

# A New Argument for Skepticism

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It is commonly thought that the traditional skeptical challenge is fatal for epistemic internalism but merely problematic for epistemic externalism.<sup>1</sup> If knowledge is essentially tied to what is accessible from the “inside,” skeptical scenarios—like vivid dreams and deceiving demons—show that knowledge is impossible. After all, from the inside things can look just the same to a normal person as they do to one who is dreaming vividly. Because the dreamer does not have knowledge, the purportedly normal person cannot, either.

On the other hand, if knowledge is grounded in a broader range of facts about the subject, including facts of which she may be unaware, then the traditional skeptical challenge does not show knowledge to be impossible. As Keith DeRose notes, “it’s difficult to see how most skeptical arguments could even ever gain a foothold if reliabilism [or some other form of externalism] were correct, since they, for the most part, seem to have no tendency to show that our beliefs are formed by an unreliable process.”<sup>2</sup> Externalist theories may still have work to do in response to skepticism—largely because externalism is thought to have too *easy* an answer for it—but the skeptical challenge is not generally thought to be a direct and immediate danger for externalists.

But, even if this correct, it does not mean that externalism is in the clear. After laying out the traditional argument for skepticism and examining the basic externalist reply to it, I shall construct a new argument for skepticism—one that that is equally damaging to both internalism and externalism. After considering a reply to that argument motivated by virtue epistemology, I shall close by considering some of the consequences of this new skeptical challenge.

## I. THE TRADITIONAL SKEPTICAL CHALLENGE

Much has been written about the relation between ancient and modern skepticism.<sup>3</sup> Some scholars argue that the ancient skeptics tried to undermine *belief* while the modern skeptics challenged claims to *knowledge*. It is also a matter of dispute whether the ancients were more, or less, radical in their skepticism than the moderns. And, of course, there are differences in the purposes for which the ancients and the moderns used their skeptical arguments.<sup>4</sup> Skepticism, as it figures in present-day epistemology, is another matter. By and large, it is presented—as it was by Descartes—as a challenge to be overcome, and not as a philosophical position one might reasonably adopt.

Despite these differences in the skeptical tradition, it is still possible to discern a common thread running through it. That thread is the basic skeptical challenge posed both to other philosophers and to ordinary subjects. To get clear about the fundamental structure of that challenge, I shall make use of what is perhaps the best-known instance of it: the evil demon hypothesis of Descartes' First Meditation.<sup>5</sup> Once the structure is in view, it should be relatively easy to see how it underlies other versions of the skeptical challenge as well.

The evil demon hypothesis emerges out of the skeptical challenge posed by the possibility of an omnipotent God. How, the meditator asks, “do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, no extended thing, no shape, no size, no place, while at the same time ensuring that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now?”<sup>6</sup> Some powerful being—whether God or an evil demon—“could have given me a nature such that I was deceived even in matters which seemed most evident.”<sup>7</sup>

Although the challenge is presented in the first person, this is not essential to it. Let us suppose Alma is the victim of an evil demon, while Betty is a normal human subject.<sup>8</sup> Although they differ in that crucial respect, they are nevertheless exactly alike with respect to how things appear to exist. Now, the skeptic invites us to compare Alma and Betty. It is clear that Alma does

not have knowledge of the world around her.<sup>9</sup> Her beliefs are false, which means that the appearances are misleading in her case. Although they make Alma's beliefs rational, in the sense of being reasonable or blameless, the appearances do not bring her anywhere near the truth. They are therefore inadequate, from a strictly epistemic point of view. Turning to Betty, then, notice that her beliefs are grounded in those very same appearances.<sup>10</sup> If they are epistemically inadequate for Alma, they must be equally inadequate for Betty. Because there is no relevant difference between the two subjects—as is apparent from the fact that Betty cannot tell whether she is not herself the victim of an evil demon—Betty cannot have knowledge of her environment. In short, Alma and Betty are alike in all relevant respects. Alma does not have knowledge, so Betty cannot have it, either.

Other versions of the traditional skeptical argument rely on a similar sort of comparison between possible subjects, though they vary in how they construct it. For example, to adapt a scenario from Bertrand Russell, there could be someone, Alfred, who has all of the same memories as a normal subject, Barton, and yet Alfred was created (with those memories) only a few minutes ago.<sup>11</sup> Because Alfred does not know anything of the past—there is, after all, no past for him to know—Barton cannot know anything of the past either. They are alike in all relevant respects; so, too, they must be alike in their ignorance.

We see the same sort of comparison in some of the arguments of the ancient skeptics.

Carneades and the Academic skeptics argue that

impressions arise from what is not as well as from what is. The fact that they are found to be equally self-evident and striking is an indication of their indiscernibility, and an indication of their being equally self-evident and striking is the fact that the consequential actions are linked to [both kinds of impression]. Just as in waking states a thirsty man gets pleasure from drinking and someone who flees from a wild beast or any other terror shouts and screams, so too in dreams people satisfy their thirst and think they are drinking from a spring, and it is just the same with the fear of those who have nightmares.<sup>12</sup>

The Ten Modes of Pyrrhonism likewise offer ways of making similar comparisons, though with one interesting difference. To take one sort of case, the second mode derives from the differences among humans—e.g., Sextus Empiricus says that “Demophon, who waited table for Alexander, used to shiver in the sun or the bath, but felt warm in the shade.”<sup>13</sup> In these respects, of course, Demophon differs from an ordinary human, with whom he is implicitly being compared. There is no presumption that either of the subjects compared is clearly ignorant, but their beliefs are incompatible with one another. So, according to Sextus, “we shall either have to give credence to all human beings or to some. But, if to all, we shall be attempting impossibilities and accepting contradictory statements. And if to some, let the Dogmatists tell us to whom we should give assent.”<sup>14</sup> Each will favor her own view, and there will be no resolution to the contradiction. So, even if we do not know which belief is false, we know that at least one of them must be. Because there is no (non-question-begging) reason to favor the belief of one person over the belief of the other, both should be rejected. That is to say, neither person has knowledge.

Another version of the skeptical argument that derives from the ancient skeptics is the so-called problem of the criterion. In this type of argument, the skeptic challenges the subject’s use of a particular cognitive faculty or belief-forming method. For the sake of simplicity, let us suppose the skeptic challenges faculty *F*. The force of the argument arises from the fact that there are no unproblematic ways for the subject to respond to such a challenge. If, in the course of her defense, the subject uses *F*, she will be guilty of having begged the question. On the other hand, if the subject uses a different faculty, *F\**, the skeptic will repeat her challenge, now targeting *F\**. The subject may attempt to provide a non-question-begging defense of *F\**, which will involve the use of some faculty other than *F\**. At each step, the skeptic will repeat the challenge. In responding, the subject will either return to the use of some faculty (e.g., *F*) already questioned by the skeptic, or she will continue to rely on faculties that have not yet been questioned and thus have not yet passed the

skeptic's challenge. In the former case, the subject's response will fail because it is epistemically circular, while, in the latter case, her response will yield a vicious regress. Neither response is satisfying because neither provides any final answer to the skeptic's challenge.

This type of skeptical argument, too, can be seen to fit the comparative pattern. Although a normal subject, Bethany, may feel quite secure in the use of her faculties—reason, sense perception, etc.—there does not appear to be any difference between her and an abnormal subject, Alice, who feels equally secure in the use of spurious faculties like clairvoyance and wishful thinking.<sup>15</sup> The defense each would give of her favored faculties would be structurally similar to the defense offered by the other subject. Because Alice's defense—whether question-begging, epistemically circular, or mired in a vicious regress—would clearly be worthless, so, too, is the defense attempted by Bethany.

At the heart of the traditional skeptical challenge, then, is a comparison between a subject, *A*, who has a false belief and a subject, *B*, who has (or, at least, may have) a true one.<sup>16</sup> The epistemic basis for *A*'s false belief is identical to the epistemic basis for *B*'s (possibly) true belief. *A* cannot have knowledge, so *B* cannot have knowledge, either.

## II. THE EXTERNALIST RESPONSE TO TRADITIONAL SKEPTICISM

Externalist theories of knowledge and justification are characterized by their grounding of epistemic properties—e.g., knowledge, justification, warrant—in factors that do not have a necessary relation to one's subjective awareness.<sup>17</sup> So, for example, a basic form of reliabilism takes one's belief to be justified just in case it is the product of a reliable belief-producing mechanism.<sup>18</sup> Whether one's cognitive faculties, like sense perception, are in fact reliable is generally too complex a fact for one to be able to know just by reflection.<sup>19</sup> This fact is thus external to one's subjective awareness.

There are, in addition to basic reliabilism, various types of externalism. Some require that the reliable belief-producing mechanisms be *virtues* of the subject.<sup>20</sup> Others focus instead on the

modal relations the subject's belief has to the purported fact known.<sup>21</sup> What is common to all of them, though, is the fundamental idea that knowledge and justification are a matter of how well one *fits* with one's environment, whether or not one is aware of that fit.<sup>22</sup>

Given this fundamental conception of knowledge (and other epistemic properties, like justification), the externalist has an easy response to offer the skeptic. The skeptic relies on a comparison between *A* (the subject in a skeptical scenario) and *B* (the normal subject), but that comparison is incomplete. There *are* epistemic differences between *A* and *B*—very important ones—and they correctly allow us to attribute knowledge to *B* even though she cannot tell, simply by reflection, that her situation is different than *A*'s. Whether or not she is aware of it, *B*'s beliefs fit well with her environment, whereas *A*'s do not. This fact, although it is external to *B*'s subjective awareness, explains why she has knowledge even though *A* does not.<sup>23</sup>

It is worth noting that, though this simple answer is available to the externalist, it is rarely defended in quite this way.<sup>24</sup> The explanation for why this is so is not hard to see: if skepticism is *obviously* false, as it would seem to be on the supposition that externalism is correct, it becomes very hard to see why countless philosophers have been so concerned about it.<sup>25</sup> The problem posed by skepticism is thus different for the externalist than for the internalist.<sup>26</sup> The externalist does not face the straightforward challenge of refuting the skeptic's argument. Although such a refutation is essential to, say, Descartes's epistemology, it is unnecessary—both for the epistemic subject and for the epistemologist theorizing about knowledge—if externalism is correct.<sup>27</sup> Instead, the externalist faces the rather less worrisome task of explaining why we are prone to mistakenly thinking skepticism is a serious problem.<sup>28</sup>

## III. A NEW SKEPTICAL CHALLENGE

The traditional skeptical argument is sometimes presented as depending on the premise that knowledge requires certainty.<sup>29</sup> Because such a conception of knowledge is so vulnerable to skepticism, most philosophers now have abandoned it.<sup>30</sup> They are willing to accept that one can have knowledge, even when the epistemic basis for one's belief is compatible with having a false belief.<sup>31</sup>

This move, although surely a reasonable one to make, has led to a serious problem in epistemology. Let us suppose that, in order for a subject's belief to count as knowledge, it is necessary that the epistemic basis for her belief must surpass some minimal threshold of excellence—it must be sufficiently good for her to have knowledge. Under the conception of knowledge we are now working with, this threshold will fall short of what would be needed for certainty. So, it is possible that the subject could hold a belief the basis for which surpasses that threshold, and yet the belief is false. To adapt an example from Bertrand Russell, let us suppose that I walk by a clock everyday on my way to campus.<sup>32</sup> The clock has worked perfectly for the past ten years—a fact that I have confirmed countless times by checking what it says against other clocks. Earlier today, however, the clock stopped. When I pass by at 11:30 AM, I do not realize that this is so, and I form the well justified, though false, belief that it is noon. Because the belief is false, it cannot count as knowledge. Now, the problematic twist occurs on the following day. I still do not know that the clock has stopped, but I happen to walk by at noon. The belief I then form is still well justified, given my past experience with the clock's reliability, but it is also true. Nevertheless, the belief does not count as knowledge. Its truth is accidental—a bit of good luck for me. The problem for epistemology, then, is this: a belief can count as well justified, and also be true, and yet not be knowledge.

This, as every philosopher knows, is the so-called Gettier problem.<sup>33</sup> Although a huge literature has followed in the wake of Edmund Gettier's initial paper, the usual reaction has been to regard the cases he presented as counterexamples requiring some sort of addition to standard accounts.<sup>34</sup> No solution to the problem has yet found widespread acceptance, but it has become fairly standard in contemporary epistemology to compartmentalize the Gettier problem—that is, most epistemologists continue working on other issues (e.g., the nature of justification) under the assumption that their views will be unaffected by the requirements of whatever solution ultimately is found.

But to see the problem with accidentality in this way, I shall now argue, is to miss the fundamental nature of the difficulty it presents. Cases of the sort that Gettier and others have proposed make possible a new comparative argument for skepticism—but, unlike in the case of the traditional skeptical argument, the nature of the new comparison is such that the move to externalism does nothing to distinguish between the ordinary subject and the subject who does not have knowledge.<sup>35</sup> To put the point more plainly, the new skeptical argument affects externalist theories just as much, and in just the same way, as it does internalist accounts.

Let us begin with a pair of cases.

*Car Possession 1:* Bartholomew has a lot of very good evidence for the proposition that his friend, Smith, owns a Ford. He has ridden in Smith's Ford numerous times in the past year, has heard Smith talk about his Ford regularly, and has even seen the title for the car in Smith's name. Moreover, Smith has never discussed any plans to sell or otherwise get rid of the car. Bartholomew has also recently taken a basic symbolic logic course, and he recognizes that the disjunction introduction rule allows him to derive a true complex proposition by disjoining two propositions where at least one of them is true. So, even though he has no reason to believe that it is now snowing in Albuquerque, he infers (and forms the belief) that Smith owns a Ford or it is now snowing in Albuquerque.<sup>36</sup>

*Car Possession 2:* Connor has a lot of very good evidence for the proposition that his friend, Lee, owns a Honda. Connor has ridden in Lee's Honda numerous times in the past year, has heard Lee talk about his Honda regularly, and has even seen the title for the car in Lee's name. However, Lee has very recently sold his car. Connor also has taken a basic symbolic logic course and understands how the disjunction introduction rule works. Even though he has no reason to believe that it is now snowing in Albuquerque, he adds this as a disjunct to

his belief that Lee owns a Honda. Consequently, Connor forms the belief that Lee owns a Honda or it is now snowing in Albuquerque.

Here is another pair of cases.

*Barn Sighting 1:* Bridget, who has excellent eyesight, is driving through an ordinary rural area, which has all of the usual features one would normally encounter in the countryside. She sees a barn not too far from the road and accordingly forms the true belief that there is a barn in the field.<sup>37</sup>

*Barn Sighting 2:* Cassandra, who also has excellent eyesight, is driving through a rural area when she sees a barn not too far from the road. She also forms the true belief that there is a barn in the field. However, she is in an area where the farmers have built numerous barn façades, which are so cleverly constructed that they cannot be distinguished from real barns by passing motorists.

When we consider in isolation the normal (*B*) subjects in each pair of cases, it seems obvious to almost everyone that they have the knowledge in question. After all, their beliefs are not only true but highly justified as well. By contrast, when we consider in isolation the abnormal (*C*) subjects in each pair of cases, it seems pretty clear to the great majority of epistemologists that they do not have the knowledge in question.<sup>38</sup> Although their beliefs are true and—it is important to note—just as well justified as the *B* subjects, the *C* subjects have beliefs that appear to be true by accident. Connor's complex belief was true because the disjunct he added randomly to his prior false belief happened to be true, though he had no reason to think that it was. And Cassandra's perceptual belief was formed when she just happened to be looking at the one real barn amongst all the barn façades in the area. She easily could have been looking at one of those façades instead and would have formed the same justified belief, though it would then have been false. Knowledge is thought to be incompatible with this kind of luck—it cannot be a mere accident that one's belief happens to be true rather than false.

Although this is the standard way of reading these cases, it has not been appreciated that they permit a comparison much like the one that underlies traditional skepticism. Here is how the new argument for skepticism works: *C* does not have knowledge. *B* is just like *C* in all epistemic respects. Therefore, *B* does not have knowledge, either.

There are only two premises to the argument. Of these, the first seems fairly secure—virtually everyone agrees that knowledge is incompatible with accidental truth. But, one might object, surely the second premise is false. Isn't it just the case that we are not in a good position to point out what the epistemic difference is between *B* and *C*, given that we do not yet have a solution to the problem of accidental truth? If so, the new argument for skepticism is no more troubling than the original Gettier problem.

This objection misses the mark, though in an instructive way. Let us suppose that epistemologists have actually found a universally accepted solution to the Gettier problem. Abstracting from the details of the solution, let us say that there is some condition  $x$  that *B* satisfies and *C* does not; this is what distinguishes all cases of non-accidentally true belief from all cases of accidentally true belief. We can abstract away from the details of the solution in this way because they do not matter, for the purposes of the new argument for skepticism. For notice that, whatever  $x$  may be, it has nothing to do with the epistemic performance of *B*, even when we conceive of that performance in the most broadly externalistic way possible. The satisfaction of condition  $x$  is not merely *external* to the subject's subjective awareness, it is also *extrinsic* to the subject's epistemic performance.<sup>39</sup> By hypothesis, the epistemic performance of *B* is just the same as the epistemic performance of *C*. Connor's belief is grounded in exactly the same sort of evidence as Bartholomew's; Cassandra's belief is grounded in exactly the same sort of visual experience as Bridget's.<sup>40</sup> The question, then, is this: should we allow a fact that is unrelated to the subject's epistemic performance to be what makes the difference between knowing and not knowing?

If the answer to this question were yes, it would also permit a straightforward response to the comparison underlying traditional skepticism. Clearly, there is a fact—independent of their respective performances—that distinguishes *A* (say, the victim of the evil demon) and *B* (a normal subject). That fact is simply that *B*'s belief is true, while *A*'s is false.<sup>41</sup> But no philosopher has ever

thought to give this answer because it is so terribly unsatisfying. The upshot of the traditional argument is that the subject's epistemic basis for her belief—her justification, warrant, or whatever—is insufficient for knowledge. It does not connect with the truth in the right sort of way. If we were to make the response now under consideration, it would mean we no longer cared about how justification matches up with the truth. All that would matter would be that the belief is both justified and true. But, of course, the beliefs in paradigmatic Gettier cases are both justified and true. So, if we allow some factor extrinsic to the subject's epistemic performance to be the sole difference between knowing and not knowing, we have no principled way of distinguishing knowledge from accidentally true belief. It is hard to see this as in any way a successful response to the skeptic.

Even for those philosophers who reject externalism, it should be clear that there is at least some plausibility to the idea that a subject's intellectual fit in her environment constitutes the epistemic basis of her belief. This plausibility is what underwrites the externalist reply to traditional skepticism as a genuine option in epistemology. But the same recourse to externalism does not work in response to the new argument for skepticism. The subject's fit in her environment has already been taken into account in the initial comparison. However we want to characterize Bridget's epistemic profile in *Barn Sighting 1*—e.g., as grounded in phenomenally available evidence or in a reliable belief-producing mechanism—it is just the same as Cassandra's epistemic profile in *Barn Sighting 2*. The sole difference between them is that Cassandra's perceptual belief is formed in an area where most things that look like barns are actually fakes. And this fact, to which Cassandra is in no way sensitive, is not part of her epistemic profile.<sup>42</sup> The conclusion, then, is that, even when we conceive of them in the most rigorously externalistic way possible, there is no epistemic difference between these two subjects. Because one of them does not have knowledge, the other cannot have it, either.

## IV. OBJECTIONS FROM VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY

Recent work in virtue epistemology appears to offer the basis for a response to the new argument for skepticism. According to many virtue epistemologists, what is distinctive about knowledge is that, in all and only those cases where the subject does have knowledge, she deserves credit for the truth of her belief.<sup>43</sup> So, even though the *C* subjects in the cases above have epistemic performances identical to those of the *B* subjects, there is nevertheless a very significant difference between them in their overall epistemic situations. Although all of them have justified, true beliefs, only the *B* subjects deserve credit for their success.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that if fallibilism is true the success a subject's belief may have is never *entirely* creditable to the subject's epistemic performance. A subject may have a performance identical in every relevant way to a successful performance and yet end up with a false belief. The subject's performance must be supplemented by something else in order to be successful—as John McDowell says, the world must “do us a favor.”<sup>44</sup> In purported cases of knowledge, that favor comes in the form of the satisfaction of condition *x* (i.e., whatever rules out Gettier cases and other instances of accidental truth); in cases where the belief is accidentally true, something else must be added to the subject's performance to yield truth. Notice, then, that *ex hypothesi* the normal subject (*B*) is in no way sensitive to the satisfaction of condition *x*—if she were, this would be part of her epistemic performance, and she would thereby be different from her supposed twin (*C*) in a Gettier case. If *B* is not sensitive to the satisfaction of *x*, though, it is hard to see how the success of her performance can be credited to her.<sup>45</sup> Again, compare how things stand with respect to the argument for traditional skepticism. The traditional skeptic points out that the subject's epistemic performance (conceived in a certain way) is compatible with both the truth and the falsity of her beliefs. Merely adding the truth to her performance is not sufficient to break the

comparison between a normal subject (*B*) and the victim of an evil demon (*A*). After all, neither is sensitive to the truth (again, *ex hypothesi*). What makes externalism even remotely plausible as a general solution to skepticism is the fact that it does identify some feature of the subject's epistemic performance that allows us to discriminate between *B* and *A*. Given the comparison between them, we can see why *B*'s success *would* be creditable to her—there is something about her performance, her fit with the environment, that explains why she has true beliefs and *A* does not. But nothing like this has yet been proposed with respect to the comparison between the normal subject (*B*) and the one who is in a Gettier case (*C*). More importantly, nothing *could* be proposed that would distinguish the two. Once we have moved in the direction of externalism, we have already included everything possible in our account of the subject's performance. As long as epistemologists are committed to fallibilism, there will always be the possibility that one's epistemic performance—no matter how externalistically we conceive of it—is successful by accident.

For that reason, the virtue epistemologist's claim that knowledge is creditable true belief is unable to provide a successful response to the new argument for skepticism. There is, however, a second line of argument that the virtue epistemologists might try. Let us begin by acknowledging that *B*'s success cannot be entirely creditable to her. Still, it might be at least partially creditable to her in a way that *C*'s success is not. Thus, John Greco says that, in cases of purported knowledge, the subject's virtues are the most salient part of the explanation for her success.<sup>46</sup> According to Ernest Sosa, a performance is apt when its success is "sufficiently" due to the subject's competence.<sup>47</sup> By contrast, the success a subject has in a Gettier case is not due in any significant way to her performance.<sup>48</sup> So, even if *C*'s performance is intrinsically the same as *B*'s, there is still an important difference in their effects. In particular, *C*'s success is *not* creditable to her performance.<sup>49</sup>

But there are several reasons for thinking that there are not in fact any significant differences, with respect to creditability, between purported instances of knowledge and accidentally

true beliefs. First, salience is typically a matter of context. In some contexts, then, the subject's virtues might be the most salient part of the explanation for why her belief is true—even when it is true accidentally. To see this, let us return to *Car Possession 2*. Suppose, now, that Connor has a friend, David, who has all of the same evidence indicating that Lee owns a Honda. Like Connor, David has also taken a symbolic logic course, though he did quite poorly. As a result, David tends to confuse the conjunction introduction rule with the disjunction introduction rule. So, David thinks that he can *conjoin* a randomly chosen proposition with one that he takes to be true and thereby derive a true complex proposition. So, even though he has no reason to believe that it is snowing in Albuquerque, he (mis)applies the conjunction introduction rule to his original proposition and comes to believe that Lee owns a Honda and it is snowing in Albuquerque. His new belief, unlike Connor's, is false. What accounts for the success Connor has achieved and David has not? The salient difference between them is simply Connor's possession of a virtue that David lacks. In that sense, Connor's success is creditable to him as a product of his virtue. Nevertheless, his belief, though justified, is still accidentally true and not a case of knowledge.<sup>50</sup>

Second, as Jennifer Lackey has argued, there are purported cases of knowledge where the subject does not seem to deserve any significant amount of credit for the success of her belief.<sup>51</sup> This is particularly easy to see in some cases of purported knowledge from testimony. For example, suppose that I have just arrived in an unfamiliar city. I randomly choose a passerby and ask for directions to the nearest subway station. As it happens, the directions-giver is reliable and gives me accurate directions. Most philosophers are willing to recognize as knowledge my newly acquired belief that the nearest subway station is six blocks to the west. Nevertheless, it is hard to see why I—rather than the testifier—deserve much credit for the success of that belief.<sup>52</sup> Although I may deserve some small measure of credit, so too does the subject in a Gettier case deserve some small

measure of credit for the success of his belief.<sup>53</sup> As Lackey argues, there does not appear to be any significant difference here.

Third, the previous argument is clear even in cases like *Car Possession 2*, which is a paradigmatic Gettier case. But the point is even stronger when we turn to cases like *Barn Sighting 2*. When we focus narrowly on Cassandra's perceptual experience and its relation to the genuine barn in front of her, it is clear that she deserves as much credit for the truth of her belief as Bridget deserves for the truth of hers. (And both of them seem to deserve more than I do for the truth of my testimonially-based belief regarding the location of the subway station.) Bridget should not get more credit than Cassandra simply because there are no barn façades in the area around Bridget—especially given that Bridget and Cassandra are equally insensitive to the presence or absence of those façades.

Because Cassandra has such a good claim to deserving credit for the success of her belief, Sosa argues that her belief should properly be regarded as knowledge.<sup>54</sup> According to his version of virtue epistemology, a belief counts as knowledge when it is *apt*—i.e., when it is true because it is competent.<sup>55</sup> Cassandra's belief is apt in this sense: it is true because she is exercising a competence—her perceptual faculty—in conditions that are appropriate for its use. This is so despite the fact that Cassandra easily could have exercised her competence in a way that would have been unsuccessful. That is, she easily could have been looking at a barn façade instead of a genuine barn. Still, as Sosa says, “That [the belief] is apt by luck makes it no less apt” (p. 87).

Is Cassandra's belief accidentally true in a way that precludes it from counting as knowledge? Consider the following case:

*Barn Sighting 3:* Clementine, who has excellent eyesight, is driving through the same countryside as Cassandra, but she sees more barn-like structures than Cassandra did. When she sees the genuine barn, she forms the belief that there is a red barn in this county. When she sees a barn façade in the next field, she forms the belief that there is a green barn in this county. And, when she again sees a barn façade, this time on the neighboring farm, she forms the belief that there is a yellow barn in this county.

Given Clementine's excellent eyesight, all three of her beliefs (call them RED, GREEN, and YELLOW, respectively) are justified. Of course, only RED is true; the other two are false. GREEN and YELLOW are obviously not knowledge, but what about RED? Suppose that Clementine is told that she has seen two façades and only one genuine barn. She will be in no position to say which of the structures she has seen is not fake. Correspondingly, she will be in no position to tell which of her beliefs is true. Because two of the beliefs are false, she should abandon (at least) two of them. But, in this situation, she can do no more than guess. If she continues to hold RED, this will clearly be a case of accidental success. For that reason, it is very hard to see RED as an instance of knowledge. But, notice, the epistemic basis for the belief is no worse than it was before Clementine was told that she had seen only one genuine barn.<sup>56</sup> Both before and after that revelation, the belief is supported by the same perceptual experience. If it is not good enough after learning that two of her similar beliefs are false, it was not good enough before she acquired that information.

The same reasoning applies in a very similar way to Cassandra's belief that she has seen a barn. Although she has not actually formed two false beliefs in the way that Clementine has, she could very easily have done so. When told of the presence of barn façades in the area, Cassandra could do no more than guess whether her belief is true. So, it is just as much an accident for Cassandra as it is for Clementine that her perceptual experience led to a true belief. Whether or not Cassandra's belief is apt, it does not seem to be knowledge.<sup>57</sup> Still, she deserves just as much credit for the truth of her belief as Bridget does for the truth of her own belief.

The upshot, then, is that there is no sense in which a subject (*B*) who purportedly has knowledge deserves credit for her beliefs in a way that a subject (*C*) with accidentally true beliefs does not. And, so, credit for truth does not serve to distinguish between *B* and *C*. They are alike in all relevant respects. *C* does not have knowledge, so *B* does not, either.

## V. PRESUPPOSITIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Every skeptical argument embodies some presuppositions about the nature of knowledge. Without them, it would be impossible to offer an argument of any sort. In some cases, the challenge posed by the skeptical argument can be overcome by abandoning its underlying presupposition. This has happened, for example, with arguments that presuppose knowledge to require certainty. The trick for the skeptic, then, is to find presuppositions that are so fundamental that they cannot be abandoned.

Has this happened in the case of the new argument for skepticism? There are only four presuppositions on which it rests. The first holds that subjects who are alike in every epistemic respect are also alike with respect to whether they have knowledge.<sup>58</sup> If this thesis were false, it would mean that knowledge would float freely of everything else that we take to have epistemic relevance. If that were really the case, it is hard to see how any sort of meaningful epistemology would be possible.

The second presupposition is fallibilism. To reject it is to leap from the frying pan into the fire. The traditional skeptical arguments lie in wait should we decide to return to a conception of knowledge that requires certainty.

The third presupposition is that fallibilism makes possible instances of justified but accidentally true belief. This has been a matter of some dispute—e.g., Alvin Plantinga has said that the Gettier problem really applies only to internalist theories, whereas Timothy Williamson has argued that it is a problem only for epistemologies that attempt to analyze knowledge.<sup>59</sup> But problems with accidentality have been shown to arise for their favored theories as well.<sup>60</sup> At this point, there is no reason to think that any version of fallibilism can escape the need to rule out accidentally true belief.

The final presupposition is just this: a belief that is accidentally true—no matter how well justified—cannot be an instance of knowledge. This is one of two bedrock principles in epistemology (the other one being that you cannot know what is false<sup>61</sup>). To say that it should not be abandoned lightly is to grossly understate its importance. Doing so would necessitate a re-conceiving of knowledge so radical that it would represent a concession to the skeptic no less significant than an outright admission of defeat.

If the new argument goes through, then, what are the consequences? For example, would it mean that we are rationally compelled to withhold or abandon our beliefs? That does not follow simply from the skeptical argument itself—nor, it should be said, does it follow solely from the traditional skeptical argument, either.<sup>62</sup> The Pyrrhonists thought that the suspension of belief follows naturally from being presented with equally plausible, incompatible arguments. Whether that is so is something that can be left to psychologists to determine for, in any case, it is not the situation that the new argument describes. The new argument for skepticism is not grounded in the presentation of counterbalanced arguments but in reflection on what it means for a belief to be true by accident.

Whatever consequences of the argument there may be, they will stem simply from the conclusion that knowledge is not possible. Are we thereby missing anything of value? It seems fairly clear that knowledge would be significantly more valuable than mere justified true belief. Certainly, we would prefer to find ourselves with knowledge rather than in a Gettier case. Why this is so may be difficult to articulate, but I will close by offering two possible explanations for it.

First, knowledge would be a more stable possession than mere justified true belief.<sup>63</sup> A subject whose justified belief is true by accident would, typically, be easily persuaded to abandon the belief through learning how easily the belief could be false. This would usually not be so in the case of knowledge. Although it would of course be possible that a subject might abandon even a belief

that counts as knowledge through being presented with misleading evidence, in normal cases this would not result simply from learning more about the environment in which one formed the belief in question.

Second, and more speculatively, the possession of knowledge seems to be essentially linked with other fundamental values. We do not count accidentally true belief as knowledge because we take it to be important that the subject has acquired knowledge in the right sort of way. It must belong to the person as her doing, much as an action for which a person is responsible must belong to her.<sup>64</sup> Although a fuller defense of this claim must wait for another occasion, it would mean that the value of knowledge is perhaps much like the value we accord to free action. In both cases, they are constitutively linked to the value of being a person: knowledge and freedom give depth and substance to our natures as active beings.<sup>65</sup> If this is so, then skepticism, like the problems surrounding freedom, is a challenge to our fundamental sense of self. This, no doubt, is why it has proven to be such an enduring part of the philosophical tradition.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Pritchard (2005), pp. 220-1.

<sup>2</sup> See the introduction to DeRose and Warfield (1999), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Fine (2000), Williams (1986), and Burnyeat (1982).

<sup>4</sup> On ancient skepticism as a way of life, see especially Burnyeat and Frede (1997). For an insightful account of the multifarious uses of skepticism in early modern philosophy, see Popkin (2003).

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted, however, that the skeptical challenge is explained in different ways by different philosophers. For example, Dretske (1970, p. 1011) says that every skeptical argument depends on the closure principle, while Fumerton (1995, p. 36) takes them to depend on what he calls the principle of inferential justification.

<sup>6</sup> First Meditation; Descartes (1984), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Third Meditation; Descartes (1984), p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> In what follows, I shall use names beginning with “A” to refer to subjects who are in skeptical scenarios and names beginning with “B” to refer to subjects who are not.

<sup>9</sup> Does she, however, have *a priori* knowledge and knowledge of her own mind? The strength of the evil demon hypothesis is a contentious matter. The Third Meditation passage quoted above naturally leads to the interpretation that Descartes means to call into question even clear and distinct perception. However, there is good reason to think that this is not really what Descartes has in mind. He says, two sentences later in the Third Meditation, that when “I turn to the things themselves which I think I perceive very clearly, I am so convinced by them that I spontaneously declare: let whoever can do so deceive me, he will never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I continue to think I am something; or make it true at some future time that I have never existed, since it is now true that I exist; or bring it about that two and three added together are more or less than five, or anything of this kind in which I see a manifest contradiction” (Descartes 1984, p. 25). So, clear and distinct perceptions are not subject to doubt when I am actually having them. The problem is that “I cannot fix my mental vision continually on the same thing, so as to keep perceiving it clearly,” as he writes in the Fifth Meditation (Descartes 1984, p. 48). When I am *not* having a clear and distinct perception, I can have doubts about their veracity. Hence, the argument that God is not a deceiver is required for stability over time in my body of knowledge. But, because there is no doubt when I *am* having a clear and distinct perception, there is no problem with using them to construct the argument that God exists. Interpreting Descartes in this way (which, admittedly, does call for a very nuanced reading of some passages in the Meditations) has the advantage of keeping the meditator out of the Cartesian Circle; see Cottingham (1986), pp. 66-70, and Kenny (1995), p. 193-5. Correlatively, it restricts the extent to which a skeptical challenge may be mounted to one’s *a priori* knowledge and knowledge of one’s own mind: although doubts will arise, they will always be answerable.

<sup>10</sup> That is to say, Betty’s appearances are qualitatively (not numerically) identical to Alma’s. Williamson rejects this claim, arguing that the former’s evidence *is* different from the latter’s; see his (2000), ch. 8. His argument depends on his rejection of what he calls the *luminosity* of evidence; his general anti-luminosity argument can be found in his (2000), ch. 4. For an objection to that argument, see my (2006b). Along similar lines, Sosa (2007) rejects the claim that our cognitive situation when dreaming is comparable to what it is in waking life. He argues that “in dreaming there is no real thinking [and thus no believing, falsely or otherwise] and perhaps not even any real experiencing” (p. 12). Although Sosa takes this to provide the basis for a response to the skeptic, it seems open to the skeptic to argue that the scope of the skeptical challenge has in fact been broadened, so that it encompasses not only the external world but the internal one as well. (This is a possibility Sosa acknowledges, p. 9, but rejects.)

<sup>11</sup> Russell (1921), pp. 159-60.

<sup>12</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Against the professors* (7.402-10), in Long and Sedley (1987), 40H. According to Sextus, the Academic skeptics also argue, against the Stoics (the leading dogmatists of the day), that the same kind of indiscernibility in appearances arises with respect to identical objects like eggs and twins: “if I give the Stoic first one and then another of two exactly similar eggs to discriminate, will the wise man, by focusing on them, be able to say infallibly that the one egg he is being shown is this one rather than that one?” (*ibid.*).

<sup>13</sup> Sextus Empiricus (1996), p. 99 (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.14.82).

<sup>14</sup> Sextus Empiricus (1996), p. 100 (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.14.88).

<sup>15</sup> Although no one (worth taking seriously) thinks that wishful thinking is a genuine cognitive faculty, there have been some very significant disputes over which purported cognitive faculties really are genuine. For one example, see Popkin (2003) on the dispute between Catholics and Protestants in the wake of the Reformation.

<sup>16</sup> Again, in the case of the Ten Modes of Pyrrhonism, it may be impossible to tell which of two people has the false belief. The important point, though, is that at least one of the beliefs *is* false.

<sup>17</sup> That is, externalists reject epistemic internalism. There are various ways in which internalism has been characterized; for a helpful discussion, see Fumerton (1995), pp. 60-9. One of the most widely shared is Chisholm’s characterization of epistemic justification as “*internal and immediate* in that one can find out directly, by *reflection*, what one is justified in believing at any time” (1989, p. 7).

<sup>18</sup> See Goldman (1979) for a statement of basic reliabilism. He has offered more complex versions of reliabilism in his (1986) and (1992).

<sup>19</sup> Moreover, even if a particular subject *does* have some awareness of the reliability of her faculties or belief-forming processes, the justification for her beliefs is independent of that awareness.

<sup>20</sup> See Sosa (1991) and Greco (2000) for two of the central defenses of virtue epistemology. See Zagzebski (1996) for a different type of virtue epistemology, grounded in the Aristotelian tradition.

<sup>21</sup> See Nozick (1981). Sosa (1999) defends the requirement of a modal connection between belief and purportedly known fact in addition to the other elements of his virtue epistemology, though he appears to abandon this requirement in his (2007). See also Williamson (2000). Nozick argues on behalf of *sensitivity* (if  $p$  were not true, one would not believe  $p$ ), where Sosa and Williamson defend *safety* (if one were to believe that  $p$ , it would be true that  $p$ ).

<sup>22</sup> This is compatible with a view such as Sosa's, which takes the awareness of one's fit in one's environment to yield a *better* epistemic status for one's belief than it would have had in the absence of that awareness. See his distinction between *animal* and *reflective* knowledge (1991, p. 240) and his discussion of Descartes's distinction between *cognitio* and *scientia* (1997).

<sup>23</sup> For one example of this strategy, see Van Cleve (1979) on epistemic circularity.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Sosa (2007), p. 27, where he briefly considers the point before moving on to a different sort of response to skepticism.

<sup>25</sup> This has been one of the primary motivations for contextualism; see Cohen (1988 and 1998) and DeRose (1995).

There is a second way in which the ease with which externalism permits a reply to skepticism has been taken as problematic for externalism. If externalism is correct, there is apparently no bar to knowing on the basis of induction that induction is reliable (or to knowing on the basis of perception that perception is reliable, etc.). As long as one's inductive reasoning *is* reliable, it will permit one to have knowledge of the results it produces, including the belief that induction is reliable. But some philosophers—see, especially, Fumerton (1995)—have argued that the fact that externalism permits epistemic circularity of this sort shows that externalism cannot be correct; see Bergmann (2004) for an externalist reply grounded in the tradition of common sense and my (2006a) for a reply to Bergmann.

<sup>26</sup> In addition to the objections already noted, there is also the so-called new evil demon problem, originally presented by Cohen (1984). Because the victim of an evil demon has all of the same evidence as a normal subject, it is implausible to say that the victim is unjustified in her beliefs while the normal subject's beliefs are justified (as they would be, if externalism were true). So, there must be more to epistemic justification (and, therefore, to knowledge as well) than externalism tells us.

<sup>27</sup> As Fumerton (1995) points out, if externalism is correct, it is a contingent matter whether we have knowledge. As such, philosophers are generally unqualified to conduct the proper sort of investigation into the reliability of a normal subject's cognitive faculties. This would be a project best left to the scientists, who are appropriately trained to gather and evaluate the relevant evidence. The most that epistemologists would be able to do is to provide an elucidation of the relevant epistemic concepts—that is, they would be able to say what knowledge is, but they would not be especially well-placed to say whether we have any.

<sup>28</sup> For externalist responses to this problem, see, e.g., Nozick (1981) and Sosa (2007). It is worth noting that some philosophers do take the externalist's easy response to skepticism to provide a *reductio* of the view—see especially Fumerton (1995). The problem is that, if externalism is correct, there is apparently no bar to knowing on the basis of induction that induction is reliable (or to knowing on the basis of perception that perception is reliable, etc.). As long as one's inductive reasoning *is* reliable, it will permit one to have knowledge of the results it produces, including the belief that induction is reliable. See Bergmann (2004) for an externalist reply grounded in the tradition of common sense and my (2006a) for a reply to Bergmann.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., Descartes's *Meditations* and Unger (1975). On the other hand, see Fumerton (1995) for a presentation of traditional skepticism that is independent of the requirement of certainty.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Williams (1999) and Feldman (2003). Although Feldman thinks that fallibilism is an adequate response to some forms of skepticism, he does acknowledge that there are skeptical arguments which do not rely on the impossibility of certainty; see p. 128. Fallibilism, by itself, is not a sufficient response to those skeptical arguments.

<sup>31</sup> See my (2002) for a full account of fallibilism, including an explanation of how necessary truths can be known in a fallibilistic way.

<sup>32</sup> Russell (1948), p. 154.

<sup>33</sup> See Edmund Gettier's classic paper (1963). Though Russell's brief example was earlier, proper focus on the problematic nature of cases of that sort begins with Gettier. See also Shope (1983) for many other cases of accidentally true, yet justified, beliefs. See also my (2000) for more on accidentality and Pritchard (2005) on epistemic luck.

<sup>34</sup> One notable exception is Williamson (2000), who argues that the ongoing failure to solve the Gettier problem shows that traditional epistemological accounts are hopeless. He argues on this basis that we ought to regard knowledge as unanalyzable. I argue, however, in my (2005) that something very much like the Gettier problem can be posed for his view as well; so, the Gettier problem itself provides no reason to prefer a view of the kind he favors over the traditional accounts he thinks we should abandon.

<sup>35</sup> I should emphasize, however, that neither Gettier nor any of the other philosophers who have proposed similar cases involving accidentally true justified beliefs have suggested a comparison of the sort that I will be making. See my (2007) for a different sort of presentation of the new argument for skepticism; there, I also defend the new argument against some popular anti-skeptical strategies, including contextualism and Moorean common sense.

<sup>36</sup> This, and the following case, are modifications of one of the two examples in Gettier (1963). As before, I shall use “B” names to refer to subjects in normal situations; I shall now use “C” names to refer to those whose beliefs are accidentally true.

<sup>37</sup> This, and the following case, are modifications of an example that appears in Goldman (1976), to whom it was suggested by Carl Ginet.

<sup>38</sup> Hetherington (1999) is an exception. He regards Gettier cases as borderline instances of knowledge. Sosa (2007) agrees that Connor does not have knowledge in *Car Possession 2*, but he thinks that Cassandra’s belief should count as knowledge in *Barn Sighting 2*. I shall return to this claim below.

<sup>39</sup> For more on this distinction, see my (2007).

<sup>40</sup> If we like, we can even make the epistemic performance of the *C* subjects *better* than that of the *B* subjects. For example, we could allow Connor’s belief to be grounded in a more extensive range of evidence (including, perhaps, a look at an affidavit signed by Lee stating that he will never sell his car) and Cassandra’s belief to be grounded in a better perceptual experience (e.g., she sees the barn from a closer vantage point and in better light). Still, the beliefs of the *C* subjects would be accidentally true.

<sup>41</sup> One might say here that this response begs the question against the skeptic. After all, *B* is in no position to assert that her own belief is true. But, even if this is so, the argument for traditional skepticism can be posed in the third person as well as in the first person. The argument, if it works at all, works whether or not the subject’s belief is true.

<sup>42</sup> Couldn’t one respond here that Cassandra does not fit as well in her environment as Bridget does in hers, given that Cassandra is far likelier to have a false belief? Although I have left the notion of *fit* at an intuitive level so that it can accommodate various specific versions of externalism, it should be clear that it cannot be construed so narrowly. After all, having a true belief through making a lucky guess does not amount to having the right sort of cognitive fit with one’s environment. This is constituted, rather, by the extent to which a subject’s cognitive faculties match the general features of her environment, such that repeated use of those faculties in that environment will lead to true belief in a high proportion of instances. In this sense, then, Bridget and Cassandra *do* fit their respective environments equally well. Despite the unusual circumstances in which Cassandra finds herself on this particular occasion, she lives in the same general environment as Bridget, and her perceptual faculties are equally well adapted for success in that environment.

<sup>43</sup> See Riggs (2002) and (unpublished), Greco (2003) and (2007), Sosa (2003) and (2007), and Zagzebski (2003).

<sup>44</sup> McDowell (1995).

<sup>45</sup> I am here using the term ‘sensitive’ in an intuitive way. That is, I do not mean to use it in the specific way Nozick (1981) does, nor do I mean that the subject must have a conscious awareness of the satisfaction of condition *x*. Rather, the point is just that, however one understands knowledge, whether in lines with internalism or externalism, we cannot properly attribute to the subject knowledge that *x* has been satisfied.

<sup>46</sup> See Greco (2003).

<sup>47</sup> See Sosa (2007), pp. 79 and 97.

<sup>48</sup> Sosa says that, in a Gettier case, the subject’s competence may be the explanation for why she has the belief in question, but it does not explain why it is true—in other words, the competence accounts for the belief’s *existence* but not for its *correctness* (2007, pp. 95-6).

<sup>49</sup> According to the first response from the virtue epistemologist, then, what matters is that success in cases of knowledge is creditable to the subject. According to the second response, what matters is that success in Gettier cases is *not* creditable to the subject.

<sup>50</sup> I am grateful to Jennifer Lackey for discussion of this point.

<sup>51</sup> See Lackey (2007) for this argument. See Greco (2007), Sosa (2007), and Riggs (unpublished) for responses to Lackey and Lackey (forthcoming-*a*) for her further defense of the argument.

<sup>52</sup> This case is drawn from Lackey (2007). She also there presents cases in which a subject apparently has knowledge but without deserving much credit for it, where the purported knowledge in question is not testimonial.

<sup>53</sup> For example, in the case above, Connor is clearly performing better intellectually than David is. Connor’s disjunctive belief is not only justified, it would count as knowledge if the original disjunct were true. By contrast, David’s belief is not justified, and it would not count as knowledge even if both conjuncts happened to be true.

<sup>54</sup> See Sosa’s discussion of the kaleidoscope believer—a case which is structurally similar to the barn façade case (2007, pp. 31-4, 96 n. 1, 99-101, and 104-9).

<sup>55</sup> Sosa (2007), pp. 23-4. To be precise, Sosa would say that Cassandra’s belief is *animal knowledge* but not *reflective knowledge* (pp. 36-7 and 100-9), where reflective knowledge is apt belief aptly noted (p. 32). In other words, *S* has

reflective knowledge that  $p$  just in case  $S$  aptly believes that she aptly believes that  $p$ . In saying that a subject in Cassandra's situation can have animal but not reflective knowledge, Sosa is attempting to account for the intuition that her belief (although apt) falls short in some way of the success achieved by a subject in normal circumstances, such as Bridget (p. 100). In what follows, I shall largely ignore the distinction between animal and reflective knowledge, as I shall be objecting to the claim that Cassandra has any sort of knowledge.

<sup>56</sup> One might object here that Clementine has been given a defeater (counterevidence) for her belief, so her epistemic situation is in fact worse than it was before. But the point can be put in the third-person just as well. An observer who learns that Clementine has seen only one genuine barn and two barn façades would say that the epistemic basis for her true belief is inadequate. It is not that the belief was well-supported and has since been outweighed by stronger evidence to the contrary. Rather, the epistemic basis for the belief was never good in the first place.

<sup>57</sup> See my (2000) for an argument that beliefs can be accidentally justified (or apt) in a way that precludes them from counting as knowledge. In denying that a subject like Cassandra can have reflective knowledge, Sosa makes use of the following premise: "For any correct belief that  $p$ , the correctness of that belief is attributable to a competence only if it derives from the exercise of that competence in appropriate conditions for its exercise, and that exercise in those conditions would not then too easily have issued a false belief" (p. 33). Setting aside how that principle bears on Cassandra's second-order belief that her first order belief is apt, it looks as though her first-order belief (viz., that there is a barn in the field) fails to meet it. That belief is the product of visual perception, and, although conditions are appropriate for its exercise, it would easily issue a false belief. This would happen if, for example, Cassandra were to look in the next field over, which she might easily do. (Moreover, if she were to look in the next field, conditions would still be appropriate for the exercise of her visual competence. She would, for example, be able to correctly form beliefs about the color, size, shape, etc., of the structure she would then perceive.) Given this principle, then, it looks as though Cassandra's belief is not apt after all (it is not correct *because* competent). Nevertheless, the original problem remains: Cassandra seems to deserve just as much credit for the truth of her belief as Bridget deserves for the truth of her own belief. One final point: can we then distinguish Bridget's situation from Cassandra's in that only Bridget's belief is apt? No; it is possible for a belief to meet Sosa's above condition and yet still be (intuitively) true by accident. Suppose, for example, that the farmers in the area would never paint their barn façades red (though no one else knows this). In that case, if Cassandra were to form the belief that there is a red barn in the field, her belief would be attributable to a competence and apt. Nevertheless, it would have no better claim to being knowledge than would her original belief that there is a barn in the field. (For cases of this sort of luck, see Lackey (forthcoming-*b*)).

<sup>58</sup> That is to say, knowledge supervenes on underlying epistemic factors. I am leaving it vague as to what they are, but various epistemologists will fill it out in different ways. For example, an internalist might take the relevant epistemic factors to be evidence and evidential relations, while an externalist might take them to be reliability or modal relations between the belief and the corresponding fact.

<sup>59</sup> See Plantinga (1993), p. 36, and Williamson (2000).

<sup>60</sup> See Greene and Balmert (1997) and my (2005), respectively.

<sup>61</sup> This thesis should be distinguished from the less plausible (and probably false) claim that 'knowledge', in all of its uses, is a factive term.

<sup>62</sup> On this point, Popkin (2003) is instructive. Historically, many people have used the skeptical arguments as a way of *defending* their beliefs from rational criticism.

<sup>63</sup> In the *Meno*, Plato says that when a subject has knowledge, there is a "tether" for her belief so that it cannot run away. See also my (unpublished) for more on the stability of knowledge.

<sup>64</sup> This is not to say that the subject must deserve credit for the truth of her belief. Rather, the point is merely that the knowledge must be attributable to her, even if someone else is largely responsible for putting the subject in a position to have a true belief. Similarly, an action may be attributable to an agent even in cases where someone else deserves most of the credit for making the action possible—e.g., a ballet instructor may deserve the credit for enabling her pupil to perform a *pas de chat*, though of course it is the pupil who is actually performing it. For more on attributability, see my (2007).

<sup>65</sup> For this claim as it relates to freedom of the will, see Frankfurt (1971) and Wolf (1990).

<sup>66</sup> I am very grateful to Jennifer Lackey for her helpful comments on this paper and, even more, for the many, many insights I have gained through our years of discussing the philosophical problems with which it is concerned. I am also thankful that she is not too skeptical of my skepticism.