SARAH WRIGHT

KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL ROLES: A VIRTUE APPROACH

ABSTRACT

Attributor contextualism and subject-sensitive invariantism both suggest ways in which our concept of knowledge depends on a context. Both offer approaches that incorporate traditionally non-epistemic elements into our standards for knowledge. But neither can account for the fact that the social role of a subject affects the standards that the subject must meet in order to warrant a knowledge attribution. I illustrate the dependence of the standards for knowledge on the social roles of the knower with three types of examples – focusing on knowledge attribution, action, and a mix of the two – and show why neither attributor contextualism nor subject-sensitive invariantism can explain them. I then suggest that subject-sensitive invariantism should be supplemented with insights from virtue epistemology so that it can explain the dependence of the standards of knowledge on social roles. This supplementation of subject-sensitive invariantism helps to solve a persistent problem facing that theory: the case of knowledge attributions made by those in high-stakes contexts about subjects in low-stakes contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon I aim to explain is the dependence of the truth value of knowledge attributions on the social roles of the putative knower. The following case illustrates this dependence.

> *Doctor vs. Layperson*: Imagine that a new drug, drug X, has just been released on the market. If a layperson reads in a reputable popular magazine, say *Newsweek*, that drug X is safe and effective, she can come to know this. However, simply reading the same story in a popular magazine does not provide a doctor with enough evidence for her to know that the drug is safe and effective; she needs to obtain further, more detailed evidence from medical journals and colleagues before coming to this conclusion. Thus "She knows that drug X is safe and effective" is true when said of the layperson and false when said of the doctor, even though the doctor and the layperson have the same evidence.

Episteme 8.1 (2011): 99–111
DOI: 10.3366/epi.2011.0009
© Edinburgh University Press
www.eupjournals.com/epi

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

How can we explain this variation in truth value of knowledge attribution without a variation in evidence? For assistance we might look to a parallel with the bank cases originally proposed to support attributor contextualism. These cases similarly demonstrate a variation in knowledge with no variation in evidence.

> *Low Stakes*: Hannah and her wife Sarah are driving home on a Friday afternoon. They plan to stop at the bank on the way home to deposit their paychecks. It is not important that they do so, as they have no impending bills. But as they drive past the bank, they notice that the lines inside are very long, as they often are on Friday afternoons. Realizing that it isn't very important that their paychecks are deposited right away, Hannah says, "I know the bank will be open tomorrow, since I was there just two weeks ago on Saturday morning. So we can deposit our paychecks tomorrow morning."
>
> *High Stakes*: Hannah and her wife Sarah are driving home on a Friday afternoon. They plan to stop at the bank on the way home to deposit their paychecks. Since they have an impending bill coming due, and very little in their account, it is very important that they deposit their paychecks by Saturday. Hannah notes that she was at the bank two weeks before on a Saturday morning, and it was open. But, as Sarah points out, banks do change their hours. Hannah says, "I guess you're right. I don't know that the bank will be open tomorrow." (Stanley 2005, 3–4)

These two cases are constructed so that Hannah has the same evidence in both. Yet her self-attribution of knowledge in the Low Stakes case seems appropriate, while her self-attribution of a lack of knowledge in the High Stakes case also seems appropriate. What can explain this difference?

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE DEPENDENCE OF KNOWLEDGE ON SOCIAL ROLES

Attributor Contextualism (AC) has a ready explanation of the bank cases, and the bank cases are taken to be a motivating example for this theory. Although there are many versions of AC, I will characterize AC in its most general form as a commitment to the following two claims:

(AC-1) The semantic value of "knows," and hence the truth value of attributions of knowledge, are determined by the context of the attributor of knowledge.

(AC-2) The standards for knowledge are determined by the alternatives that are salient within that conversational context of the attributor. The standards for knowledge can be raised by making skeptical scenarios conversationally relevant.[1]

(AC-1) implies that it is possible for the sentence "S knows that p" to be true when uttered by T, and yet false when uttered by R, even when said about the same S and p. By focusing on the context of the attributor, AC opens up this possibility of apparent conflict, while at the same time explaining it away; "S knows that p," when uttered by T and by R, can have different meanings.

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

How does AC explain the difference between the bank cases? By focusing on the way that the higher stakes in the second situation make the possibility of error more salient. AC holds that in the first case, when the stakes are low, the possibility of the bank changing its hours is not salient; in the second situation the high stakes make the possibility of the bank changing its hours salient. The attribution of knowledge in this high-stakes context thus requires meeting higher standards to rule out this newly-salient possibility. Therefore the self-attribution of "I guess I don't know that the bank will be open" is true, even though the self-attribution in the first case of "I know that the bank will be open" is also true.

How might this explanation be extended to cover cases such as *Doctor vs. Layperson*? The presence of a doctor in the scenario may make the possibility of error more salient for the attributor. It may make salient the costs of medical error and thus raise the perceived stakes. Even if it is only the perceived stakes that are raised, this is sufficient to bring about a change in the meaning of "knows" according to AC since it is the attributor's conversational context that determines the meaning of "knows."

However, this answer is insufficient to explain all the details of *Doctor vs. Layperson*. If the presence of the doctor raises the salience of error, it should result in raising standards throughout the context of attribution. These higher standards should make attributions of knowledge to either the doctor or the layperson false. Thus, AC doesn't have any mechanism to explain the *difference* in the verdicts between the two subjects.

A different explanation might be offered by the proponents of views that have come to be called Subject-Sensitive Invariantism.[2] I will characterize Subject-Sensitive Invariantism (henceforth SSI) as committed to the following two claims:

(SSI-1) The standards for knowledge are determined by the practical context of the subject of the attribution.

(SSI-2) The standards for knowledge increase as the value of what it at stake for the subject increases.

SSI is therefore not a semantic claim about the meaning of "knows" but rather a claim about the standards for knowledge itself.[3] However, SSI can also explain why it is possible for two people with the same evidence to differ in whether or not they know. In the first bank case, the practical context of the subject is one in which very little is at stake; as a result the standards for knowledge are low. However, in the second bank case, the practical context of the subject includes a very real risk of financial ruin; as a result the epistemic standards are high. The evidence had by both subjects is enough to meet the low standards but not the high ones. Therefore, the first subject knows, while the second does not, which explains the truth of both the positive self-attribution in the first case and the negative self-attribution in the second.

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Can this SSI explanation of the bank cases be extended to explain *Doctor vs. Layperson*? As described, the practical context of the doctor and the layperson are the same; they are both simply curious about a new drug, and do not have anything of importance depending on this judgment. However, the doctor may at some point prescribe drug X; the layperson cannot. This fact may imply that the stakes, in a more extended sense, are higher for the doctor; a doctor's judgment that the drug is safe may lead to future risky behavior. Thus the proponent of SSI could point to the extended stakes for the doctor; higher stakes for the subject imply a higher standard for knowledge.

However, this is only one way in which the situation of *Doctor vs. Layperson* may be filled out. Drug X might be one that the doctor will never use, and she may be able to predict this. If the doctor is a gynecologist and drug X is a new prostate drug, then the doctor may be confident that she will not be in the position to prescribe drug X in the future. But this does not reduce her standards for knowledge. These standards are not raised by what is at stake, but rather by her role and responsibilities as a doctor. And yet the SSI theories on offer have no clear mechanism by which to incorporate social roles into the practical context.

We have seen so far that neither AC nor SSI can adequately explain the case of *Doctor vs. Layperson*.

In addition to explaining why the standards for these two epistemic agents are different, there is a second fact that needs to be explained: why we hold the knowledge of the doctor in higher regard than the knowledge of the layperson. Evidence that the doctor knows that drug X is effective and safe give us more reason to take drug X than equal evidence that the layperson knows that drug X is effective and safe.

Can either AC or SSI explain why evidence that the doctor knows is better reason for action than evidence that the layperson knows? Again, there might be an explanation if there is more at stake for the doctor than for the layperson; perhaps she is about to prescribe the drug and the possible side effects are dire. If the stakes are higher for the doctor, then both AC and SSI can argue that the standards for the doctor's knowledge are higher; thus if she does achieve knowledge, the evidence she possesses is more than is required for the layperson to have knowledge. Yet it is possible to imagine a situation in which the stakes are not higher for the doctor, nor are the stakes likely to be higher in future situations she will face. And yet, as a doctor she seems to bear a higher burden and be held to a higher standard. Of course our reasoning in following the advice of a doctor over that of a layperson is also grounded in our belief that the doctor has more medical knowledge than the layperson.[4] But even if this assumption were false in a particular situation, even if the layperson were a medical hobbyist who had just as much evidence about a drug as a doctor, we would still have a better reason to act on the apparent knowledge of the doctor than that of the layperson. The doctor has taken on a stronger epistemic responsibility than the layperson, and hence we have more reason to trust (and act on) her assertions about the drug.

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As a final piece of evidence that neither AC nor SSI can adequately capture the relevance of social role to knowledge attributions, I offer the following case of a seemingly perfectly appropriate knowledge self-attribution.

> *Sterile Scalpels*: Doctor Isis walks into the surgery theater and prepares to begin a C-section. The concerned husband of the patient asks the doctor, "Are you sure that the scalpels are sterile? They might be left over from the last surgery." Even though she cannot definitely rule out this possibility (since she has not checked the scalpels herself), Dr. Isis can properly reply, "Yes I do know that the scalpels are sterile. We are ready to begin surgery."[5]

Can AC explain why Dr. Isis's self-attribution of knowledge is true? No. AC must deny this. The conversational context of the attributor (that of both Dr. Isis and the husband) is one in which a skeptical hypothesis ("The scalpels might be left over from the last surgery") has been made relevant, and there is no available evidence ruling out this skeptical hypothesis. While both have evidence that hospitals have procedures to ensure that dirty scalpels are not left in the operating room after a surgery, they both also know that it is possible that the procedures were not followed. Dr. Isis does not have any extra evidence to definitively rule out the (perhaps remote) possibility that the scalpels are left over from the last surgery; attending to the conversational context of the attributor raises the standards for knowledge higher than the available evidence. And yet it seems that Dr. Isis's claim to knowledge is both legitimate and true. She acts rightly in trusting the hospital staff to perform the jobs required of them.

SSI also cannot explain why Dr. Isis's self-attribution of knowledge is true. The practical context of the subject of attribution (who is also Dr. Isis) is one where there is much at stake; if the scalpels are not sterile, the patient may develop a life-threatening infection. The high stakes in this surgery should entail that the standards for knowledge are likewise very high. Yet Dr. Isis has done no special inquiry to check the sterility of the scalpels; she is only depending on the protocols of the hospital and trusting the technicians who set up the operating theater. Hence Dr. Isis does not meet the highest standards for knowledge as the stakes seem to dictate; there are remaining ways that Dr. Isis could ensure that the scalpels are sterile. However, even without these further checks, it seems that Dr. Isis does truly know that the scalpels are sterile, and acts appropriately when she begins the surgery.

INCLUDING SOCIAL ROLES IN THE SENSITIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE

We have seen three cases in which AC and SSI give answers conflicting with our intuitions. An element common to these three types of cases is the relevance of the social role of the potential knower and the way that this role interacts with the standards for knowledge. In *Doctor vs. Layperson*, the social role of a doctor comes

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with higher standards for knowledge. These higher standards also explain why we are more willing to act on our evidence that the doctor knows. In *Sterile Scalpels* it seems appropriate for the doctor to trust the hospital staff; she can have knowledge on the basis of this trust in others to perform their roles.

It may be possible to incorporate this element of the dependence of knowledge on social roles into AC; however, since the relevant social roles are a feature of the subject's and not the attributor's context, to include them would introduce a radical change in the structure of the theory. Of course, AC does take into account the epistemic context of the subject, showing a sensitivity to the evidence that the subject possesses, the truth of the subject's belief in the subject's own temporal context, and the possibility of Gettier conditions in that context. But all these elements of the subject's context are traditional epistemic considerations. The role for practical consequences in AC is limited to the context of the attributor. Thus inclusion of the practical context for the subject would be a radical shift from the heart of AC. For this reason, I will not further develop the idea of incorporating the effect of the subject's social role into AC.

SSI, on the other hand, is more readily adaptable to incorporate the effect of social roles, for the practical context of the subject is already considered; we must only ensure that the social roles of the subject are included in her practical context. To do this, I propose the following requirement as an addition to SSI:

> *Social Sensitivity Requirement (SSR):* S knows that p only if S's belief that p displays epistemic virtue with respect to S's social context.

This requirement implies that the standards for knowledge are determined by the social context of the subject of the attribution (which is composed of the subject's social roles and social circumstances). This requirement does not imply (as AC does) that it possible for the sentence "S knows that p" to be true when uttered by T, and yet false when uttered by R.[6] It does imply the possibility of "S knows that p" being true of S and "S* knows that p" being false of S*, even though S and S* have identical evidence. But this is already a consequence of SSI.

One way in which the addition of the SSR will change SSI is in breaking the tight connection between stakes and the standards for knowledge. Since the standards for knowledge depend on what is at stake in that subject's social context and on the special responsibilities S bears as a result of her social roles, S's social roles may require much of her, even if the stakes are low (and vice versa). This consequence goes beyond the simple SSI described above, as it implies that there is no single scale of standards for knowledge along which one is pushed by a raising or lowering of the stakes. Rather, there are some pieces of information for which one bears special responsibility, and it is for those pieces of information alone that the standards for knowledge are raised.

For example, Dr. Isis must meet high standards to know some propositions, e.g., whether the patient should be given a C-section. But she has low standards for knowing that the scalpels are sterile; so long as they are in the right place and she

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

has no special reason to doubt their sterility, she can know that they are sterile. The hospital technician, on the other hand, has a higher burden for knowing that the scalpels are sterile; he must remember taking them out of the autoclave and placing them in the surgery theater. However, he can easily know that the patient should be given a C-section. Seeing her listed as ready for surgery is sufficient for him to know this; he does not need to have any further information about her medical conditions.

While other epistemologies may be able to incorporate the ideal that the standards for knowledge depend on social roles, I have formulated the SSR within a virtue epistemology approach.[7] The virtue approach has the advantage of providing a natural explanation of the way that our social roles affect our virtues. Focusing on the moral virtues, we can see that the dependence of the moral virtues on social roles has ancient roots in the virtue ethics of the Stoics, particularly Epictetus:

> If, furthermore, you are on the council of any city, you should remember that you are a councilor; if a youth, a youth; if an old man, an old man. For each of these names, if rightly considered, points to the acts appropriate to it. (*Discourses* II.x)

What it is to be virtuous cannot be understood in the absence of our social roles. If I am walking through a part of town that seems a little dangerous and see a house on fire, it may be courageous for me to call the fire department and to wait and direct the firefighters to the burning house. But a firefighter who simply waits for others to put out a fire is far from courageous. A virtue-based explanation of this difference is that the very notion of courage depends on social roles. No judgment of an action as courageous is possible without knowing the social roles of the actor.

This same dependence on social roles can be extended to the epistemic virtues as well. In order to display epistemic carefulness, it may be enough for the layperson to read about drug X's benefits in *Newsweek*, rather than in the *National Enquirer* or a drug company's promotional materials. Yet epistemic carefulness requires more of the doctor. If she simply trusts the report in *Newsweek*, she could be criticized for being epistemically hasty and for failing to display epistemic carefulness. This dependence on social roles implies that there can be no specification of the epistemic virtues independent of the social roles of those who are reasoning. Of course, we may say generally that people ought to be epistemically careful, just as we may say generally that people ought to be courageous; but what it is to be courageous or to be epistemically careful will vary from person to person. The adoption of the SSR, along with an understanding of epistemic virtues as dependent on social roles, implies that there can be no standard of knowledge that applies universally, regardless of the social roles of the knower.

Finally, focusing on the sensitivity of virtues to social roles helps to explain why evidence that a doctor knows drug X is safe and effective is better reason to take drug X than similar evidence that the layperson knows that drug X is safe and effective. This difference can be explained by the differences between the

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

requirements epistemic virtue places on both characters. If the doctor knows, then according to SSR she has displayed appropriate epistemic virtue, and thus she has gathered more evidence about the drug than would be required for the layperson. Both may have acted epistemically virtuously and so we may judge that they both have knowledge; yet we have reason to take the knowledge of the doctor more seriously, for it requires weightier evidence.

APPLICATION TO A PROBLEM FOR SSI

The addition of the SSR also helps to explain cases that have proven difficult for SSI, typified by what Keith DeRose calls Third Person cases.

> *High Attributor-Low Subject Stakes*: Hannah and her wife Sarah are driving home on a Friday afternoon. They plan to stop at the bank on their way home to deposit their paychecks. Since they have an impending bill coming due, and very little in their account, it is very important that they deposit their paychecks by Saturday. Hannah calls up Bill on her cell phone and asks Bill whether the bank will be open on Saturday. Bill replies by telling Hannah, "Well, I was there two weeks ago on a Saturday, and it was open." After reporting the discussion to Sarah, Hannah concludes that, since banks do occasionally change their hours, "Bill doesn't really know that the bank will be open on Saturday." (Stanley 2005, 5)

Hannah's assertion about Bill seems appropriate. This intuition is clearly explicable by the attributor contextualist. The attribution of a lack of knowledge takes place within Hannah and Sarah's high-stakes context; thus the meaning of "knows" is indexed to higher standards. For the proponent of SSI, an explanation is more difficult. The subject of attribution is Bill, and the stakes for Bill are not high. Instead, they are low, as they were for Hannah and Sarah in their Low Stakes situation; and Bill's information is just as good as theirs was. Bill has evidence adequate to his stakes, and thus knows that the bank will be open. Why then does it seem appropriate for Hannah to say of him that he does not know?

We can give an easy explanation of why it seems appropriate for Hannah to withhold attributing knowledge to Bill. If she were to attribute it, she would give the false implicature that Bill knows relative to the High Stakes situation in which Hannah and Sarah are speaking.[8] It is more difficult to explain why, in addition, it seems appropriate for Hannah to attribute a lack of knowledge to Bill. One answer developed by John Hawthorne is that Hannah is projecting her own lack of knowledge onto Bill (2004, 162–6). This overprojection of one's own state might be explained as a special case of an availability heuristic; if a skeptical scenario is salient in Hannah's situation, she might imagine that it is also salient in Bill's situation, even if it isn't. But this explanation of the High Attributor-Low Subject Stakes case comes with a cost: it offers an error theory for why Hannah says what she does. This error theory explains why we think that Hannah is correct to attribute a lack of knowledge to Bill, but also claims that the intuition is in error.

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

We may preserve the intuition if we take Hannah's attribution to be aimed at answering a slightly different question than it seems to be answering.[9] Jason Stanley argues that we intuitively understand Hannah's attribution to concern the issue of "whether Bill would know, were he in Hannah and Sarah's practical situation" (2005, 102). Since Hannah and Sarah are in a high-stakes situation, Bill, though he does know now, would not know if he were in their situation with their stakes. This explanation, based on slightly changing our understanding of Hannah's claim, allows that her attribution is true, once properly understood.

Yet this explanation leaves us with a mystery: why understand Hannah's attribution in this way? Although not specified in the original characterization of the High Attributor-Low Subject Stakes case, Hannah may well know that Bill is in a low stakes situation. Given that she is not confused about Bill's situation, we need an explanation for why Hannah would be answering the question, "Would Bill know (in our practical situation)?" rather than the more obvious question, "Does Bill know (in his own practical situation)?" Such an explanation is not offered by Stanley. (In fact, he admits that this is a somewhat counterintuitive way to reach the intuitively correct conclusion about this case (119).)

However, we need not rest with Stanley's counterintutive reinterpretation of Hannah's claim if we turn to Edward Craig's (1990) explorations of the concept of knowledge, and particularly to his claim that we use this concept to mark out good informants. Craig's developmental explanation of the concept of knowledge starts from the idea that in an epistemic state of nature, it is useful to know who might be a good source of information. Craig then explains how our concept of knowledge becomes generalized: we discount the particularities of specific situations to develop the general concept of the knower as an all-purpose informant. But one need not follow him in all steps of this development. Specifically, we might observe that particular questions we ask about knowledge are still tightly tied to the context of attribution.[10] For example, when we are looking for some missing reports, it is perfectly natural to answer the question "Does Kyla know where the reports are?" with "She is in a meeting right now." This answer is relevant because the original question is best understood not as an abstract question about Kyla's epistemic state, but rather as a question about her usefulness as an informant in a particular context. Her unavailability as an informant is thus relevant, and the answer given is appropriate.

The general point that questions about someone's knowledge are often really queries about the suitability of the subject as an informant on the subject at hand helps to answer other objections to SSI. DeRose's problem case for SSI is that of Thelma being questioned by the police about John's alibi for a crime (2004, 2005). Thelma saw John's hat and heard from a reliable source that he was in the office. But does she know John was in the office? In her high-stakes situation, Thelma admits that she does not know. But what about Louise? Thelma knows that Louise has the same evidence about John's whereabouts, but she also knows that Louise is not being questioned by the police and is not in a high-stakes

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

situation. If the police consider questioning Louise, Thelma may reply, "Louise does not know either." This response is explicable if we consider what the police are really asking; they want to know if Louise would be a good informant for them. Thelma knows that Louise would not be a good informant, since Louise has no more definitive information than Thelma. Thus she answers the police officer's real question correctly. This example, then, does not serve to undermine SSI. Louise, relative to her practical context, does know that John was in his office. Yet it is appropriate for Thelma to say that Louise does not know; she is correctly answering the question the police intended to ask her.

Thelma's situation also shows us the importance of social roles. Having been called in by the police, Thelma must now think of herself as a witness giving testimony to the police in an important investigation. This new role requires her to have more evidence than just hearsay in order to know that John was in the office; epistemic carefulness now requires more of her. And this is true regardless of whether what is at stake is of interest to her. Perhaps Thelma cares not one whit about John's well-being or for justice being done in this case. Or if Thelma is instead sympathetic with the murderer, her interests would be reversed and she might desire to give an alibi to anyone who might be the murderer. What standards for knowledge does Sympathetic Thelma operate under? If we look at a pure SSI approach, we might judge that her standards should be low. Although there is something at stake for her, she is only concerned that no one be convicted of the crime. Her standards for alibi giving, if determined only by the stakes she cares about, should thus be low. But this does not seem right. Even if Thelma doesn't care about justice, she should still be applying high epistemic standards to her putative knowledge of John's alibi. This follows easily from the SSR requirement. Even if Thelma does not care about justice, she is being called upon to serve as a witness, and in this social role the requirements she must meet to be epistemically careful are higher. This is true regardless of her interests.

What about High Attributor-Low Subject Stakes? This case can also be explained by seeing knowledge attributions as claims about the subject being a good informant, but we must be careful about the kind of information that the attributors are looking for. The information Bill can give is not the kind of information Sarah and Hannah need, for they are considering the possibility that the bank has changed its hours. Thus it is appropriate for Hannah to claim that Bill does not know; in her context her expression should only be understood as claiming that Bill does not have sufficient information to settle the question of whether the bank's hours have changed, and this is true. This does not undermine the fact that Bill does know, within his own practical context.

Thus the solution to the problem for SSI is to make a pragmatic claim about the meaning of "knows." Though "knows" doesn't literally change its semantic value, we often use "knows" to ask about particular informants in particular contexts rather than to refer to the most generalized concept of knowledge as the mark of generally good informants. And this is in keeping with the claim that our standards

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for knowledge depend on our social roles. Sometimes, we are not interested in or committed to playing the role of informant; in these cases the interests of those we inform do not place any extra requirements on us as informants. However, we are often called upon to play the social role of informant, and when we do we must consider the practical context of those to whom we are giving information. If they will use that information to arrest someone or to put off an important visit to the bank, we are good informants only to the extent that we give them information strong enough for those purposes. So the practical contexts of attributors may have an influence on the standards of knowledge appropriate for the subjects of attribution, but this influence is only transmitted to those who have taken on the social role (and the responsibilities) of an informant.[11]

REFERENCES

Axtell, Guy. 1998. "The Role of the Intellectual Virtues in the Reunification of Epistemology." *The Monist* 81: 488–508.

Bach, Kent. 2008. "Applying Pragmatics to Epistemology." *Philosophical Issues* 18: 68–88.

Code, Lorraine. 1987. *Epistemic Responsibility*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Code, Lorraine. 2006. *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohen, Stewart. 1988. "How to Be a Fallibilist." *Philosophical Perspectives* 2: 91–123.

Cohen, Stewart. 1998. "Contextualist Solutions to Epistemological Problems: Scepticism, Gettier, and the Lottery." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 76(2): 289–306.

Cohen, Stewart. 1999. "Contextualism, Skepticism, and the Structure of Reasons." *Philosophical Perspectives: Epistemology* 13: 57–89.

Craig, Edward. 1990. *Knowledge and the State of Nature: An Essay in Conceptual Synthesis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

DeRose, Keith. 1995. "Solving the Skeptical Problem." *Philosophical Review* 104(1): 1–52.

DeRose, Keith. 1999. "Contextualism: An Explanation and a Defense." In J. Greco and E. Sosa (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*, pp. 187–205. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

DeRose, Keith. 2002. "Assertion, Knowledge, and Context." *Philosophical Review* 111: 167–203.

DeRose, Keith. 2004. "The Problem with Subject-Sensitive Invariantism." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 48(2): 346–50.

DeRose, Keith. 2005. "The Ordinary Language Basis for Contextualism, and the New Invariantism." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 55: 172–98.

Epictetus. 1995. *The Discourses, the Handbook, Fragments of Epictetus*. C. Gill (ed.), R. Hard (trans.). London: Everyman.

Fantl, Jeremy and Matthew McGrath. 2009. *Knowledge in an Uncertain World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Greco, John. 2008. "What's Wrong with Contextualism?" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 58: 416–36.

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Hawthorne, John. 2004. *Knowledge and Lotteries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Henderson, David. 2009. "Motivated Contextualism." *Philosophical Studies* 142: 119–31.
Lewis, David. 1996. "Elusive Knowledge." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74(4): 549–67.
Pritchard, Duncan. 2002. "Two Forms of Epistemological Contextualism." *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 64: 19–55.
Stanley, Jason. 2005. *Knowledge and Practical Interests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Williams, Michael. 1992. *Unnatural Doubts: Epistemological Realism and the Basis of Scepticism*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
Williams, Michael. 1999. "Skepticism." In J. Greco and E. Sosa (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*, pp. 35–69. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
Williams, Michael. 2004. "Scepticism and the Context of Philosophy." *Philosophical Issues* 14: 456–75.
Wright, Sarah. 2010. "Virtues, Social Roles, and Contextualism." *Metaphilosophy* 41: 95–114.
Zagzebski, Linda. 1996. *Virtues of the Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NOTES

1 The mechanism by which this occurs is different for different authors. Compare David Lewis (1996), Keith DeRose (1995, 1999, 2002), and Stewart Cohen (1988, 1998, 1999).
2 This term is due to Keith DeRose (2004). (Its appropriateness is questioned by John Greco (2008) and Jason Stanley (2005).) In this category I classify Jason Stanley (2005), John Hawthorne (2004), and Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath (2009). (Fantl and McGrath might not be appropriately characterized as invariantists, since they are open to using the semantic mechanisms of the contextualists in certain cases; however, they could clearly support the limited version of SSI I characterize here.)
3 Thanks to Jonathan Ichikawa for stressing the importance of this point in interpreting SSI.
4 Thanks to Sandy Goldberg and Miranda Fricker for pointing out the relevance of this comparison.
5 This scenario is not meant to imply that the doctor has knowledge merely in light of her role as a doctor. Nor should we interpret social roles in an authoritarian way. In *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location* (2006), Lorraine Code highlights instances of "undefined disorders" in women, as studied by Kristi Malterud. These disorders do not fit neatly into pre-existing diagnoses; when faced with these symptoms a doctor may discover that her role requires sensitivity to symptoms, and a willingness to try to reduce them, without being able to categorize them. These negotiations of Code's "negotiated empiricism" remind us that our epistemic social roles are not static.
6 Thus SSI supplemented by SSR is similar in many ways to the type of contextualism that is offered by Michael Williams (1992, 1999, 2004), as his contextualism does not depend on the context of the attributor, but on the methodological context of the subject. These contexts are clearly sensitive to social roles. The example most fully developed by Williams is that of the methodological context of doing history; when one is working in the social role of historian, one makes certain methodological assumptions, and these determine what is required for knowledge (within that methodological context). See (Pritchard 2002) and (Wright 2010) for arguments that Williams's contextualism is

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press

preferable to attributor contextualism. These arguments should also favor SSI + SSR to the extent that it results in a view similar to Williams's.

7 The version of virtue epistemology presented here is one that develops parallels between the moral and epistemic virtues. The virtue epistemologies developed by Lorraine Code (1987), Linda Zagzebski (1996), Guy Axtell (1998), and Miranda Fricker (2007) all have this feature.

8 This explanation is similar to Hawthorne's explanation of the impropriety of statements such as "Up to five minutes ago, I knew I wouldn't have enough money to go on an African safari, but not anymore," even when those statements are true (2004, 162).

9 This is an instance of the general approach to knowledge attributions offered by Kent Bach (2008). He is wary of always taking them as literally true, and argues that we ought to be more sensitive to the pragmatics of knowledge attributions in general.

10 David Henderson (2009) uses Craig's non-generalized concept of knowledge to argue that we should look at the interests of the attributor over those of the subject of attribution. I am here arguing that we ought to understand (only) some uses of the word "knows" in this way.

11 I am grateful to Daniel Andler, Evan Butts, Lorraine Code, Miranda Fricker, Sandy Goldberg, Jonathan Ichikawa, Klemens Kappel, Jason Kawall, Boaz Miller, and other participants at the 2010 *Episteme* conference in Edinburgh for their helpful comments at and after my presentation of this paper.

Sarah Wright is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Georgia. Her research interests lie in virtue, value-driven, and formal epistemologies. Her articles have appeared in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *Metaphilosophy*, and *Acta Analytica*.

https://doi.org/10.3366/epi.2011.0009 Published online by Cambridge University Press