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Knowledge and Practical Reason

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Abstract

It has become recently popular to suggest that knowledge is the epistemic norm of practical reasoning and that this provides an important constraint on the correct account of knowledge, one which favours subject-sensitive invariantism over contextualism and classic invariantism. I argue that there are putative counterexamples to both directions of the knowledge norm. Even if the knowledge norm can be defended against these counterexamples, I argue that it is a delicate issue whether it is true, one which relies on fine distinctions among a variety of relevant notions of propriety which our intuitions may reflect. These notions variously apply to the agent herself, her character traits, her beliefs, her reasoning and any resultant action. Given the delicacy of these issues, I argue that the knowledge norm is not a fixed point from which to defend substantive and controversial views in epistemology. Rather, these views need to be defended on other grounds.

1. Introduction

Epistemologists are increasingly interested in the notion of practical reasoning, or reasoning about what to do. Like assertion, practical reasoning seems subject to epistemic appraisal. For instance, a policeman in charge of an inquiry would be rightly criticised for making an assertion or relying on an assumption without sufficient evidence. For instance, he would be rightly criticised if he asserted 'The assailant was over 6 feet tall' without any evidence. Similarly, he would be rightly criticised if he based a decision about whom to arrest on an assumption for which he lacked evidence, e.g. the claim that the assailant was male. It has become popular to argue that the epistemic norm for assertion is knowledge (Hawthorne; Stanley; Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*). Similarly, several authors have recently argued that knowledge is the epistemic standard, or norm, for practical reasoning (e.g. Hawthorne; Stanley). The idea that knowledge is the norm of practical reasoning has been used to support a new position in the debate between invariantists and contextualists about the correct account of knowledge, a position which attempts to reflect the insights of both positions. This new position goes by a number of different names, but I will call it subject-sensitive invariantism (SSI). Subject-sensitive invariantism is an invariantist view on which whether the true belief that

p is knowledge not only depends on such factors as one's evidence, and the reliability of the belief-producing process, but also the stakes or how important it is that p be true (see also 'sensitive moderate invariantism' (Hawthorne) and 'interest relative invariantism' (Stanley)).

2. SSI and the Knowledge Norm

To introduce SSI and its relation to contextualism and classic invariantism, let us consider a standard contextualist case. Such cases are constructed so that, in one context, 'Low', a knowledge ascription seems appropriate, whereas in a second context, 'High', it seems inappropriate, even though the contexts differ only in the salience of error and the stakes, or how much turns on the issue. For instance, in DeRose's bank case, DeRose and his wife intend to deposit some cheques in their bank account on their way home. However, there is a long queue since it is a Friday. They need to decide whether to wait in the queue or return to the bank the next day, a Saturday. In Low, nothing much turns on the issue and no possibilities of error are mentioned. On the basis of his recent visit to the bank, DeRose says, 'I know the bank is open on Saturday. I was there just two weeks ago'. In Low, this attribution of knowledge seems appropriate. However, in High, a lot turns on whether the cheques are paid in by Saturday (there will be big trouble with the bank if the cheques are not deposited by then). Further, DeRose's wife raises a possibility of error, saying, 'What if the bank has changed its hours since your last visit?' In these circumstances and given that DeRose cannot rule out a change of hours, it seems inappropriate for him to say 'I know that the bank is open'. Contextualists and invariantists differ in their explanation of the difference in the appropriateness of the knowledge attribution in Low and High. Contextualists hold that it seems appropriate for DeRose to self-attribute knowledge in Low but not High because, in Low but not High, it is true for DeRose to say 'I know that the bank is open on Saturday'. According to contextualism (CXM), 'know' is a context sensitive term which expresses different epistemic properties in different contexts. In particular, the epistemic property expressed by 'know' is a function of the stakes and the salience of error for the attributor of knowledge. Although DeRose meets the standards for counting as knowing in Low, he does not do so in High. By contrast, classic invariantists deny that 'know' is a context sensitive term. They hold that the truth value of 'S knows that p' depends only on such traditional properties as p's truth, whether S believes that p, S's evidence and the reliability of her belief forming process. So, they deny that there is a difference in the truth value of the knowledge ascription in Low and High. They therefore need to find some explanation of why it nonetheless seems appropriate for DeRose to say that he knows in Low but not High. Some explain the data by appeal to conversational propriety (e.g. Bach; Brown; Davis; Hazlett; Rysiew); others appeal to an error theory (e.g. Williamson, 'Contextualism').

Like classic invariantism, SSI denies the contextualist claim that 'know' is a context-sensitive term. However, unlike classic invariantism, it holds that the truth value of 'S knows that p' depends not only on such traditional properties as p's truth, whether S believes that p, S's evidence and the reliability of her belief forming process, but also such factors as the stakes for S. Thus, SSI, like contextualism but unlike classic invariantism, holds that DeRose's self-attribution of knowledge is true in Low but false in High. SSI may seem to offer the benefits of contextualism without the costs: since it is invariantist, it avoids the objections to contextualism stemming from its claim that 'know' is context-sensitive (see Stanley ch. 2, 3). Since it allows that knowledge is a function of the stakes, it regards the intuitions concerning contextualist cases as simply reflecting the truth value of the knowledge attributions and need not offer any pragmatic explanation or error theory (it may be open to further objections, see e.g. Schaffer). A further point of comparison is that whereas CXM holds that it is the stakes for the attributor of knowledge which matter, SSI holds that it is the stakes for the subject of the ascription which matter. This difference is not obvious in cases like the bank case sketched above in which the knowledge ascription is in the first person (where the subject = attributor), but becomes important in contextualist cases in which the knowledge ascription is in the third person.

Subject-sensitive invariantism has been defended by appeal to the idea that knowledge is the norm of practical reasoning (see Hawthorne; Stanley). The knowledge norm can be understood in several ways, as a claim of necessity, sufficiency, or as a bi-conditional connection. In an early expression of the view, Stanley endorses a necessity claim, arguing that one should act on p only if one knows that p (9). Fantl and McGrath ('Knowledge and the Purely Epistemic') endorse a sufficiency claim, arguing that S knows that p only if S is rational to act as if p. More recently, Hawthorne and Stanley endorse a bi-conditional version of the view claiming that 'where's one's choice is p-dependent, it is appropriate to treat p as a reason for acting iff you know that p' (see also Hawthorne 30). In assessing the case for the knowledge norm, it will be useful for us to distinguish the following claims:

NEC: if it is appropriate to rely on p in practical reasoning[1] then you know that p.[2]

SUFF: if you know that p then it is appropriate[3] to rely on p in practical reasoning.

KN: it is appropriate to rely on p in practical reasoning iff you know that p

In fact, SUFF and KN need restricting. If p is completely irrelevant to the issue at hand, it seems odd to say that if one knows that p, it is appropriate to treat p as a reason for acting. Thus, Hawthorne and Stanley (forthcoming) suggest restricting the knowledge norm to 'p-dependent

choices' where a choice between options x1-xn is p-dependent iff the most preferable of x1-xn conditional on p is not the same as the most preferable of x1-xn conditional on not-p' (9). Since the cases considered in the paper involve p-dependent choices, we will continue to work with the simpler claim.

Two main considerations have been used to support KN, namely certain examples of unacceptable reasoning and the use of knowledge in defending and criticising action. If KN is to function as a premise in an argument for SSI, then it is illegitimate to appeal to SSI in order to defend KN; rather we are looking for a defence of KN which does not rely on SSI. This will turn out to be important in assessing the case for KN and particularly SUFF.

3. Unacceptable Reasoning

One argument for KN arises from certain cases of intuitively unacceptable reasoning (Hawthorne 174–5). For instance, suppose that you have bought a £1 ticket in a lottery in which there are 10,000 tickets and the prize is £5000. The draw has taken place although it has not yet been announced; in fact your ticket has lost. You truly believe that your ticket has lost on probabilistic grounds. Someone offers you 1p for the lottery ticket. It seems intuitively unacceptable for you to reason as follows:

I will lose the lottery.
If I keep the ticket I will get nothing.
If I sell the ticket, I will get 1p.
So I ought to sell the ticket.

By contrast, the reasoning would seem acceptable if you had heard the announcement of the lottery.

Similarly, the following reasoning concerning an offer of life insurance seems unacceptable:

I will be going to Blackpool next year.
So I won't die beforehand.
So I ought to wait until next year before buying life insurance.

Hawthorne suggests that in these and other cases, the reasoning seems unacceptable because, in each case, the first premise is not known (176). If this diagnosis is correct, then it provides some support to NEC. However, the case is hardly conclusive since there may be alternative possible explanations of the unacceptability of the reasoning. Further, the cases offer no support to SUFF.

4. Criticism and Defence of Action

KN might seem to be supported by the way in which knowledge is cited in the defence and criticism of action (Fantl and McGrath, 'Knowledge

and the Purely Epistemic'; Hawthorne and Stanley; Stanley). For instance, a mother may criticise her teenage daughter, saying 'You shouldn't have left the party so late; you didn't know that there would be a bus at that time'. Or I may defend the fact that I'm still in the office at noon when I have arranged to meet my partner for lunch at 1pm by pointing out that I know that there's an express train at 12.20pm (the express arrives in time for me to make our lunch meeting). In these and similar examples, the relevant defence and criticism focuses on action whereas KN concerns when it's appropriate to rely on a proposition in practical reasoning. Intuitions about the correctness of action do not necessarily reflect the appropriateness of the reasoning. For one may do the right action on the grounds of inappropriate reasoning. Still, it may be said that in our cases what's implicitly being assessed is the reasoning which lies behind the relevant action. For instance, it may be said that the mother is implicitly criticising her daughter for relying on a proposition which she didn't know – that there would be a bus at the relevant time – in deciding what to do. In this way, the cases may be thought to support KN. In more detail, cases such as that of the teenage daughter may seem to support NEC. If it's appropriate to rely on p in practical reasoning only if one knows that p that would explain why one's criticisable for acting on propositions one doesn't know. By contrast, other examples may seem to support SUFF. Consider again the case in which I defend my remaining in the office until noon by pointing out that I know that there's an express train at 12.20pm. If knowing p is sufficient for it's being appropriate to rely on p in practical reasoning, that would explain why I can defend acting on the proposition that there's an express at 12.20pm by pointing out that I know that proposition.[4] In other examples, I'm criticised for failing to act on a known proposition. Suppose this time that my partner and I have agreed to meet some friends for a drink in a pub at 6pm. We both know that the only train that will allow me to make this arrangement is the 5.20pm. My partner rings me up to discover I'm still in the office at 5.20pm. He berates me, saying 'You know the express is at 5.20pm. You should have left by now'. This kind of case may seem to support SUFF. If knowing p is sufficient for it's being appropriate to rely on p in practical reasoning, that would explain why I'm criticisable for not acting on a known proposition.

Although the use of knowledge in defending and criticising action is explicable on the assumption of KN, that use does not establish KN. For, we may cite a factor in defending and criticising action even if that factor is neither necessary nor sufficient for appropriate action. To see this, consider a different example of the justification of action. Suppose that in dividing up the stew I give Alison the biggest portion. I might defend my action by pointing out that Alison is training for a marathon. If, on the other hand, I had instead given the largest portion to Sarah, Alison might have criticised me saying 'You should have given me the biggest portion.

I'm training for the marathon', or 'You shouldn't have given Sarah the biggest portion. She's not training for the marathon'. In certain circumstances, the suggested defence and criticism may seem appropriate. Even so, this doesn't show that training for a marathon is either necessary or sufficient for being justified in getting the largest portion of the stew: not necessary since other kinds of factors could justify getting the biggest portion (e.g. Sarah's pregnant), and not sufficient since other factors could trump training for a marathon (Sarah's starving). Analogously, that knowledge is cited in the defence and criticism of action does not show that knowledge is either necessary or sufficient for relying on p in practical reasoning.

This conclusion is reinforced when we consider the ways in which we criticise and defend actions in more detail. Although we sometimes defend and criticise actions by citing the absence or presence of knowledge, we also do so by citing conditions both weaker and stronger than knowledge. For instance, in defending why I'm still at the office when we're due to meet for lunch at 1pm I might cite facts about the train schedule ('There's an express at 12.20pm'), or my evidence about the train schedule ('The timetable says there's a train at 12.20pm'; or, 'Peter said there's a train at 12.20pm'). That we cite factors weaker than knowledge in defending action counts against NEC. Similarly, although we sometimes criticise action by pointing out that the agent knew a relevant claim, we also do so by pointing to factors weaker than knowledge. For instance, suppose I leave my partner a note saying we're out of potatoes. My partner returns home from work having stopped in the grocery store to buy beer, but doesn't get any potatoes. I may criticise his action saying, 'You should have got potatoes. You knew we don't have any'. His action is equally criticisable if it turns out that we do have potatoes since, by chance, a neighbour happened to bring some over from her garden as a surprise for us (although, of course, in such a situation, I would phrase my criticism differently, e.g. 'You should have got potatoes. You thought we didn't have any'). That we offer such criticisms of actions involving conditions weaker then knowledge counts against NEC. While we sometimes criticise actions by citing conditions weaker than knowledge we sometimes criticise actions by citing conditions stronger than, or orthogonal to, knowledge. For instance, a mother might criticise her teenager's late departure from a party by saying, 'You shouldn't have left so late. You weren't certain there'd be a bus home that late', or 'You shouldn't have left so late. You didn't know for sure that there'd be a bus at that time'. On the standard assumption that knowledge does not entail certainty, these kind of criticisms count against SUFF.

It seems, then, that when we look at the way we criticise and defend actions in more detail, we do so by citing factors both weaker and stronger than knowledge. It may be that our practice of citing factors other than knowledge can be shown to be consistent with KN.[5] Nevertheless, the point remains that our ordinary practice of assessing actions is not

obviously suggestive of KN. Rather, it suggests that the standard for practical reasoning varies with context: sometimes the standard is knowledge, sometimes it is less than knowledge, and sometimes it is more than knowledge. This alternative can easily explain the use of knowledge in defending and criticising action even while denying both NEC and SUFF. Knowledge is cited in defending and criticising actions since, in many contexts, knowledge is the standard for relying on propositions in practical reasoning. It does not follow that, in all contexts, knowledge is the standard. In the following sections, I support this alternative view by considering putative counterexamples to NEC and SUFF.

5. Is Knowledge Necessary?

According to NEC, if it is appropriate to rely on p in practical reasoning then you know that p. On this view, if one does not know that p, it is inappropriate to rely on p in one's practical reasoning. We can test this view by considering cases in which one lacks knowledge that p, say because although one has a justified true belief that p, one is in a Gettier situation. Suppose, then, that S leaves the office at 12.00pm in order to meet her partner for lunch at 1pm. S believes truly that there is an express train at 12.20pm which would allow her to arrive in time to make lunch. Further, this belief is justified: S checked the train timetable on the internet just before leaving the office. In fact, unbeknownst to S, she is in a Gettier situation: a hacker has got into the train web site and for a joke has replaced all of the current timetables with last season's timetables. Luckily for S, according to both the old and new timetables, there is an express at 12.20pm. So, S's belief is a case of true justified belief but not knowledge. Let's now consider whether it's appropriate for S to rely on her belief that there's an express at 12.20pm in deciding what to do. It seems that it is appropriate. After all, S checked the timetable and she had no reason to suppose that a hacker had replaced the current timetable with last season's. In such circumstances, it seems appropriate for her to rely on the belief that there is an express at 12.20pm in deciding what to do. This is reflected in our practices of assessment. For instance, if S's partner comes to know about the hacking, it will not seem appropriate for him to criticise S's action. For instance, he would not say 'You shouldn't have left so late. You didn't know there was an express at 12.20pm'. More generally, it seems that if S and her partner discover the hacking and so come to find out that S's belief is not a case of knowledge after all, this would not change their view about the appropriateness of S's reasoning. It is just as appropriate for S to rely on her belief that there is an express at 12.20pm in the Gettier case in which her belief is not knowledge, as it would be in a non-Gettier case in which her belief is knowledge. It seems, then, that NEC conflicts with our intuitions about Gettier cases.

A defender of NEC may attempt to deal with the Gettier counterexample by distinguishing between whether it is appropriate to rely on a proposition in practical reasoning and whether the agent is reasonable or blameless in so doing. By NEC, it is appropriate for a subject to rely on a proposition p in practical reasoning only if she knows that p. However, if a subject relies on p in her practical reasoning where she reasonably but falsely believes that she does know that p, then she is blameless in so doing. Compare the case of games. If a player reasonably but falsely believes that she is onside and continues to play then, although she has broken the offside rule, she has done so blamelessly. Games provide us with a clear distinction between the notion of an action's being in accord with the rules, and the notion of whether the subject is blameworthy for that action. However, it is not obvious that this model carries across to the case of relying on a proposition in practical reasoning. The suggestion would be that, in the Gettier case, since the subject does not know that there is an express train at 12:20 p.m., it is inappropriate to her to rely on that claim in practical reasoning, even though she is blameless in doing so. However, it is not obvious to me that the example is one in which the subject inappropriately but blamelessly relies on a proposition in practical reasoning. When I consider the question of whether it is appropriate for her to rely on the relevant proposition in practical reasoning, it seems that it is so, even recognizing the distinction between blamelessness and impropriety in acting. She justifiably and truly believes that there is an express train at 12:20 p.m., and she has no reason to doubt this. In this situation, it seems to me appropriate for her to rely on that proposition in her practical reasoning.

I have argued that the suggested defence of NEC is not intuitively correct. A further way to cast doubt on this defence of NEC is to note that there are a variety of distinct notions of propriety in terms of which we could construe the case. Rather than distinguishing between the blameworthiness of the agent and the propriety of relying on a certain proposition in practical reasoning, one could instead distinguish the issue of whether the belief was formed appropriately, and whether, given that the subject has this belief, it is appropriate for her to rely on it in her practical reasoning. Clearly, in the Gettier case, the subject's belief could have been formed in a better way, one in which there was not a merely accidental connection between its justification and its truth. Indeed, we may say that the belief was formed inappropriately because of this very feature. However, it is a further question whether, given that the subject justifiably believes that the train leaves at 12:20 p.m., it is appropriate for her to rely on that belief in her practical reasoning. To illustrate the point, consider the example of the evil demon victim. Clearly, the victim of the evil demon could form her beliefs in a better way, for her beliefs about the external world around her are false. Nonetheless, we may imagine that the evil demon victim is an epistemic paragon when it comes to forming

further beliefs from the beliefs she bases on her (deceptive) experiences. So, we may be tempted to say that, although the beliefs she forms on the basis of her experiences are, in a certain sense, epistemically inappropriate, given that she has these beliefs, the way in which she relies on them in her further reasoning is not only appropriate, but a paradigm of epistemic propriety. More generally, we may distinguish between what we may call 'entry rules', which concern when a certain situation, C, is appropriate, and 'rules of play', which concern what one should do given condition C. Consider a situation in which condition C obtains although this violates the entry condition for C. This does not by itself determine whether any further move is appropriate or inappropriate. If some further move is in accord with the rules of play given C, then that move may be appropriate even though the entry rules for C have been violated. For instance, suppose that there is an entry rule governing when it is appropriate for the Queen to start eating, namely only when her guests are ready to eat. Further, there is a rule of play according to which it is appropriate for the Queen's guests to start eating only if the Queen has started eating. Suppose that a guest starts to eat in the circumstances that the Queen has started to eat even though her guests are not ready to do so. It seems plausible that only the entry rule has been broken but not the rule of play governing when it is appropriate to eat in the presence of the Queen. Applying this model to the case of belief, it would not follow from the fact that the belief was formed inappropriately that it is inappropriate for the subject to rely on that belief in her reasoning, whether practical or theoretical.

While these considerations cast doubt on NEC, they do not conclusively show that it is false. The more important point which has emerged from our discussion is that there are a variety of notions of propriety which our intuitions about a piece of practical reasoning may reflect. Indeed, we will see the same point in the later discussion of SUFF. When we realise the variety of different notions of propriety at issue, we see that it is a delicate issue whether NEC is correct. Even if NEC is true, that it is so is hardly a clear-cut matter which would enable one to place firm reliance on it. In the final section, we will see that both directions of the knowledge norm have been used to make substantive and controversial claims in epistemology. To the extent that it is a delicate matter whether the knowledge norm is correct, this undermines its use in defending such controversial conclusions about knowledge.

6. Is Knowledge Sufficient?

The idea that knowledge that p is sufficient to rely on p in practical reasoning is undermined when we reflect on the fact that it is part of our everyday concept of knowledge that it allows that two people can both know something, yet one be in a better epistemic position than the other.

For example, two subjects may both know that p but one base her belief on a more reliable method of belief formation. Such cases commonly arise when both an expert and a non-expert know some claim but the expert's basis for the knowledge claim is superior. For instance, a doctor and a patient may both know that the patient has arthritis but the doctor's knowledge is based on a wider range of data, including various test results. Once we see that it is part of our intuitive concept of knowledge that two subjects can both know that p yet one of them be in a stronger epistemic position than the other, this puts pressure on the idea that knowing p is always sufficient for relying on p in practical reasoning. If two subjects, A and B, both know that p, but B's epistemic position is better than A's, why should we think that mere knowledge is always sufficient for relying on p in practical reasoning? Although A and B share an important epistemic commonality – they both know that p – they also differ epistemically: B is in a better epistemic position than A. Perhaps it's this difference which is crucial for practical reasoning? On this view, knowledge is not always sufficient for practical reasoning. In order to defend this view, it is useful to examine a range of cases in which it seems intuitive that a subject knows that p but it does not seem appropriate for her to rely on p in her practical reasoning.

One way of generating cases in which it seems intuitive that a subject knows that p but it does not seem appropriate for her to rely on p in her practical reasoning is to focus on bets with extreme stakes. Take any claim which one would ordinarily regard oneself as knowing, say where one was born or one's name. One can construct a bet with such stakes that it seems irrational for one to take the bet. Nonetheless it seems that one knows the target claim. These cases seem to provide examples in which, intuitively, one knows that p but it would be inappropriate to rely on p in one's practical reasoning (Hawthorne; Hawthorne and Stanley).

For instance, suppose that Liz knows that she was born in England. Nonetheless, it would seem irrational for her to accept a bet with the following pay-offs:

> Liz was born in England: Liz gains £1
> Liz was not born in England: Liz loses her home

Such cases are not isolated. It seems plausible that, for any claim one knows, one can set up a bet with such stakes that it is irrational for one to take the bet.

Other putative counterexamples to SUFF do not involve bets. Here are a range of examples.

> *SURGEON*
> A student is spending the day shadowing a surgeon. In the morning he observes her in clinic examining patient A who has a diseased left kidney. The decision is taken to remove it that afternoon. Later, the student observes the surgeon in theatre where patient A is lying anaesthetised on the operating

table. The operation hasn't started as the surgeon is consulting the patient's notes. The student is puzzled and asks one of the nurses what's going on:
Student: I don't understand. Why is she looking at the patient's records? She was in clinic with the patient this morning. Doesn't she even know which kidney it is?
Nurse: Of course, she knows which kidney it is. But, imagine what it would be like if she removed the wrong kidney. She shouldn't operate before checking the patient's records.

AFFAIR
A husband is berating his friend for not telling him that his wife has been having an affair even though the friend has known of the affair for weeks.
Husband: Why didn't you say she was having an affair? You've known for weeks.
Friend: Ok, I admit I knew, but it wouldn't have been right for me to say anything before I was absolutely sure. I knew the damage it would cause to your marriage.
Here the friend admits knowing but claims that it would have been inappropriate for him to act on that knowledge by telling the husband. Of course, there are a variety of non-epistemic reasons why a friend in this situation might not reveal the affair: perhaps the husband has been under such severe pressure recently that information about the affair might tip him over the edge into suicide or a breakdown; perhaps revealing the affair would involve breaking a promise to a third party; perhaps the friend is simply squeamish. We will stipulate that none of these factors apply to the case in hand. Nonetheless, the friend's statement seems perfectly intelligible and plausible: he is saying that although he knew of the affair his epistemic position wasn't strong enough to act on that knowledge. He needed to be absolutely certain before proceeding to inform the husband.

RESULT
Two lecturers have been in an exams meeting all morning at which the students' exam results are determined. After the meeting lecturer B bumps into one of the students and, on the basis of her recollection of the meeting, informs her that she has passed. On discovering this, lecturer A criticises her colleague for giving out information about the results without checking the exam pass list.
A: You shouldn't have told her she'd passed without having the list in front of you.
B: What's the problem? I knew she'd passed – I was in the examination meeting this morning.
A: That's not the point. Think of the damage it would cause if you gave the wrong result. We can't afford to take that risk.
Note that A doesn't reply by denying that B knows, but by saying 'that's not the point'.

Intuitively these cases put pressure on SUFF: in each one, a subject claims that either she, or a third party, knows something but that it would be inappropriate for her to act on that knowledge. Although the relevant evaluations explicitly concern action, it seems that they reflect claims about the underlying reasoning. For instance, the relevant intuition in SURGEON is that the surgeon should not rely on the premise that it is the left kidney which is affected in practical reasoning. For instance, she should not reason that since it is the left kidney which is affected, she should remove the left kidney straightaway rather than check first before

operating. Similarly, the relevant intuition in RESULT is that the lecturer should not rely on the claim that the relevant student has passed in her practical reasoning. For instance, she should not reason that since the student has passed she should tell her straightaway rather than first check the pass list.

A defender of SUFF may respond to putative counterexamples by arguing that, in each case, the subject does not know that p because she fails to meet one of the conditions for knowledge. It is built into the cases that the subject truly believes that p. Further, it is plausible that the evidence on which her belief is based is of a strength which is often sufficient for knowledge. For instance, it seems plausible that an experienced surgeon can know which kidney is diseased by suitable examination of a patient together with test results. Of course, the agent may not be able to distinguish her situation from a possible situation (the BAD situation) in which she makes a mistake. For instance, the lecturer cannot distinguish her situation from a possible situation in which she seems to recall that the student passed although she did not. However, on pain of scepticism, we should reject the suggestion that knowledge requires that the agent can distinguish her actual situation from any possible BAD situation. (Since SSI is a non-sceptical position, a defender of SSI should not find such a response attractive.) A defender of SUFF could instead argue that although the relevant evidence is often strong enough for knowledge, this is not the case given the stakes in question. On SSI, whether a subject knows that p depends not only on her evidence but also the stakes. However, such a reply is illegitimate given our dialectic. The aim was to see whether the knowledge norm, and in particular SUFF, could be used as a premise in an argument for SSI. Within this project, we need a defence of SUFF which does not itself rest on SSI.

Assuming that, in each case the agent does know the relevant proposition, the defender of SUFF could reply to the counterexamples by explaining away the intuition that it is inappropriate for the agent to rely on her knowledge in practical reasoning. On one obvious strategy, it is suggested that we confuse intuitions about whether it's appropriate for the subject to rely on what she knows in practical reasoning with intuitions about whether she knows that she meets the sufficient condition for so relying. Suppose that, in our cases, the subject knows that p but does not know that she knows that p. In that case, the agent meets the condition for relying on p in practical reasoning but does not know that she does. As a result, we may mistakenly think that it is inappropriate for her to rely on p in practical reasoning because we confuse intuitions about the acceptability of the reasoning with intuitions about the agent and whether she was in a position to know that she meets the condition for relying on p in practical reasoning. This reply is convincing only if we have reason to suppose that, in all the counterexamples, the subject knows without knowing that she does. But, we have been given no such

reason. Notice that Williamson's anti-luminosity argument provides no such reason. Williamson's anti-luminosity argument provides reason to suppose that a condition, C, fails to be luminous for borderline cases of C, those which are close to the boundary between C and not-C. But, intuitively the counterexamples do not concern borderline cases of knowledge. For instance, the target proposition in the case of extreme bets – that one knows one's name or where one is born – is not intuitively a borderline case of knowledge. Indeed, part of the interest of extreme bets is that they seem applicable even to the most secure or paradigm cases of knowledge. Similarly, when a surgeon bases her belief that it is the left kidney which is diseased on the basis of a careful examination of the patient and test results, this does not appear to be a borderline case of knowledge. Given this, there is no reason to suppose that in all the putative counterexamples, the subject knows the target proposition without knowing that she does. So, the anti-luminosity defence of SUFF fails.

The failure of the anti-luminosity defence of SUFF does not establish that there is no possible defence of SUFF.[6] However, it usefully illustrates the general form of an attempt to explain away the intuitions concerning the putative counterexamples to SUFF. Such an explanation involves introducing a notion of propriety additional to the notion of the propriety of relying on a proposition in practical reasoning, and arguing that we confuse these two notions of propriety. For instance, the anti-luminosity defence distinguishes the notion of its being appropriate for a subject to rely on the proposition in her practical reasoning from the notion of her knowing that it is so appropriate, and argues that we confuse these two notions. This provides a further illustration of the point made in our discussion of NEC, that there are a variety of notions of propriety which may be reflected in our intuitive judgements about a piece of practical reasoning. In addition to the notion of whether the agent is blameless in relying on a proposition in her practical reasoning, we now have the notion of whether she knows that it is appropriate for her to so rely on the proposition. These notions come apart: for instance, if a subject reasonably but falsely believes that she knows that p, then she is blameless in relying on p on her practical reasoning but does not know that it is appropriate for her to rely on that proposition in practical reasoning. Earlier, we also distinguished the notions of whether a belief is formed appropriately and whether it is appropriate to rely on that belief in practical reasoning. Other attempted defences of SUFF introduce yet further notions of propriety, for example Hawthorne and Stanley focus on the propriety of the character trait exhibited in the reasoning. Once we see the variety of dimensions of assessment available, we see that it is a delicate issue whether SUFF is true. In the next section, I argue that this undermines the use of SUFF to draw substantive and controversial conclusions in epistemology.

7. *Practical Reasoning and the Case for SSI*

I have been examining whether KN can be used as a premise in an argument for SSI. In this dialectical context, it is illegitimate to defend KN by appeal to SSI. I have argued that, without such an illegitimate appeal, there are apparent counterexamples to SUFF. Further, I have argued that Gettier cases cast doubt on NEC. I have argued that it is a delicate matter whether SUFF and/or NEC can be defended against these counterexamples. In this section, I argue that this undermines the use of the knowledge norm to draw substantial and controversial conclusions in epistemology.

Someone could try to combine KN with contextualist cases to provide a case for SSI. Standard contextualist cases are constructed so that a knowledge attribution seems appropriate in Low but not High even though Low and High differ only in the stakes and the salience of error. Earlier, we saw that there are a variety of responses to contextualist cases. Contextualists and defenders of SSI hold that the intuitions of propriety directly reflect the truth value of the relevant knowledge attribution and so hold that, in Low but not High, it is true for DeRose to say 'I know that the bank is open' (they differ over the explanation and, in particular, whether 'know' is a context-sensitive term). By contrast, classic invariantists deny that our intuitions of propriety reflect the truth value of the relevant knowledge attributions. Instead, they attempt to explain away these intuitions as the result of an error theory or pragmatic factors. A defender of SSI could reinforce her truth value interpretation of the contextualist cases by appeal to KN. Low and High differ not only in the intuitive acceptability of knowledge-ascriptions but also in the intuitive acceptability of practical reasoning. Recall that, in the case, DeRose truly believes that the bank is open on Saturday on the basis of his visit to the bank two weeks ago. If stakes are low, then it seems appropriate for DeRose to rely on the claim that the bank is open on Saturday in his practical reasoning, say in reasoning that since the bank is open on Saturday, he will go then rather than wait in the long Friday queue. But if stakes are high – there'll be big trouble with the bank if the checks are not deposited before Monday – then it no longer seems appropriate for DeRose to rely on that claim in his practical reasoning. He should not reason that since the bank is open on Saturday, he should go then rather than wait in the Friday queue. Given the stakes, he should go in and check whether the bank is open on Saturday.

A defender of SSI could combine this difference in the intuitive acceptability of practical reasoning with KN to defend their interpretation of contextualist cases over rival invariantist explanations. Consider the following argument against classic invariantism, letting O be the proposition that the bank is open on Saturday:

1. KN: it is appropriate to rely on p in practical reasoning iff you know that p (by assumption).
2. In Low but not High, it is appropriate for DeRose to rely on O in practical reasoning.
3. In Low but not High, DeRose knows that O (from 1 and 2).
4. Low and High differ in the stakes (by stipulation).
5. Whether S knows that p partly depends on the stakes.

If knowledge depends on the stakes, then classic invariantist is false. Of course, the contextualist agrees with SSI that, in Low but not High, it is true for DeRose to say 'I know that O'. However, arguably, the idea that knowledge is the standard of practical reasoning supports SSI rather than CXM. Whether a subject should rely on a certain proposition in practical reasoning depends on the stakes for her, not any third party. So, if knowledge were tied to practical reasoning, it seems that knowledge too would be a function of the stakes for the subject rather than any third party. Stanley uses this idea to rebut one of the contextualist's most important objections to SSI, that arising from third person contextualist cases. In such cases, it seems inappropriate for an attributor in a high stakes context to attribute knowledge to a subject in a low stakes context. Such cases present difficulties for SSI on which the truth value of 'S knows that p' depends on the stakes for the subject but not the attributor. If knowledge is the norm of practical reasoning, this provides a reason to reject the intuition that it is inappropriate for the attributor in the high context to attribute knowledge to the subject in the low context. As Stanley puts it,

> it would be a mistake to allow idiosyncratic facts about my own practical situation to impinge upon my judgements about the practical rationality of someone in a quite different situation . . . given the intuitive connections between knowledge and practical reasoning, one should therefore be deeply suspicious of a theory that gives undue weight to our intuitions about High Attributor-Low Subject Stakes. (98)

The propriety of the practical reasoning of the subject of a knowledge attribution depends only on the subject's context and not the attributor's. Thus, if knowledge is tied to practical reasoning, then in determining whether a subject in a low stakes context knows, we should ignore intuitions about the propriety of attributions made to that subject by an attributor in a high stakes context. Thus KN enables SSI to reply to the problem of third person contextualist cases. Without KN, Stanley needs to find some other explanation of third person cases, one which does not undermine his own preferred interpretations of first person cases.

Earlier, we saw that it is a delicate matter whether either direction of KN is true. There are a variety of notions of propriety which our intuitions about a piece of practical reasoning may reflect. As a result, even if the knowledge norm is true, this is not a clear-cut matter. This undermines the use of the knowledge norm to support controversial and substantive

conclusions in epistemology, such as the suggested defence of SSI. It raises a further problem for the attempt to combine KN and contextualist cases to argue for SSI. If there are a variety of different notions of propriety reflected in our intuitions about a piece of practical reasoning, then this argument is open to the danger of equivocation. Perhaps, the sense in which, in High, it seems inappropriate for DeRose to rely on the proposition that the bank is open on Saturday in his practical reasoning is not identical to the sense of propriety which figures in KN.

The delicacy of the issue of whether KN is true also affects Hawthorne's defence of SSI. Hawthorne presents a number of criteria for an account of knowledge, one of the most important of which is the claim that knowledge is the norm of assertion and practical reasoning (21–31). Hawthorne admits that which account of knowledge the criteria favour is a finely balanced matter, however, he suggests that SSI has the edge over contextualism and classic invariantism:

> Put a gun to my head and I will opt for a treatment of the puzzles built around the materials of the 'Practical Environment' section above. But I am far from confident that this is the correct way to proceed. Then there is the further question of whether to embed those ideas within an invariantist semantically framework for 'know'. Here, though more tentatively still, I would opt for invariantism over contextualism. (188)

Appeal to KN is crucial to Hawthorne's suggestion that SSI has the edge over contextualism and classic invariantism. For instance, without appeal to the idea that knowledge is the norm for assertion and practical reasoning, non-sceptical classic invariantism and SSI perform similarly on Hawthorne's criteria (149, 185–6). Both respect the Moorean constraint and Single Premise Closure. Neither can honour both the Epistemic Possibility Constraint and the Objective Chance Principle. Whereas non-sceptical invariantism is 'in obvious tension' with Multiple Premise Closure, SSI has 'some prospect' of maintaining Multiple-Premise Closure. By contrast, Hawthorne claims, SSI is better able to accommodate the idea that knowledge is the norm for assertion and practical reasoning. However, I suggest that the delicacy of the issue of whether KN is true undermines Hawthorne's reliance on KN in his argument for SSI.

8. Conclusion

It has become recently popular to suggest that knowledge is the epistemic norm of practical reasoning and that this provides an important constraint on the correct account of knowledge, one which favours SSI over CXM and CINV. I have argued that there are putative counterexamples to both directions of KN. Even if KN can be defended against these counterexamples, I have argued that it is a delicate issue whether KN is true which relies on fine distinctions among a variety of relevant notions of propriety

which our intuitions may reflect. These notions variously apply to the agent herself, her character traits, her beliefs, her reasoning, and any resultant action. Given the delicacy of these issues, I have argued that KN is not a fixed point from which to defend substantive and controversial views in epistemology. Rather, these views need to be defended on other grounds.

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Short biography

Jessica Brown completed her graduate studies at Oxford University. She taught at Bristol University, before moving to St Andrews in 2007 to take up a professorship within the Arche research centre. She mainly works in epistemology and philosophy of mind. Her monograph for MIT, entitled *Anti-Individualism and Knowledge*, considers the consequences of anti-individualism about thought contents for our knowledge of our own minds and knowledge of the world. She has published a number of articles on contextualism and invariantism, closure and transmission for knowledge, scepticism, and the knowledge norm for assertion and practical reasoning. Together with Professor Cappelen, she has recently received a major AHRC award of almost £900,000 for a four-year project entitled, 'Intuitions and Philosophical Methodology'.

Notes

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[1] Notice that the notion of 'relying on p in practical reasoning' used by Hawthorne and Stanley is rather different from the notion of acting for a reason used by Hyman. For Hawthorne and Stanley, one can rely on p in practical reasoning whether or not one knows that p; however, doing so is appropriate iff one knows that p. Hyman defends the thesis that the fact that p can be A's reason for acting iff A knows that p. Thus, for Hyman, when p is A's reason for acting, her so reasoning cannot be assessed normatively according to whether A knows that p. Rather, if she does not know that p, then the fact that p cannot be her reason for acting. It is difficult, then, to use Hyman's analysis of the logic of reason giving statements to defend the thesis of Hawthorne and Stanley.

[2] There are a variety of formulations of the left hand side of the norm, including 'it is acceptable to use the premise that p in one's practical reasoning' (Hawthorne 30), 'it is appropriate to treat

p as a reason for acting' (Hawthorne and Stanley), 'it is appropriate to act on p' (Stanley 9), 'it is rational to act as if p' (Fantl and McGrath, 'Knowledge and the Purely Epistemic'). I have focussed on the notion of its being appropriate to rely on p in one's practical reasoning as this seems a reasonably intuitive notion.

[3] The norm is formulated in terms of the notion of its being 'appropriate' to rely to p in practical reasoning, rather than the notion that one ought to so rely. As Hawthorne and Stanley point out, 'it would be overly demanding to require someone to treat all of their relevant knowledge as reasons for each action undertaken'.

[4] This case is also explicable on the assumption of NEC (it is appropriate to rely on p in practical reasoning only if one knows that p). The use of knowledge in defending my action could be understood in the following way: I defend my acting on p by pointing out that I meet the necessary condition for this to be appropriate, namely that I know that p.

[5] For example, that I defend my remaining in the office by citing facts about the train schedule (there's an express at 12.20pm) is compatible with KN if knowledge is also the norm of assertion (Stanley 10). That I defend my remaining in the office by citing evidence about the train schedule (the timetable says there's an express at 12.20pm) could be explained compatibly with KN by exploiting the idea that knowledge is the norm of assertion, and holding that the reasoning in question starts from the proposition that the timetable says there's a train at 12.20pm. One might reason: the timetable says there's a train at 12.20pm, the timetable is very likely true so, given the stakes, I'll leave the office in time for the 12.20pm.

[6] For discussion of other strategies for defending SUFF, see Hawthorne and Stanley; Brown.

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