conditions. Consider the claim, plausible presumably to at least some Christians, that a deep and abiding faith in Jesus is a necessary condition for being a good Christian. It may well be that an effective way to maintain a deep and abiding faith is to associate only with other Christians. However, it would be wrong to suppose that associating only with other Christians would thus be a necessary condition for being a good Christian; missionaries who spend their lives bringing their faith to the unconverted would otherwise be quite crestfallen.

Similarly, truth may be the norm governing belief, and believing only what is grounded in adequate evidence may be an effective way of acquiring true beliefs. From this, however, it doesn't follow that grounding one's beliefs in adequate evidence is a derivative doxastic norm. Clearly there may be other ways, besides grounding beliefs in adequate evidence, for getting at the truth. Nor does the truth norm of belief, by itself, bear on which of these various ways for getting at the truth are themselves norms governing belief.

More on the AK Norm

Indeed, there are further reasons to be skeptical of the validity of the AK norm. To see this, it will be useful to consider for a moment what the *aim* of assertion is. Presumably, the norms governing assertion are norms deriving from what the constitutive aim of assertion is. Thus, to claim that in order properly to assert that *p* it is necessary that one know that *p* is to claim that one is epistemically licensed to aim at the goal that is constitutive of assertion only if one knows what it is that one asserts.

Following Stalnaker (1978), I will take it that what assertion does is aim to reduce the *context set*.[3] In order to make sense of this claim, however, it will be necessary to introduce a bit of terminology. On Stalnaker's account of conversational context, a *context* may be understood as a set of possible worlds **C**, where **C**:= {*w*: *w* is a live option in the context}. Similarly, the *content* of an assertion that *p* is a set of worlds

[2] In a recent paper, F. Hindriks (2007) has advanced a similar sort of argument for deriving the AK norm from the linkage between belief and knowledge. (cf. pp. 403–404) However, Hindriks' argument is qualified in that it applies only to situations of normal trust. Given this, Hindriks' support for the AK norm is qualified as well: "the rule does not apply to all assertions, but only to some [and thus] the knowledge rule is not a constitutive rule of assertion." (p. 404) Hindriks' skepticism about the status of the AK rule as a norm of assertion comports well with the criticisms of AK in the remainder of this section and in the following section.

[3] For a related appeal of Stalnaker's account of assertion, cf. Schaffer (2008). Note, however, that Schaffer endorses the knowledge norm of assertion.

P, where **P**:= {*w*: *w* is a world in which it is the case that *p*}. A successful assertion results in an *update*, $\mathbf{C}^+$, of the conversational context, where $\mathbf{C}^+ := \mathbf{C} \cap \mathbf{P}$. Finally, Stalnaker understands the *contrast*, $\mathbf{C}^-$, to be that part of the context set that does not intersect with the content set, or $\mathbf{C}^- := \mathbf{C} - \mathbf{P}$. What an assertion aims at, then, is eliminating the contrast $\mathbf{C}^-$ and thus reducing the context set **C** to the update $\mathbf{C}^+$.

Given this discussion, then, to claim that some condition S is necessary to license assertion is to claim that that condition S is necessary to license eliminating the contrast. There are, however, reasons to suggest that, given the sheer variety of purposes that assertions serve, the myriads of situations in which assertions are licensed and the varieties of conversational goals that speakers pursue, something less than knowledge may be all that is necessary to license eliminating the contrast—and, therefore, that something less than knowledge may be all that is necessary to license assertion.

To see this, consider the following two exchanges:

(a)

Speaker 1: "It's going to rain."
Speaker 2: "You don't know that."
Speaker 1: "Maybe not, but I'm pretty sure it will."
Speaker 2: "Oh. If it's going to rain I should take an umbrella, then."

(b)

Speaker 3: "Barack will win the nomination."
Speaker 4: "You can't know that."
Speaker 3: "No, but I think he will."
Speaker 4: "Good. We need a real change in this country."

Both of these exchanges are perfectly natural examples of conversation. Arguably, however, neither involves an instance in which knowledge is the necessary condition for eliminating the contrast. Consider exchange (a). In this exchange, speaker 1, when challenged, explicitly disavows knowledge of the upcoming climatic conditions, merely claiming a less-than-certain level of confidence. Nevertheless, despite this, speaker 2 allows the conversation to proceed with the updated presupposition that it will rain. Since one of the purposes of conversation is to allow parties to reach agreement, it would seem plausible to suppose that the necessary condition on licensing eliminating the contrast will involve the agreement of one's conversational partner; if that partner is comfortable proceeding on the basis of something less than knowledge, then it is *this* agreement on the part of the interlocutors—and not an artificial knowledge norm—that would seem to determine whether a given conversational contribution is licensed.[4] This would provide at least prima facie support for the idea that, e.g., certain contexts of action planning and coordination like the one represented in exchange (a) are such that something less than knowledge is required for conversational success.

Indeed, in situations in which both parties are interested in pursuing a line of inquiry, it would seem that mere belief is sufficient for eliminating the contrast. This would seem to be the lesson of exchange (b). In exchange (b), speaker 3 does not

[4] Cf. Lewis (1983): "it's not as easy as you might think to say something that will be unacceptable for lack of required presuppositions. Say something that requires a missing presupposition, and straightaway that presupposition springs into existence, making what you said acceptable after all. (Or at least, this is what happens if your conversational partners tacitly acquiesce ...)" (Lewis 1983, p. 234)

even claim great confidence in the content of his assertion, but contents him/herself with mere belief. Note, however, that the way in which the conversation proceeds indicates that this retreat to mere belief does not shift the content of the assertion from a claim that Barack will win the election to a claim that speaker 3 *thinks* that Barack will win the election. For, were one to understand the content to have shifted in this way, speaker 4's response would make no sense: that speaker 3 *thinks* that Barack will win the election has no direct bearing on whether the country will get the change it needs. In order for speaker 4's contribution to make sense, it must be the case that the content of speaker 3's initial assertion remains unchanged, despite the fact that speaker 3 claims no more than mere belief in that content; speaker 4 nevertheless accepts the assertion as a licensed one, and signals that the conversation may proceed with the contrast eliminated as indicated by speaker 3's initial assertion.

If the considerations suggested by exchanges (a) and (b) are correct, then, something less than knowledge is all that is necessary to eliminate the contrast. And if, as we suggested at the outset, the norms governing assertion ought to derive their motivation from the constitutive aim of assertion, and if, further, the constitutive aim of assertion is—as Stalnaker suggests—eliminating the contrast, then it would seem that something less than knowledge is all that is required to license assertion. Given these considerations, then, we have reason to reject the AK norm.

Invariantism and the Knowledge Account

Of course, as we noted at the outset, the AK norm is not the only norm linking assertion and knowledge. There is another norm in the offing—viz., the KA norm—that would provide a normative link between knowledge and assertion. That such a link would be significant is evident from, for example, Keith DeRose's recent suggestion that what he terms the "knowledge account of assertion" provides strong evidence in favor of contextualism. As DeRose puts it, "if the standards for when one is in a position to warrantedly assert that P are the same as those that comprise a truth-condition for 'I know that P,' then if the former vary with context, so do the latter." (DeRose 2002)

Certainly, it cannot be the case that the conjunction of KA and AK *alone* motivates contextualism. Indeed, there could be skeptics who embrace both the KA and AK norms, along with the further claim that

> [NS] No contexts are ones in which the standards for warrantedly asserting that P [*mutatis mutandis*, for knowing that P] are other than the highest standards—i.e., those that require the assertor [knower] to rule out *any* situation incompatible in the context with the truth of P.

Nor must invariantists reject the conjunction of the KA and AK norms; they *can* maintain the truth of those norms, along with

> [IS] The standards for warrantedly asserting that P [*mutatis mutandis*, for knowing that P] are invariant with respect to the context in which the assertor [knower] finds herself.

Nevertheless—as I hope to demonstrate—the invariantist may well have reason for rejecting at least one of the knowledge-assertion norms, viz., the KA norm.

DeRose's Argument

We are now in a position to appreciate DeRose's argument. Although it is possible for an invariantist to embrace the assertional form of [IS]—i.e., that the standards for warranted assertion are invariant with respect to context, DeRose takes it in fact as uncontroversial that [IS] is false with respect to the question of warranted assertion. That is,

1. What counts as properly asserting p varies with the context of utterance.

But then, DeRose suggests, the contextualist conclusion regarding the variation of knowledge with the context of utterance quickly follows:

2. One knows that *p* at *t* iff one may properly assert *p* at *t*.

Thus,

3. What counts as knowing p at t depends on the context at *t*.

Note, however, that the argument from 1 to 3 as stated makes it unclear as to which of the two norms, AK or KA, one considers when one analyzes the argument. As we have so far had reason to question the plausibility of the AK norm, however, we will focus in the remainder of our discussion on the KA component of the biconditional. That is, for the sake of clarity, we will now only consider the KA component of 2:

2'. One knows that p at t only if one may properly assert *p* at *t*.

We will accept for now that it would be difficult for invariantists to argue against premise (1)—indeed, the success of warranted assertability maneuvers so in vogue among invariantists are dependent on accepting premise (1). Thus, if for now we leave aside questions cited previously regarding the acceptability of the AK norm, it would seem that the strength of DeRose's argument stands and falls with premise (2′), i.e., with the KA norm.

Note first that DeRose is not as clear as he could be about the way in which (2) relies on motivation *both* the KA and AK norms. Thus, in presenting the argument he notes that:

> Given how secure is the premise that assertability is context-variable, the knowledge account of assertion, which provides the only other premise needed to establish contextualism, is lethal to invariantism. (DeRose 2002)

However, it is misleading to suggest that evidence about the relation between knowledge and assertion supports both planks of the "knowledge account of assertion" equally. Indeed, all of the evidence that DeRose adduces in favor of the knowledge account of assertion—and all of the evidence presented in the discussion in Williamson (2000) to which DeRose appeals for additional support—is in motivation of the AK norm.[5]

[5] This is perhaps forgivable in that many of those with whom DeRose has debated this point in the literature have seemed to accept the KA norm. Thus Hawthorne (2004) suggests—following Brandom (1983)—that assertion provides a reassertion license. Such a claim, however, if we are assuming the truth of the AK norm, simply amounts to the KA norm.

Given the weight that the KA norm must bear in DeRose's argument, it is perhaps surprising that the most explicit *mention* the norm gets is the following, in the course of a single paragraph:

> The strength of the position that one represents oneself as being in when one asserts that P is just that of knowing that *P*, nothing more or less. … In either of its forms then, the knowledge account of assertion says that one is well-enough positioned to assert that P iff one knows that P. (DeRose 2002)

Nowhere in the lead-up to this passage, however, nor in the discussion that follows, is there evidence presented in defense of the KA norm. It is the silent partner of the two knowledge norms of assertion, despite the fact that the KA norm is an equal partner in the "knowledge account of assertion" that DeRose employs as the argumentative fulcrum in his argument in favor of contextualism.[6] Furthermore, it would seem that the KA norm is even more problematic than the AK norm that we had reason to criticize in The Knowledge Account and More on the AK Norm.

Certainly, it would seem obvious that counterexamples to the KA principle abound. Thus, someone who, in a pub in London, utters:

4. "That man is not lighting his cigarette with a $100 bill," is violating assertional practice—on the Gricean schema, he's violating the Maxim of Relation. DeRose might have anticipated these sorts of counterexamples to the KA principle, however. He notes:

> We are here interested only in those [warranted assertability conditions for assertions] that pertain to one's being well-enough positioned with respect to the proposition asserted to be able to assert it, and are ignoring other conditions—e.g., that the assertion be conversationally relevant. (DeRose 2002)

The suggestion could then be that any seeming counterexamples to the KA norm aren't counterexamples to the claim that knowing that p puts one in a sufficient position *epistemically* to be warranted in claiming that *p*.

Let us first note the dialectical position that we are in. DeRose has presented a two-premise argument, one of whose premises is the KA norm; however, he has provided no positive evidence for the KA norm—all of the examples adduced support the distinct AK norm. Given this situation, it would seem that the invariantist need do nothing to resist the force of DeRose's argument. However, it would seem that the invariantist can do more than merely point to the lack of positive support for the KA norm. Indeed, there are two responses available to the invariantist—although she cannot, at the same time, avail herself of both.

According to the first response, the argument adduced to DeRose from premises [1] and [2'] to [3] involves a subtle ambiguity. Tracing out this ambiguity, however, involves denying the fundamental intuition about the variability of assertional standards with respect to context upon which DeRose's initial argument was based.

[6] Adam Leite, in his (2007), notes that "DeRose does not explicitly defend this claim." Leite continues, however, by seeming to accept as a justification for the lack of further defense DeRose's statement that "[the AK norm] is the only rule governing assertion that has to do with asserting only what one is positioned well enough with respect to." (Quoted in Leite, fn. 5) As should be immediately obvious, however, this is not an *argument* in favor of the KA norm.

Given this, the first response might thus be too radical. For those invariantists for whom such a response is not acceptable, there is a second response in the offing, according to which, though the epistemic standards for proper assertion may vary according to context, this variation fails to have an impact on the standards required for knowing a proposition in given context. We will discuss the first response—which we will refer to as the *Radical Response*—in the following section, The Radical Response Considered, then pursue an investigation of the second response—the *Modest Response*—in Introducing the Modest Response.

The Radical Response Considered

We noted above that the Radical Response, the first of the proposed responses to DeRose's argument, rests on noting a subtle ambiguity in the argument from premises [1] and [2'] to [3]. In order to see this, note that, as adduced by DeRose as a response to examples such as the utterance presented in [4] suggests, there are two available readings of the KA norm, viz.,

[KA1] One knows p at t only if one may properly assert—i.e., is epistemically licensed in asserting—p at t.
[KA2] One knows p at t only if one may properly assert—i.e., is according with all maxims governing assertional practice with respect to the utterance of—p at t.

The first reading of the KA norm, KA1, involves properly *epistemic* considerations only, whereas the second reading, KA2, involves all considerations bearing on the appropriate performance of a given assertional utterance in a given context.

Note further that, parallel to the two readings of the KA norm, there will be two available readings of the assertional form of the claim IS, viz.,

[IS1] The properly *epistemic* standards for properly asserting that P are invariant with respect to the context in which the assertor finds herself.
[IS2] The totality of standards for properly asserting that P is invariant with respect to the context in which the assertor finds herself.

As in the case of the two readings of the KA norm, IS1 involves properly *epistemic* considerations only, whereas IS2 involves all considerations bearing on the appropriate performance of a given assertional utterance in a given context.

Recall DeRose's original argument:

[1] What counts as properly asserting p varies with the context of utterance.
[2] One knows that p at t only if one may properly assert p at t.

Thus,

[3] What counts as knowing p at t depends on the context at t.

In considering the argument initially, we accepted without comment DeRose's claim that it is virtually universally accepted that [1] is incontrovertible. Now, however, we have reason to read this claim as being more complicated than initially supposed. For [1] is ambiguous between the purely epistemic and the all-things-

considered readings of "properly asserting." And it is not clear that the intuitions motivating acceptance of [1] aren't, in fact, ones given their strength by the rejection of IS2, rather than IS1. If this is the case, it would be open to the invariantist to maintain support for IS1—indeed, I am inclined to think that this is the strategy that the invariantist ought to pursue.

Following out this line of argument, the invariantist would suggest that, just as the only form of the KA norm that could motivate the argument from [1] to [3] is KA1, similarly the only form of premise [1] that would allow the argument to proceed involves the rejection of IS1. However, the invariantist would proceed, the prospect at which our intuitions actually recoil is only the acceptance of IS2. This allows the invariantist to sustain her commitment to IS1, while nevertheless accepting premise 1 of the argument—albeit in the innocuous form involving the rejection merely of IS2, and thus *not* allowing DeRose's contextualist argument to proceed.

It is crucial to emphasize once again the dialectic here. Since DeRose is presenting an argument *against* invariantism, it is open to the invariantist to appeal to invariantist intuitions in responding to the argument. Furthermore, since, as we have seen, DeRose provides no positive support in favor of the central premise of his argument, the KA norm, and—in particular—KA1, there seems little reason for the invariantist to be concerned that a correct account of the norms of assertion—including, among others, the AK norm—provides support for contextualism.

Introducing the Modest Response

Of course, the notion that the properly epistemic standards for licensed assertion vary according to the context of utterance enjoys a great deal of plausibility. Indeed, if anything that notion was bolstered by our discussion of some of the weaknesses of the AK norm in More on the AK Norm. For this reason, it would be useful for the invariantist to have a line of response open to her that doesn't require her rejecting the variability of the epistemic standards for licensed assertion. There is such an available strategy, however: it is the second response to which we alluded briefly at the conclusion of DeRose's Argument, the Modest Response.

This Modest Response available to the invariantist is to accept that the *epistemic* standards for proper assertion may vary according to context, but to deny that this variation has an impact on the standards for knowing a proposition in given context. That is, the invariantist can present suitable counterexamples to the KA norm, read with an epistemic interpretation of the phrase "properly assert." In fact, one might think that any of the accounts of warranted assertability employed by invariantists—including Rysiew's (2001)—could be employed to suggest that there will be numerous instances in which, in a particular conversational context, though the standards for *knowledge* remain unchanged, the standards for what may be asserted have risen to require evidence greater than that needed simply to know. Certainly, for those invariantists who employ warranted assertability maneuvers, this response will have the virtue of being utterly consistent with parallel invariantist responses to deal with knowledge attributions.

Indeed, it is worthwhile to note that there is at least some evidence from Williamson's own discussion of the knowledge norm of assertion that suggests that

there might well be many examples of conversational practice supporting the claim that knowledge alone is often insufficient to license assertion. Consider the following quote from Williamson (2000), adduced as evidence in favor of the knowledge account of assertion: "Conversational patterns confirm the knowledge account. Consider a standard response to an assertion, the question 'How do you know?'. The question presupposes that it has an answer, that somehow you do know." (Williamson 2000, 252) Williamson notes that this question involves "an implicit challenge," and that the absence of an answer to the challenge implies the absence of warrant for the assertion. Given this, then, Williamson is suggesting that it is a necessary condition for one to have license to assert that *p* that one be able to answer the challenge as to how one knows that *p*.

Pace Williamson, however, this requirement would seem to mean that assertion requires more than mere knowledge.[7] The question "How do you know?" requires a verbal response; the response to a how-question is itself an assertion. Thus, to answer the challenge to one's assertion that *p* concerning how it is that one knows that *p*, presumably one must be able to assert that one knows that *p*—say, because one fulfills conditions C. Answering the challenge as to how one knows that *p*, then, would seem to require one's *knowing* that one knows that *p*.

It might seem that this consideration is simply a *reductio ad absurdum* of the knowledge account of assertion. This, however, might well be too quick. We are here interpreting Williamson as suggesting that it is a necessary condition for one to have license to assert that *p* that one *be able* to answer the challenge as to how one knows that *p*. That is, there is no requirement that one have a standing belief that one knows; given this, there is no immediate requirement that, in order to know, and thus be licensed to assert, one must at the same time know that one knows. Nor does the necessary condition bring with the concomitant threat of an infinite regress; only if challenged must one respond with an assertion, and presumably the challenges will, as a matter of course, come to an end. These points ought not be understood as an endorsement of Williamson's suggestion, by any means. Rather, they simply indicate that Williamson's suggestion is not utterly indefensible.

If these considerations are at all correct, however, then one might draw from them the conclusion that Williamson is wrong to suggest that assertion requires knowledge. For the considerations would seem to motivate the idea that what assertion requires is in fact something stronger: viz., the ability to know that one knows. And, as we saw in the preceding paragraph, this may in fact be too strong a position to maintain. At the very least, though, the considerations Williamson raises would suggest that, at least in those cases of assertion to which the response "How do you know?" is appropriate, what licenses assertion is something more than mere knowledge. In those cases, at least, what licenses assertion is only evidence sufficient to underwrite knowledge that one knows. Thus, in all of those cases, mere knowledge would be epistemically insufficient to license assertion. Given this, however, we would seem to have at least some *prima facie* evidence that there is no KA norm governing epistemically licensed assertion.

[7] Note, however, that Douven (2006) has recently suggested a reading of "The 'How Do You Know' Response" that requires even *less* than knowledge—viz., the rational credibility criterion that Douven defends. Cf. particularly the discussion at Douven (2006), pp. 468–72.

Motivating the Modest Response

In the previous section we suggested that Williamson's own discussion of the knowledge norm of assertion might offer a counterexample to the KA norm: cases in which the epistemic standards sufficient to license assertion require not merely knowing, but the ability to know that one knows. The suggestion, then, is that such cases would be ones in which, though the standards for *knowledge* remain unchanged, the standards for what may be asserted have risen to require evidence greater than that needed simply to know. As such, then, such cases would be exactly the sort of case to which the invariantist wishing to embrace the Modest Response, introduced at the outset of Introducing the Modest Response, would wish to appeal.

However, the defender of the link between the knowledge norm and contextualism might respond by simply digging in her heels, suggesting that, in those cases in which the challenge "How do you know?" is appropriate, the criterion for knowledge itself rises. In doing so, the defender of the DeRose's position would be suggesting that, in such contexts, knowing that p requires the knowledge that one knows that p—i.e., that the context is one in which the standards for knowing are raised along with the standards for asserting.

The availability of such a rejoinder to the defender of the knowledge norm as a motivator for contextualism suggests that the second response strategy, the modest response strategy, is not as easy to motivate as it might first appear. There are two difficulties with which proponents of this strategy must deal. The first, of course, is to present examples that do not lend themselves to interpretation in a way that is compatible with a contextualist reading of the KA norm. The second is to present examples that are instances of properly epistemic considerations—and not, e.g., simply instances of other, non-epistemic, Gricean norms. That is, the examples must be such that it is clear that the assertor knows, but is nevertheless not licensed in asserting—indeed, not *epistemically* licensed in asserting.

It seems to me that a number of such examples are available to the invariantist. I will propose two. For the first, consider a case in which a group of mathematicians have come together in a working group to discuss theorems that they are researching. The mathematicians have one rule: when making a claim, one must be able to back up that claim with a proof that can be presented on the chalkboard—no computer proofs, no hand-waving, no appealing to work done by others that cannot be replicated in the presence of the group. Suppose furthermore that there is another mathematician, Professor Bolshoi Mozok, not a member of the group, who is revered by the group for being inerrant in his claims; whenever Professor Mozok makes a mathematical claim, he is correct. Indeed, we may suppose for the sake of argument that the mathematicians' confidence in Professor Mozok's abilities is unlimited and that there is no context in which citing Professor Mozok as an authority would not count as sufficient to underwrite knowledge. Now consider an instance in which a member of the group knows that the great Bolshoi Mozok has proved that p—indeed, we may assume, *arguendo*, that this is common knowledge within the group—although nobody within the group is capable of replicating the proof. In such a case, given the rules of the group, nobody may assert that p, despite the fact that all members of the group would grant that they know that p—they know that Professor Bolshoi Mozok proved it, and that he's never wrong.

It would seem obvious that this would be a case in which knowledge that p is insufficient to license asserting that p. Furthermore, it would seem clear that the insufficiency here is properly epistemic: what the participants lack is a sort of evidence—in the case considered, formal proof—that is the only sort of evidence sufficient for licensing assertion in the context of the group. However, it is not the case that the participants lack *knowledge*. They themselves would grant that the testimony of Professor Mozok is a guarantee that the claim to which Mozok testifies is true; that is, we may assume that Mozok's testimony meets any standard of reliability that one might require. Certainly, the participants of the group all agree that it is sufficient to underwrite knowledge. Nevertheless, given the constraints of the group, knowledge is not enough to license assertion—only the having of a very particular sort of evidence is. Given this, however, we have a case in which knowledge is not sufficient epistemically to license assertion. There is no KA norm linking knowledge and assertion.

The reader might be concerned that the above case is too artificial. This worry seems to me to be misplaced. As we noted in More on the AK Norm, there are a variety of conversational contexts, each of which at least in part determined by the standards that each of the conversational participants applies in deciding what contributions will count as a sufficient basis for consensus, for *eliminating the contrast*, as we put it in the discussion in More on the AK Norm. The fact that, in the example adduced above, the conversational participants made explicit the criteria to which they would advert in determining what contributions are licensed to eliminate the contrast does not in any way make the case something other than a particular sort of conversational context, though perhaps a somewhat atypical one. However, not all counterexamples to the KA norm need rely on cases of this type, in which participants explicitly agree upon rules of conversational engagement. The second counterexample provides a case in which no such explicit agreement is required.

Consider the case of a doctor—let's call him Dr. Sanserreur—whose diagnostic brilliance is unparalleled and universally acknowledged throughout the medical community. Suppose that Dr. Sanserreur has a patient, Mr. Pega, who is facing the possibility of a potentially life-threatening illness, one whose presence is easily detected by means of a very quick, simple, inexpensive, and painless test. Of course, Dr. Sanserreur, savant that he is, already knows that Pega has the illness, even without the benefit of the test. Indeed, we can, for the sake of argument, imagine that Sanserreur's diagnostic intuitions really are inerrant; if he makes an intuitive diagnosis, he is infallibly correct, and from experience he knows this. Given the fact that Sanserreur unquestionably knows that Pega has the illness, would he be licensed in asserting this fact to Pega prior to performing the test?

It seems clear that he would not be licensed in asserting in this case. Despite the fact that Sanserreur has knowledge of Pega's condition even in advance of receiving the test results, and despite the fact that Sanserreur knows this fact, nevertheless he ought to wait until the test results before telling Pega of his condition. For were he to tell Pega of his illness prior to receiving the results, and were Pega to ask Sanserreur the basis for his diagnosis, what could Sanserreur say in response? He could only respond, "I know it, and I'm never wrong. Ask anyone." And this response, while strictly speaking accurate, will be unlikely to satisfy Pega.

Thus the case of Sanserreur demonstrates, as with the case of the mathematicians' working group, that certain situations may demand not merely knowledge, but also a

particular sort of evidence in order to license assertion. That is, the suggestion, again, is that considerations of the *types* of evidence to which one adverts in making an assertion sometimes come apart from considerations bearing on whether one knows, so that one can know—even given the reliability demands of a given context—but not know in the right way, the way appropriate to a given conversational context. This is the case with both the mathematicians and Dr. Sanserreur. And, unlike the case of the mathematicians, this is a case in which no artificially-determined criteria are involved in making it the case that the properly epistemic standards for assertion make it the case that mere knowledge is insufficient to license assertion. Thus, again we see that there is no KA norm governing the relation between knowledge and assertion.

Conclusion

Thus, we have seen reason to question both components of the knowledge account of assertion, the KA and AK theses. Given the centrality of the knowledge account of assertion in motivating DeRose's (2002) argument from the nature of assertion to contextualism, however, this result would seem to bode ill for the cogency of DeRose's argument. Independent of the debate between contextualists and invariantists, however, the examples adduced here raise doubts about the extent to which much of the discussion concerning the aptness of the knowledge account of assertion does justice to the variety of uses to which assertions are put. If these examples are as telling as they seem to be, then it would seem that a correct account of the epistemic standards governing assertional practice will be far more complex and nuanced than the proponents of the knowledge account of assertion would have us believe.

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