

1. An Inchoate Thought and Some Definitions:

KNOWLEDGE IS NORMATIVE: There's some interesting sense in which Knowledge is normative.¹

What is it for standards, properties, or kinds to be normative?

'Normativity' is, for better or worse, the chief term we philosophers seem to have settled upon for discussing some central but deeply puzzling phenomena of human life. We use it to mark a distinction, not between the good and the bad (or between the right and the wrong, the correct and the incorrect), but rather between the good-or-bad (or right-or-wrong,...), on the one hand, and the actual, possible, or usual, on the other. Ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, rationality, semantics — all these areas of philosophical inquiry draw us into a discussion of normativity. (Railton 1999: 320)

- (1) A standard is NORMATIVE for M iff in situations of M's non-conformity to the standard, M, rather than the standard or application of the standard, is held at fault and in situations of M's conformity to the standard, M is thereby better because of the success.
- (2) Properties are NORMATIVE if either of the following are true of them:
 - a. A property is NORMATIVELY VIRTUOUS if it is had in virtue of satisfying an authoritative normative standard.
 - b. A property is NORMATIVELY SIGNIFICANT for M if it enables the satisfaction of M's authoritative normative standards.

In order for a kind to be normative, rather than merely have members with normative properties, the nature of the kind must have some connection to the normative properties of its members.

2. Option 1: Could Knowledge be a Norm Governed Kind?

—>A kind is NORM GOVERNED if its nature determines some distinctive set of normative standards which govern its kind-members.

So, e.g., Liver is a norm governed kind, with the proper function of filtering toxins from the blood, which determines the norms according to which livers are assessed as better and worse *qua* Liver.

Quick Argument Against Knowledge as a Norm Governed Kind:

1. Norm governed kinds have kind-members which are better or worse, depending on whether they satisfy or fail to satisfy the norms that govern the kind.
 2. There is not better and worse knowledge. (cf. Hetherington 2001)
- So, Knowledge cannot be a norm governed kind.

3. Option 2: Knowledge Might be a Normatively Virtuous Kind?

—>A kind is NORMATIVELY VIRTUOUS if its nature is determined by some set or type of shared normatively virtuous properties.

So, e.g., Healthy People are a normatively virtuous kind, whose criterial standards include the normatively virtuous property of being a healthy person.

¹ There is possibility for ambiguity when writing about kinds and their kind-members, which can be referred to with the same term. Throughout, when using a term to refer to a kind, I will capitalize it and leave the term lower-case when referring to kind-members.

Argument that normatively virtuous kinds are derivative of norm governed kinds:

1. Normatively virtuous kind-members are kind-members in virtue of sharing normatively virtuous properties.
2. Having normatively virtuous properties requires being governed by authoritative normative standards.
3. Being governed by authoritative normative standards requires being a member of a norm governed kind.

So, normatively virtuous kinds are groupings of members of norm governed kind-members who share normatively virtuous properties.

Q: What norm governed kind might Knowledge be derivative of? A: Belief.

4. Familiar Problems With Reductive Normative Accounts of Knowledge:

Determination Problem: Which normatively virtuous properties of Belief are criterial of Knowledge?

- (1) Minimalism: Just truth.
What minimalism has going for it: simplicity, discussed in Plato, aligns with supposed aim of Belief.
-Obviously *too minimal* (cf Sartwell 1992 and Hetherington 2001)
- (2) Shortcut: Generalize to all of them!

-*One Gettier Problem to Rule Them All, Zagzebski Formula:*

As long as there is a small degree of independence between this other element and the truth, we can construct Gettier cases by using the following procedure: start with a case of justified (or warranted) false belief. Make the element of justification (warrant) strong enough for knowledge, but make the belief false ... due to one element of bad luck. Now emend the case by adding another element of luck, only this time an element which makes the belief true after all. The second element must be independent of the element of warrant so that the degree of warrant is unchanged. ... We now have a case in which the belief is justified (warranted) in a sense strong enough for knowledge, the belief is true, but it is not knowledge. (Zagzebski 1994: 69)

Normatively virtuous properties of Belief + Good Luck + Bad Luck = Not Knowledge

- (3) Go Second Order: Add relational properties into the normatively significant properties for Belief.

Regarding the nature of knowledge, we can diagnose Gettier cases as follows: In Gettier cases, S's belief is true and S's belief is competent, but S's belief is not true *because* competent. That is, S does not have a true belief because S's belief is produced by ability. (Greco 2012: section 1)

The property of being true *because* competent adds a second-order normatively virtuous property.

-*Gettier Problem, Miracchi Revenge:* Miracchi tweaked Zagzebski's Formula to cause problems for this.

Start with a Gettier case ... Then specify a further fact that is independent of the justification (warrant) that makes the elements of bad and good luck systematically related, so that if the subject were to form beliefs in the way that yields justification and encounters the bad luck, she would encounter the good luck as well. ... This will suffice to make it that, in a case where the subject exercises her competence and both the bad and good luck obtain, she will succeed in the way that ... makes her success due to her competence to believe truly. Nevertheless she will fail to know. (Miracchi 2015, section 2.5)

Normatively virtuous properties of Belief + Good Luck + Bad Luck + Systematic Connection = Not Knowledge

5. Depressing Conclusions?

Is Anything Interesting Left? Problem: Some cases of Gettiered belief don't really seem worse in interesting ways than knowledge.

Consider the following cases:

(clock) You have a justified true belief about the time because you looked at your kitchen clock, which happened to have stopped exactly twelve hours ago. You don't know the time, but things are going pretty well for you, mental-economy-wise.

(counting) You can miscount the number of chairs in a room as 11 (rather than 12) and on that basis infer that we need to get more for our 30 person audience. It seems that this belief, which does constitute knowledge, is just as likely to lead you astray as (clock).

We might be tempted, following Josh Schechter to think that maybe knowledge isn't normatively important after all.

What this suggests is that knowledge is actually a rather marginal epistemic status. It is important to have true beliefs so that we correctly represent the world. It is important to respect the evidence and, more generally, to have justified beliefs (and rational credences). But it is difficult for me to see that, in addition, it is important to have knowledge, too. (Schechter forthcoming)

6. Option 3: Knowledge is Normatively Consequential Belief.

—>A kind is CONSEQUENTIALLY NORMATIVE if its nature is determined by shared normatively significant properties.

So, e.g., Healthful Spinach is a normatively consequential kind, whose criterial standards include having normatively significant properties for satisfying the norms of people (e.g. being high in iron.)

- (1) *Spinach Challenge:* Even if Knowledge does have criterial properties that are normatively significant, why is Knowledge any more normatively interesting than healthful spinach?
- (2) *Determination Challenge Redux:* What are these normatively significant properties and what are they normatively significant for?

In the cases of *mere* true belief that seem normatively on par with knowledge, the only relevant epistemic features of the believer are their features as a *consumer* of epistemic reasons.

But we are *social epistemic agents*. We engage in transmission of knowledge via testimony, offer reasons, assess the evidence of others, take on the policing of others' beliefs for falsehood. We open ourselves to, and put others in, epistemic and practical risk because of the way we put our epistemic trust in each other. (see, e.g., Fricker 2006, Goldberg 2014)

KNOWLEDGE IS NORMATIVELY CONSEQUENTIAL BELIEF: M's belief, b that p, constitutes knowledge iff and because b's normatively significant properties make M a good source of epistemic reasons for p.

Our nature as social epistemic agents makes us, and not merely our beliefs, assessable according to the properties of our beliefs, and that nature requires our beliefs to have certain properties which make us good qua epistemic agents.

By entering into the marketplace of ideas we take on the burden of being *providers* as well as consumers of epistemic reasons.

Understood as Belief that is normatively consequential for our ability to serve as good providers as well as consumers of epistemic reasons, Knowledge's status as normatively important is pretty solid.

7. Fruits of Normatively Consequential Knowledge.

- (1) This can point us towards how to discharge the *Determination Challenge Redux*: the properties that a belief must have to constitute knowledge are relational properties which are normatively significant for the believer, in their position as a social epistemic agent.
- (2) It also helps us explain why the normatively virtuous properties of Belief are needed for Knowledge.
- (3) The generality of the account and the essential role of knowledge in our epistemic agency makes Knowledge's normatively consequential status obviously more important than Healthful Spinach.
- (4) Most importantly, though, it accounts for KNOWLEDGE IS NORMATIVE. Knowledge is interestingly normative because it is an essential part of the norm-governed practice of social epistemic agency.

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