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ARTICLE

# Against Beliefless Knowledge

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**Abstract**

There is wide agreement on the entailment thesis, according to which if S knows that p, then S believes that p. Some philosophers, however, have attempted to present counterexamples to the entailment thesis, where subjects know that p without believing p. Proponents of the entailment thesis have typically responded to such cases by arguing that the subjects have the required prior beliefs, and therefore, the cases in question do not constitute genuine counterexamples. Unfortunately, this line of reply seems untenable when the counterexamples involve subjects who have clearly not formed the relevant beliefs, making it impossible for proponents to appeal to prior beliefs. I therefore propose a different approach by demonstrating the lack of knowledge rather than arguing for the presence of belief. My approach is based on KNA-Suff, which states that if S knows that p, then it is proper for S to assert p. By applying KNA-Suff, I show that the subjects in the putative counterexamples lack knowledge, since it would be improper for them to assert the relevant propositions. Hence, the putative counterexamples fail, and the entailment thesis survives the challenge.

**Keywords:** Knowledge; belief; norms of assertion; the entailment thesis; dispositional belief; occurrent belief

## 1. Introduction

Consider the following thesis, which I shall call *the entailment thesis* (ET):

(ET) If *S* knows that *p*, then *S* believes that *p*.

For two compelling reasons, most epistemologists take ET for granted. First, utterances of the following form sound infelicitous: "*S* knows that *p*, but *S* doesn't believe that *p*." For example, "I know that it is raining, but I don't believe it." Second, the dispositions of subjects who know that *p* are analogous to those of subjects who believe that *p*. For example, a subject who knows that it is raining has a disposition to assert that it is raining, along with a disposition to take an umbrella when going outside. Likewise, a subject who believes that it is raining possesses such dispositions.

Some philosophers have offered counterexamples to ET. In what follows, I focus on two of them. The first is *The Unconfident Examinee*, which was originally presented by

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Radford (1966) and later reinforced by Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel (2013). Consider the following case:

> **The Unconfident Examinee:** Jeane spent many hours studying for her history exam. She's now in class taking the exam. Everything's going quite well, until she comes to the final question. It reads, "What year did Queen Elizabeth die?" Jeane had reviewed this date many times. She had even recited the date to a friend just a few hours earlier. So, when Jeane sees that this is the last question, she feels relieved. She confidently looks down at the blank space, waiting to recollect the answer. But before she can remember it, the teacher interrupts and announces, "Alright, the class session is almost over. You have one more minute to finalize your answers." Jeane's demeanor suddenly changes. She glances up at the clock, now flustered and worried. "Oh, no. I can't perform well under this kind of pressure." Her grip tightens around her pencil. She strains to recall the answer, but nothing comes to her. She quickly loses confidence. "I suppose I'll just have to guess the answer," she says to herself. With a sigh of disappointment, she decides to write "1603" into the blank space. This was, in fact, the correct answer. (Slightly revised from Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel 2013)[1]

According to Myers-Schulz and Schwitzgebel (2013), when ordinary people were asked whether Jeane knew/believed *Queen Elizabeth died in 1603* (henceforth, *Q*), 87% of the respondents ascribed knowledge of *Q* to Jeane, but only 37% ascribed belief in *Q* to her. Given this result, they conclude that *The Unconfident Examinee* is a counterexample to ET.

Silva (2019) offers another counterexample, which I shall call *The Inquiring Student*:

> **The Inquiring Student:** Kat previously attended a college with incompetent instructors, which led her to form many false beliefs. Because of this experience, even after moving to a college with credible instructors, she decides to follow a strict policy: She believes propositions only if she knows she is in a position to know they are true. Suddenly, her instructor presents her with a series of geographical propositions she has not yet considered.
>
> (3) Tezpur is in Assam, not in Mizoram.
>
> (. . .)
>
> (48) Either Tezpur is in Mizoram or Tezpur is not near Oman.
>
> She knows—and she knows that she knows—that the statements in the list are highly reliable. She therefore knows that she is in a position to know the propositions on the list. Then, following her policy, she believes (and knows) the propositions in question. Through deductive reasoning, Kat derives a new proposition that is not on the list: (K) Tezpur is not near Oman. Though she has no prior belief in *K*, she recognizes that *K* follows from statements she knows to be true. After confirming she is in a position to know this derived conclusion, she

[1]In the original text, the protagonist is called Kate. I have changed the name to avoid confusion, since the protagonist of Silva's counterexample is named "Kat."

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forms a belief in *K*, in accordance with her established belief policy. (Modified from Silva 2019)

Here, Silva (2019) identifies two noteworthy moments: one in which Kat deduces *K* from the list, and another in which she confirms that she is in a position to know *K*, thereby satisfying her epistemic policy. During the gap between the two moments, according to Silva, Kat knows *K*, but does not believe *K*.

A general strategy for addressing putative counterexamples to ET, especially *The Unconfident Examinee*, is to show that the relevant subjects believe the propositions in question (I shall call this *the presence-of-belief account*). For example, Rose and Schaffer (2013) introduce the distinction between an occurrent belief (a belief that is explicitly and consciously endorsed) and a dispositional belief (a disposition to believe occurrently). They argue that the subjects possess dispositional beliefs in the relevant propositions. Therefore, they hold that the putative counterexamples are not genuine ones.

Likewise, Buckwalter *et al.* (2015) distinguish between a thin belief (a bare representational attitude) and a thick belief (a belief involving emotion). They contend that the subjects in question possess thin beliefs in the relevant propositions. In their view, these cases are not genuine counterexamples to ET.

Although I find these accounts appealing, they share a common problem: they cannot refute Silva's argument against ET (I will revisit this point in §2.3). Fortunately, *the presence-of-belief account* is not the only way to defend ET. I will instead demonstrate that the subjects of putative counterexamples lack knowledge of the relevant propositions (I shall call this *the absence-of-knowledge account*). *The absence-of-knowledge account* does not encounter the problem that *the presence-of-belief account* faces. In this article, I aim to develop this account, which has received much less attention than it deserves.

My strategy is to appeal to a widespread intuition about the link between knowledge and assertion. The following principle is highly plausible:

(KNA-Suff) If *S* knows *p*, then it is proper for *S* to assert *p*. (Benton 2016; Simion 2016; for criticism, Brown 2010; Lackey 2011)[2]

When we apply KNA-Suff to the putative counterexamples, it does not seem proper for the subjects in question to assert the relevant propositions. It follows that they lack knowledge of the propositions, in which case these putative counterexamples fail.

My article goes as follows: In §2, I will address Silva's argument against ET and demonstrate that *The Unconfident Examinee* can be understood within Silva's framework. In §3, I will defend KNA-Suff and then use it to show that the subjects in question lack knowledge of the relevant propositions. Subsequently, I will address two potential objections concerning the links between awareness and knowledge (§4) and between belief and assertion (§5).

[2]This principle first received attention from Lackey and Brown, but they argue that KNA-Suff should be rejected. Benton and Simion defend the principle from their objections. I will not deal with Lackey and Brown's objections to KNA-Suff, since accepting their objections leaves my strategy unscathed. Lackey's counterexample to KNA-Suff concerns an expert's assertion; Brown's concerns high-stakes situations. Since the putative counterexamples have nothing to do with either of these, I can safely set aside Lackey and Brown's objections.

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## 2. How does Silva's account work?

### 2.1. Awareness and knowledge

In Silva's argument, the core concept is *awareness*. Though he does not define it precisely, one can identify its characteristic features. First, awareness is a factive mental state: If *S* is aware that *p*, then *p* is true. For example, if one says "I am aware that it is raining, but it isn't raining," it sounds infelicitous. Second, awareness is grounded in intellectual competencies, such as memory, inference, and introspection. Third, one can appeal to awareness when criticizing or excusing behavior. For example, when criticizing, one can say, "Were you aware of that?" or "You were aware that it was wrong, but you did it!" When excusing, one can say, "I was not aware of that" (Silva 2019: 725–726).

Silva (2019) contends that ET is false. His argument can be formulated as follows:

P1. Awareness entails knowledge.

P2. There are cases where *S* is aware that *p* without believing that *p*.

C. There are cases where *S* knows that *p* without believing that *p*.

Let us start with P1. Silva (2019) provides several considerations in favor of P1. The first is Williamson's (2000) generality thesis, which states that knowledge is the most general factive mental state. This means that if one has any factive mental state concerning *p*, then one knows that *p*. Silva admits that the generality thesis is highly controversial but notes that two linguistic phenomena seem to support P1. First, utterances of the following form sound infelicitous: "I am aware that *p*, but I do not know that *p*." For example, this sounds infelicitous: "I am aware that it is raining, but I do not know that it is raining." Second, when someone asks whether you know *p*, you can respond by acknowledging your awareness of *p*; this response is considered an acknowledgment that you know *p*. P1, it seems, can easily explain these phenomena.

P2 is where *The Inquiring Student* comes into play. Recall that Kat has decided to adopt an epistemic policy: She believes propositions only if she knows she is in a position to know that they are true. According to Silva, when Kat infers *K*, there is a time gap between two significant moments: one in which she completes the inference whose conclusion is *K* and another in which she recognizes that her epistemic policy is satisfied. During the time gap, Kat does not believe *K*, but she is aware of *K* and thereby knows *K*. By P1, it follows that during the gap, Kat knows *K* without believing *K*. Silva argues that *The Inquiring Student* is a counterexample to ET, which implies ET is false.

### 2.2. A recipe for making counterexamples to ET

Consider how *The Unconfident Examinee* can be understood as an application of Silva's account. In my view, Silva's main contribution is a recipe for constructing counterexamples to ET. The recipe can be structured as follows: (1) choose a kind of awareness (perception, memory, introspection, and so on); (2) devise a case involving a subject who is aware that *p* in the way you have chosen; (3) put that subject in a situation that leads the subject to suspend judgment about whether *p* is true or a situation that leads the subject not to believe that *p* (because of a lack of conviction, nervousness, doubt about one's own capability, or an epistemic policy). Following this recipe, you can posit a case where the subject is aware that *p* but does not believe that *p*. If P1 is true, then you succeed in making a counterexample to ET.

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Not surprisingly, with this recipe, you can "cook up" *The Unconfident Examinee*, or something similar to it: (1) choose memory as a kind of relevant awareness; (2) make a case where a subject (Jeane) remembers *Q*; (3) put her in a situation that makes her nervous so that she lacks conviction in *Q*. In this case, Jeane is aware of *Q* because she remembers *Q*. If P1 is true, then she knows *Q*. According to the description of the case, however, Jeane does not believe *Q*. The similarity between *The Unconfident Examinee* and *The Inquiring Student* means that the strategy for addressing the latter would work for the former, since they are cooked from the same recipe.

### 2.3. Problems with the presence-of-belief account

Turning to *the presence-of-belief account* and its limitations, I will address how *the presence-of-belief account* works in *The Unconfident Examinee* and why it encounters a novel problem, as Silva has suggested.

*The presence-of-belief account* encompasses more than one attempt to defend ET. The first, Rose and Schaffer's (2013), begins with the distinction between occurrent and dispositional beliefs. They argue that Jeane, the protagonist of *The Unconfident Examinee*, has a dispositional belief in *Q*, but her belief is masked by her panic. This strategy, however, faces a serious flaw when applied to *The Inquiring Student.* According to Silva, Kat had not formed any belief in *K* before becoming aware of *K* (and thereby coming to know *K*). This point represents a significant difference from *The Unconfident Examinee*. In that case, Jeane has learned *Q*, so she has already formed a belief in *Q*. Therefore, one can plausibly ascribe a dispositional belief to Jeane. In contrast, in *The Inquiring Student*, there is no prior learning process. Instead, Kat seems to be in the process of learning *K* during the gap. Thus, one cannot plausibly ascribe a dispositional belief to Kat, since she did not form any belief in *K* before finishing the inference.

Second, Buckwalter *et al.*'s (2015) attempt faces a problem that arises from *The Inquiring Student*. Their attempt is based on the distinction between thin and thick beliefs. They claim that Jeane has a thin belief in *Q* and that the presence of this belief can be captured by asking, "At least on some level, does Jeane believe that Elizabeth died in 1603?" It is intuitive to answer this question as follows: "Yes, at least on some level, Jeane believes it." According to them, this shows that Jeane has a thin belief in *Q*. However, in *The Inquiring Student*, Kat's epistemic policy can be reworked to nullify their strategy. For example, suppose Kat revises her epistemic policy as follows: "Believe a proposition thinly only if you know that you are in a position to know that it is true." In accordance with this revised policy, Kat would not believe *K* thinly.

Two points support the intuition that Kat does not believe *K*. First, it seems she is seriously considering possibilities in which she has a false belief in *K*. Second, Kat is deliberating whether she should believe *K*; it is therefore difficult to describe her as someone who presently believes *K*. This reveals that *the presence-of-belief account* fails for *The Inquiring Student*. By contrast, in *The Unconfident Examinee*, Jeane formed a belief in *Q*. Given her prior belief in *Q*, it is natural to think she has a (thin) belief in *Q*, even though she temporarily does not feel convinced of it.

In sum, *the presence-of-belief account* fails in *The Inquiring Student*, since the case involves no prior belief formation. In *The Unconfident Examinee*, it is natural to ascribe belief to Jeane; we are told that Jeane had previously formed a belief in *Q*. However, in *The Inquiring Student*, during the gap, Kat is engaged in a belief-formation process, not in recollection, so an appeal to a prior belief is much less persuasive.

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Here, someone might object that I have overlooked how dispositionalists or interpretationists could reply to my argument. I have argued that the *absence-of-knowledge account* has an advantage over the *presence-of-belief account*. The critic might say that if one takes dispositionalism or interpretationism as the default view, one cannot clearly tell whether this advantage is real. This is because it seems that dispositionalists and interpretationists could attribute belief to Kat.

Let us turn to *The Inquiring Student*. Kat has a disposition to finish the inference with the conclusion *K*. Furthermore, if Kat were forced to bet on whether *K* is true, then she would lean toward betting that *K* is true. If forced to state whether *K* is true or false, she would lean toward answering that *K* is true. These dispositions seem appropriately associated with a belief in *K*, since any believer in *K* would possess them.

The critic might therefore argue, drawing on either dispositionalism or interpretationism, that Kat believes *K*. According to dispositionalism, to believe that *p* is simply to have enough of the dispositions that belong to a dispositional stereotype associated with the belief that *p* (Price 1969; Schwitzgebel 2001, 2002, 2013).[3] A dispositionalist might support *the presence-of-belief account* by asserting that Kat has a sufficiently large number of dispositions that are appropriately related to a belief in *K*. Meanwhile, according to interpretationism, for *S* to believe that *p* means that the attribution to *S* of a belief that *p* figures in the best (most predictive) interpretation of *S*'s behavior (Davidson 1973, 1974; Dennett 1989: 29). An interpretationist could buttress *the presence-of-belief account* by showing that Kat's inference, action, and utterance are best explained by an interpretation that includes Kat's belief in *K*.

However, these objections to my argument do not withstand closer scrutiny. Of course, Kat would indeed have the dispositions or features the hypothetical objectors mention. A different picture, however, comes into view once we shift our focus to the dispositions Kat lacks. Kat has no disposition to feel convinced that *K* is true. Kat would not bet that *K* is true, or assert flatly that *K* is true, unless forced. Furthermore, Kat lacks a disposition to engage in any practical inference with *K* as one of its premises. Accordingly, Kat has only some, but not all, of the dispositions or features that are appropriately related to a belief in *K*.

Could one, then, attribute a belief in *K* to Kat on the grounds of dispositionalism or interpretationism? The answer seems unclear, since dispositionalism and interpretationism both allow belief attribution to be indeterminate: They accept the existence of cases where one can appropriately say neither that the subject believes that *p* nor that the subject does not believe that *p*. Dispositionalists accept this because, in such a case, the subject matches a dispositional stereotype appropriately in some respects but not in others (Schwitzgebel (2001, 2002) describes such cases as in-between believing, and Price (1969: 302–314) describes them as half-belief). Thus, from the dispositionalist perspective, whether Kat believes *K* is at best indeterminate. As a strategy for supporting *the presence-of-belief account*, then, dispositionalism does not seem promising.

Similar points apply to interpretationism. Interpretationists acknowledge that there are competing interpretations that are equally good but incompatible with one another. In such cases, they believe there is no fact of the matter as to whether the subject believes the relevant proposition (Davidson 1974: 321–322; Dennett 1989: 40–41). Therefore, interpretationists would argue that there are two competing interpretations of *The Inquiring Student* that are at best equally good but incompatible with one another. If one

[3]Instead of "stereotype," Price (1969, pp. 294–295) uses "multiform disposition" to describe a similar intuition.

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focuses on the prediction about forced betting or answering, and on the inference leading to *K* as its conclusion, the interpretation that Kat believes *K* seems better. However, when we shift our focus to betting or assertion in ordinary situations and to practical inferences in which *K* is a premise, the interpretation that Kat fails to believe *K* seems preferable. This leaves it unclear whether we should attribute the belief in question to Kat. Hence, the strategy in question does not work.

Therefore, I will focus mainly on *The Inquiring Student*, for which *the presence-of-belief account* does not work. *The presence-of-belief account* holds good only in those putative counterexamples to ET where an appeal to prior belief is justified. Nonetheless, in *The Inquiring Student*, there is no prior belief to appeal to. From now on, focusing on *The Inquiring Student*, I will address putative counterexamples by applying *the absence-of-knowledge account* based on KNA-Suff.

## 3. Knowledge and assertion

### *3.1. The plausibility of KNA-Suff*

Recall the following principle:

(KNA-Suff) If *S* knows *p*, then it is proper for *S* to assert *p*.

Several considerations support KNA-Suff. First, in our ordinary conversations, we talk about whether assertions are appropriate. When determining whether an assertion is appropriate, we ask whether it is well-grounded in the speaker's knowledge. When it becomes evident that an assertion is indeed based on knowledge, we consider it appropriate. For example, suppose your friend asserts that the Earth is a spheroid. If you know that your friend knows that the Earth is a spheroid, you will think that her assertion is appropriate.

Second, we make assertions with specific aims in mind. What is the purpose of assertion? One of the most intuitive explanations is that assertion is a vehicle of knowledge: we assert to generate or transmit knowledge. As Simion (2016) suggests, a subject who knows that *p* is in a proper position to transmit knowledge of *p* to hearers or generate such knowledge in them.

Finally, the *"How do you know?" challenge* is a standard and legitimate way to challenge an assertion.[4] Its target is the propriety of assertion. Suppose one asserts that *p*. The addressee can challenge that assertion by uttering, "How do you know that?" If the asserter satisfies the challenge by referring to the relevant knowledge that *p*, the addressee recognizes the assertion as proper; otherwise, the addressee will consider it improper. Thus, appealing to knowledge that *p* is a legitimate way to meet a challenge to an assertion. For these reasons, KNA-Suff is highly plausible.

Here, it is worth noting what "proper" means in KNA-Suff. For the present purpose, the following points will suffice. First, propriety in KNA-Suff is a property of an assertion. To be specific, propriety is associated with the distinctive norm of assertion that distinguishes it from other kinds of speech acts (Williamson 2000). Brown and Cappelen (2011) have a helpful example: Even if you know that your boss is bald, it is not *proper* for you to assert it. If you did, you would be appropriately criticized. However, the reason is not that you have violated the distinctive norm of assertion. Perhaps your

[4]The "How do you know?" challenge is not the only challenge. For example, one can challenge by asking, "Do you really believe . . . ?" (Kelp 2018; Turri 2014).

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assertion sounds improper because it violates a norm of politeness, which is not specific to assertions but applies to speech acts in general (see Leech 2014). In KNA-Suff, the domain of the term "proper" is limited to assertion.

Second, when an assertion that *p* is improper, its asserter should retract the assertion that *p*, and the addressee is allowed to challenge the assertion or to criticize the asserter (Kelp 2018; Van Elswyk and Benton 2023; Williamson 2000). For example, suppose Sam passes through a countryside area full of fake barn façades. Pointing to what looks like a barn, he asserts, "Over there! There's a barn!" Fred, Sam's friend, then challenges this assertion by raising a question: "How do you know that?" Fred explains that this region is full of fake barn façades. This challenge seems legitimate, so Sam should retract the assertion that there is a barn. By attending to these linguistic patterns, we can see that Sam's assertion is improper. This point supports the preceding claim. When we are determining the propriety of speech acts other than assertions, we do not judge them in terms of knowledge. For instance, when Sam guesses, "There seems to be a barn," it would be odd for Fred to challenge that guess by saying, "How do you know that?" As this example shows, knowledge plays a normative role in the assessment of assertions.

In what follows, when I say that "an assertion that *p* is proper," I mean that the asserter can defend the assertion that *p* against challenges, such that no retraction is required and the assertion cannot be legitimately criticized. Now, suppose that in a modified version of the example, Sam says, "I just checked it. I went there myself and saw that it is a real barn. I *know* that there's a barn!" It would then sound absurd for Fred to challenge the assertion by asking, "How do you know that it is a real barn?" or for Fred to criticize Sam by saying, "You don't know that!" or for Sam to retract his assertion that there is a barn. Sam's assertion is proper in the sense I have just explained.

In this example, it is intuitive that Sam's assertion is proper, and KNA-Suff makes this both explicable and predictable. According to KNA-Suff, it is proper for him to assert that there is a barn, since he knows that there is a barn. KNA-Suff predicts that challenging, criticizing, or retracting the assertion would sound odd. This prediction fits our ordinary intuitions.

### 3.2. Refining KNA-Suff

Someone might point out that, in certain cases, one knows *p*, but one's knowledge "escapes from view" or is temporarily inaccessible (Friedman 2017). Importantly, the objector might claim that, in such cases, KNA-Suff seems false. This claim gains force in the following case.

> **Alice on Leave:** Brian knows that his colleague Alice is on leave in Paris this term; she told Brian last month that she would be. Still, yesterday Brian seemed to have no memory of that conversation with Alice, and he wondered why she hadn't been to the conference last week. He knew why Alice hadn't been to the talk, and yet, at the same time, he wondered why she hadn't been there. (Slightly modified from Friedman 2017)[5]

Friedman (2017) argues that when Brian wonders about Alice's absence, it seems intuitive that he knows that Alice is on leave; since he had already formed that

[5]Friedman's (2017) original case uses the first-person pronoun "I." To avoid confusion, I slightly modified the case by replacing "I" with "Brian."

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knowledge, it is unnatural to think that he lost it at the moment he began to wonder about her. Drawing on her point, one might argue that *Alice on Leave* seems to be a counterexample to KNA-Suff, since Brian knows that *Alice is on leave this term*, but it seems improper for him to assert it.

Suppose he asserts that Alice did not attend the conference because she is on leave this term. He cannot defend this assertion against the *"How do you know?" challenge*. If an addressee challenges it – by asking, "How do you know?" – Brian cannot meet this challenge by answering it since the memory of his conversation with Alice has temporarily slipped his mind. The challenger can criticize him by saying, "You don't know that!" Therefore, it seems that this is a counterexample to KNA-Suff, since Brian knows that *Alice is on leave this term*, but it is improper for him to assert it.

Fortunately, I can avoid this problem simply by refining KNA-Suff as follows:

(KNA-Suff*) If *S* (occurrently) knows *p*, then it is proper for *S* to assert *p*.

I use "occurrent" both to contrast it with "dispositional" and to indicate that this mental state's content enters one's consciousness (Rose and Schaffer 2013). If knowledge that *p* is present in one's consciousness, one can access that knowledge, so it is proper for one to assert *p*. For example, suppose Brian recalls that *Alice is on leave this term*. Since he conjures up this proposition on the surface of his consciousness, his knowledge is occurrent. His knowledge that *Alice is on leave this term* is accessible to him, and it is proper for Brian to assert that *Alice is on leave this term*.

This example shows that knowledge becomes inaccessible when, although one has already formed that knowledge and it is stored in one's memory, one (temporarily) fails to conjure up the proposition on the surface of one's consciousness. In other words, inaccessible knowledge principally involves a failure to remember. As Lee (2023) suggests, such cases can be understood as cases involving dispositional mental states. A dispositional mental state can be masked, even though it remains one's mental state. Cases like *Alice on Leave* can be interpreted appropriately: Brian dispositionally knows the proposition, but his knowledge is temporarily masked. This point will be crucial when I address *The Inquiring Student* in §3.3.2.

### 3.3. Applying the knowledge–assertion link

#### 3.3.1. The unconfident examinee

Thus far, I have explained the plausibility of KNA-Suff and KNA-Suff*. I will now apply these two principles to Silva-style cases, demonstrating that they are not genuine counterexamples to ET.

First, *The Unconfident Examinee*. Suppose that it is an instance of knowledge without belief. A crucial question arises: "Is it proper for Jeane to assert *Q*?" The intuitive response would be, "No!" This is because, if Jeane asserts *Q*, the addressee could criticize or challenge the assertion; Jeane would then fail to satisfy the challenge and should retract her assertion. Therefore, following KNA-Suff, Jeane does not know *Q*. This suggests that *The Unconfident Examinee* is not a genuine counterexample to ET, since Jeane lacks knowledge of *Q*.

Someone might object that, as Jeane's knowledge is stored in her memory, she dispositionally knows *Q*. This reply seems persuasive when one considers that Jeane has already acquired knowledge of *Q*. This example can be understood as a case of masked knowledge: Jeane's knowledge is temporarily inaccessible to her, since her stored

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memory is masked. Therefore, one might argue that the impropriety of asserting *Q* does not arise from a lack of knowledge but from the inaccessibility of Jeane's knowledge. However, this line of reply has an unfortunate consequence for the opponent of ET. Dialectically, if it is plausible that Jeane dispositionally knows *Q*, then it is equally plausible that she dispositionally believes *Q* in the same manner. She has already formed a belief in *Q*, so this example can also be understood as a case of masked belief: Jeane's belief in *Q* is temporarily inaccessible to her, even though it is stored in her memory, or *belief-box*.[6] This means that *the presence-of-belief account* works. If so, this case still does not constitute a genuine counterexample to ET.

### *3.3.2. The inquiring student*

More importantly, a strategy based on the knowledge–assertion link puts more pressure on ET's opponents, who base their stance on *The Inquiring Student*. Consider its protagonist, Kat, during the gap between the moment when she finishes the inference whose conclusion is *K* and the moment when she decides to believe *K*. Suppose she asserts *K*, and an addressee asks, "How do you know that?" Kat is unable to meet this challenge by providing a relevant answer, since she is still wondering whether to believe *K*. The addressee could therefore criticize Kat: "You don't know that Tezpur is not near Oman." In such a situation, Kat should retract her original assertion. Hence, it is not proper for her to assert *K*. According to KNA-Suff, she does not know *K*. Thus, *The Inquiring Student* fails to constitute a genuine counterexample to ET, since Kat lacks knowledge of *K*.

One may attempt to refute this argument by claiming that *The Inquiring Student* involves inaccessible knowledge. As with *Alice on Leave*, one can argue that Kat knows *K*, but it has temporarily slipped her mind. However, this reply has an unwelcome consequence. My response proceeds as follows:

P1. If Kat knows *K*, then she occurrently knows *K*.

P2. If she occurrently knows *K*, then it is proper for her to assert *K*. (By KNA-Suff*)

P3. It is not proper for her to assert *K*.

C. Therefore, Kat does not know *K*.

In defense of P1: Kat seems to know the premises of her inference occurrently, since she recognizes that they satisfy her policy. Then, it seems that she occurrently knows *K*, since she acquired knowledge of *K* by inference. In general, if a subject forms a belief or knowledge that *p* through inference as a conscious process, that belief or knowledge is occurrent: when such conscious processes reach completion, their results are consciously presented to the subject. Suppose that, from the premise that $1 + 1 = 2$, you infer that *$1 + 1 = 2$ or the Moon is made of cheese*. You have consciously inferred that conclusion, and knowledge of it is also present in your consciousness, so your knowledge is occurrent. With these in mind, the following point becomes highly plausible: If *S* knows that *p* through conscious inference, then *S* occurrently knows that *p*.

[6]One might suspect that my argument relies too heavily on representationalism, as I use terms like "belief-box" and "stored." However, I use them to capture the intuitive idea that one can believe a proposition even when one is not consciously thinking about it. Using such terms does not, I believe, commit me to representationalism. In addition, if a theory denies such an intuition, that, in itself, counts as a reason to reject the theory.

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Plausibly, if Kat knows *K*, then she occurrently knows *K*. First, she acquires knowledge of *K* by inferring *K* as a conclusion from the premises she occurrently knows. Second, she did not form any knowledge of *K* until she completed her inference, at which point she concluded *K*. Thus, she does not yet have dispositional knowledge of *K*. Recall that inaccessible knowledge principally involves a failure to remember knowledge one has already formed. Since Kat had not previously formed knowledge of *K*, *The Inquiring Student* does not involve memory; it cannot plausibly be interpreted as a case where the subject dispositionally knows *K*, but this knowledge is temporarily masked. For these reasons, it is highly plausible that if Kat knows *K*, then she occurrently knows *K*.

Yet, by KNA-Suff* (P2), if she *occurrently* knows *K*, then it is proper for her to assert *K*. However, it is not proper for her to assert *K* (P3). According to KNA-Suff*, she does not occurrently know *K*, so she does not know *K* (by P1). Thus, *The Inquiring Student* does not constitute a genuine counterexample to ET, since Kat lacks knowledge of *K*.

Importantly, *the absence-of-knowledge account* does not face the problems I mentioned in §2.3, since these problems stem from how *the presence-of-belief account* appeals to prior beliefs. Thus, *the absence-of-knowledge account* works regardless of whether the subject has formed a belief in *p*.

## 4. Awareness and knowledge

### *4.1. Objection 1: awareness entails knowledge?*

Up to now, I have shown that the putative counterexamples to ET are not genuine ones; their subjects lack occurrent knowledge, or, if they have dispositional knowledge, then it is at least plausible to ascribe dispositional beliefs to them. I will now deal with two potential objections—the first in §4 and the second in §5—to clarify and reinforce my account.

The first objection concerns the knowledge–assertion link on which I rely: The appeal to the link fails to identify the absence of knowledge. The objector might argue that Kat knows *K*, even though it is improper for her to assert *K*. So, the objection goes, *the absence-of-knowledge account* based on the link does not work well.

This objection gains force when one considers the link between awareness and knowledge. As I noted in §2.1, according to Silva (2019), awareness entails knowledge. Two linguistic phenomena support this thesis: first, when you are asked whether you know that *p*, if you acknowledge your awareness of *p*, this acknowledgment is taken to affirm your knowledge that *p*; second, uttering "I am aware that *p*, but I don't know that *p*" sounds contradictory. If we accept the link between awareness and knowledge, then the subjects know the relevant propositions. Consequently, the objector might argue that KNA-Suff and KNA-Suff* fail to identify the absence of knowledge.

### *4.2. Reply: doubts about the awareness–knowledge entailment*

The awareness–knowledge entailment seems prima facie plausible. However, contrary to this impression, the phenomena – the linguistic patterns Silva describes – do not support the awareness–knowledge entailment. My strategy is to show that the phenomena can be explained by the thesis that awareness means something weaker than knowledge. It is possible to explain the phenomena without relying on the awareness–knowledge entailment, which undermines its persuasiveness.

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The task involves two plausible suppositions. The first supposition is that awareness means *being in a good position to know*, which does not entail knowledge. In favor of this, the instances of "awareness" (memory, perception, and so on) are factive states (Silva 2019: 738). Also, Pritchard (2012: 26) contends that such states can be understood as *being in a good position to know*. Even if awareness does not mean *being in a good position to know*, the underlying strategy remains effective. Suppose this supposition, together with the second introduced below, can explain the two phenomena that Silva describes. Then, these linguistic phenomena are inconclusive evidence for the awareness–knowledge entailment. This is because the phenomena equally support another explanation: one that is incompatible with the awareness–knowledge entailment. The second supposition is that when one asserts *p*, one represents oneself as someone who knows that *p* (Van Elswyk and Benton 2023; Williamson 2000). With these two suppositions, we can explain the two phenomena without relying on the claim that awareness entails knowledge.

When you assert "I am aware that *p*," you represent yourself as someone who knows that you are aware that *p* (by the second supposition). Then, you represent yourself as someone who knows you are in a good position to know *p* in virtue of possessing factive mental states, such as seeing and remembering (by the first supposition). In turn, you thereby represent yourself as someone who knows that *p*. This is because if you know you are in a good position to know *p* in virtue of possessing factive states, then it seems that you know *p*. To be specific, in order to know that you have a factive state, you should know that the proposition (the object of the factive mental state) is true. For instance, when you know that you see that there is a barn, you know that there is a barn.

To see how these suppositions explain the linguistic patterns in question, suppose you are an astronomer working with a space telescope. One day, a person who believes that the Earth is flat challenges your epistemic authority by asking you, "How do you know that?" In such a situation, you can answer the question by saying, "I see that the Earth is a spheroid, not flat." In doing so, you represent yourself as someone who knows that you are in a good position to know the Earth is a spheroid in virtue of seeing that it is. In turn, you convey the content that you know that the Earth is a spheroid. When someone asserts that she has a factive state that *p*, it is natural to understand this as an utterance that conveys both the content that *p* and a claim that she has epistemic authority over *p*.

It seems that if awareness entails only being in a good position to know, one represents oneself as someone who knows that *p*, when one asserts "I am aware that *p*." Therefore, if one acknowledges that one is aware that *p*, the acknowledgment conveys that one knows *p*. We can explain this phenomenon without supposing the awareness–knowledge entailment.

The second phenomenon can be explained in the same manner. When someone asserts, "I don't know *p*," it generally means that she does not know whether *p*. In saying it, she represents herself as someone who knows that she does not know whether *p* and thereby represents herself as not knowing whether *p*. Therefore, if one says, "I am aware that *p*, but I don't know that *p*," a collision occurs. As I explained, from the two suppositions, to utter "I am aware that *p*" conveys the content "I know *p*." By uttering such a conjunction, one represents oneself as someone who knows that *p*, while one represents oneself as someone who does not know whether *p*. In this way, we can explain the second phenomenon without supposing the awareness–knowledge entailment.

What I have provided here is not a full explanation of the linguistic phenomena that Silva has identified. However, in this section, I have demonstrated that in explaining the

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linguistic patterns, there is no need to accept the awareness–knowledge entailment, which means that the potential objection fails.

## 5. Belief and assertion

### *5.1. Objection 2: proper assertion without belief?*

One might object that it is proper for Kat to assert *K*, which implies that *the absence-of-knowledge account* does not work. To support this idea, one might appeal to the intuition that *The Inquiring Student* is analogous to cases of *selfless assertions* that Lackey (2007) presented: cases in which the asserter does not believe that *p*, but is aware that *p* is well-supported by the available evidence. To see the analogy, consider the following:

> **Distraught Doctor:** Sebastian is an extremely well-respected pediatrician and researcher who has done extensive work studying childhood vaccines. He recognizes and appreciates that all of the scientific evidence shows that there is absolutely no connection between vaccines and autism. However, shortly after his apparently normal 18-month-old daughter received one of her vaccines, her behavior became increasingly withdrawn and she was soon diagnosed with autism. While Sebastian is aware that signs of autism typically emerge around this age, regardless of whether a child received any vaccines, the grief and exhaustion brought on by his daughter's recent diagnosis cause him to abandon his previously deeply-held beliefs regarding vaccines. Today, while performing a well-baby checkup on one of his patients, the child's parents ask him about the legitimacy of the rumors surrounding vaccines and autism. Recognizing both that the current doubt he has towards vaccines was probably brought about through the emotional trauma of dealing with his daughter's condition and that he has an obligation to his patients to present what is most likely to be true, Sebastian asserts, "There is no connection between vaccines and autism" (Lackey 2007).[7]

Lackey argues that it is proper for Sebastian to assert, "There is no connection between vaccines and autism" (henceforth, *R*). Furthermore, this intuition is widely accepted among the opponents of the knowledge norm of assertion (e.g., McKinnon 2013; Pelling 2013; Pritchard 2014). One might therefore argue that, if *selfless assertions* are considered proper, then assertions in Silva-style cases should be considered proper. This is because these two kinds of cases are sufficiently analogous: In both, the relevant propositions (*K* and *R*) are well-supported by evidence that the asserters have. In both, the asserters (Kat and Sebastian) are aware of this evidential support but do not believe the relevant propositions.

Admittedly, on the basis of ET, Lackey (2007) argues that Sebastian does not know *R*, since he does not believe *R*. Opponents of ET could reinterpret this case differently (cf. Tebben 2021). Since they claim that ET is false, they might argue Sebastian can know *R* without believing *R*; if he knows *R*, then, by KNA-Suff, it is proper for Sebastian to assert *R*, which explains the apparent propriety of the *selfless assertions*. In this way,

[7]I have removed the last sentence of Lackey's description of the case, which mentioned that the protagonist does not believe the proposition and therefore does not know it. Lackey argues in this way because she assumes that ET is true, but in this article, whether ET is true or not is the question at stake.

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opponents of ET would argue that the best way to understand *selfless assertions* is to deny ET, not the propriety of *selfless assertions*.

Silva's argument, combined with the observation that (at least) some *selfless assertions* seem proper, strengthens the case against ET. The same strategy can be applied to *The Inquiring Student*: Is it proper for Kat to assert *K*, even though she does not believe *K*? Those who believe that Sebastian's assertion is proper would think of Kat's as proper, too. They might argue that the best way to explain this intuition, while preserving KNA-Suff, is to reject ET: Even though Kat does not believe *K*, she knows *K*. According to KNA-Suff, then, if she knows *K*, it is proper for her to assert *K*, which meshes with their intuition. If so, *the absence-of-knowledge account* based on KNA-Suff does not work, since it fails to show that Kat does not know *K*.

### 5.2. Reply: belief as a requirement of proper assertion

According to this objection, proper assertion does not require belief. However, proper assertion, in fact, does require belief. Two considerations support the thesis that proper assertion requires belief and undermine the objection.

First, asserting a Moorean sentence – one with the form "*p*, but I don't know/believe that *p*" – always sounds infelicitous (Moore 1942). For example, it sounds infelicitous for Kat to utter, "Tezpur is not near Oman, but I don't believe that." The standard explanation of Moorean sentences' infelicity is that proper assertion requires belief (Turri 2014; Williamson 2000). If proper assertion requires belief, someone who asserts such a sentence should believe both of its conjuncts. However, if the asserter believes the first conjunct, this belief conflicts with the second one. That is, if one utters a Moorean sentence, one's assertion contradicts how one represents oneself.

In response to this, Lackey (2007) argues that Moorean assertions' oddness is explained away by pragmatic conversational implicature rather than by the propriety condition of assertion. She claims that what explains the oddness is something like Grice's (1975) Maxim of Quantity ("Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes").[8] In ordinary contexts, it is presupposed that all participants in a conversation are cooperative and observe conversational maxims. In such contexts, if Sebastian says, "There is no connection between vaccines and autism, but I don't believe it," his utterance would make his addressee doubt that there is no connection between vaccines and autism, since the second conjunct suggests that there is non-negligible evidence for the connection. In her view, Moorean assertions sound odd because of the misunderstanding they would cause; their apparent oddness can be explained by a pragmatic problem.

However, this explanation is off the mark. Importantly, as Baldwin (2007) points out, the Moorean paradox occurs in thought, not merely in assertion. Consider a case where you attempt to believe "It is raining, but I don't believe that it is raining." Obviously, such a belief would be odd. The fact that the Moorean paradox occurs in thought suggests that pragmatic approaches to this paradox fail, since the paradox cannot be explained away by applying Gricean Maxims, which presuppose conversational situations.

[8]Lackey presents her own pragmatic rules labeled NMNA and NMNA*. She writes, "One plausible answer here is that the NMNA either can be subsumed by or is at least akin to Grice's Maxim of Quantity" (Lackey 2007: 616).

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Furthermore, if Moorean assertions' oddness comes from conversational implicature, then it could be canceled. Consider a well-known example, presented by Grice (1975) himself: Professor A is writing a letter of recommendation for his pupil, Mr. X, as follows: "Mr. X's command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular." Through its conversational implicature, this utterance pragmatically conveys that Mr. X is not good at philosophy. But this implicature can be canceled if Professor A clarifies, "Of course, Mr. X is excellent at philosophy."

Now consider Sebastian again. Suppose that the reason why it would be problematic for him to assert a Moorean sentence about *R* is that such assertions pragmatically provoke their addressees' misunderstanding. Then, what kind of clarification can cancel such a misunderstanding? Once one asserts Moorean sentences, can the confusing implicature be canceled? It does not seem so. Instead, a clarification from Sebastian would only deepen his addressee's confusion and doubt. Suppose Sebastian clarifies, "... because my daughter was diagnosed with autism soon after she got a vaccine. Thus, I cannot believe that there is no connection between vaccines and autism, because of the grief and exhaustion I feel, not because of lack of evidence." His addressee would not think that this oddity had been resolved. As Turri (2014) notes, such a denial of the link between evidence and belief sounds "feeble and evasive."[9]

Importantly, these two problems are well explained in terms of the thesis that proper assertion requires belief. Let us begin with the Moorean paradox in thought. From the fact that one cannot believe Moorean sentences, and the thesis that proper assertion requires belief, it follows that one cannot assert Moorean sentences properly. Thus, those who accept that proper assertion requires belief have the resources to explain the Moorean paradox both in thought and in assertion, while Lackey would have to present a separate account of the Moorean paradox in thought beyond the account she has presented. In addition, one can explain the fact that the alleged implicature cannot be canceled in an expected way, if one accepts the thesis that proper assertion requires belief. This is because the oddity of Moorean assertions comes from the fact that one cannot believe Moorean sentences, not from the pragmatically provoked misunderstanding. In other words, the oddness of Moorean sentences arises from the propriety condition of assertion, not from pragmatically provoked confusion.

Second, the view that proper assertion requires belief is well-supported by linguistic patterns. As Turri (2014) notes, asking, "Do you believe that?" or "Why do you believe that?" is an appropriate way to challenge an assertion. When such questions are put to Sebastian or Kat, they cannot meet the challenge. Then the challenger can criticize them by saying, "You don't (even) believe that!" Sebastian or Kat should then retract the original assertion. These linguistic patterns support the view that proper assertion requires belief.

For these reasons, it has become clear why *selfless assertions* remain improper, despite their apparent propriety. The objection I have examined in this section, which is based on the alleged propriety of *selfless assertions*, is unconvincing. Therefore, the thesis that proper assertion requires belief still holds.

## 6. Conclusion

I have demonstrated that the putative counterexamples to ET are not genuine ones. The putative counterexamples can be divided into two groups. The first group comprises the

[9]The same line of response applies to *The Inquiring Student*.

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cases in which subjects have formed knowledge earlier but cannot conjure up the relevant propositions (e.g., *The Unconfident Examinee*). The second group contains the cases in which the subjects allegedly know the relevant propositions but have not yet come to believe them.

KNA-Suff and KNA-Suff* apply to both groups. In the first group's cases, the subjects do not know $p$, since it is not proper for them to assert $p$. At this point, opponents of ET might say that the impropriety of asserting $p$ does not show a lack of knowledge, since the subjects' knowledge might be dispositional. This line of objection seems plausible because the subjects have already formed knowledge that $p$. However, proponents of ET can counter it: If such an objection makes sense, they can contend the corresponding belief is dispositional by appealing to the prior belief.[10] This seems a plausible answer, since the cases' subjects appear to have believed $p$ before they failed to conjure up $p$. Therefore, this kind of case is not a counterexample to ET.

In the cases within the second group, the subjects do not know $p$, since it is not proper for them to assert $p$. According to the description, if the subjects know that $p$, that knowledge is clearly occurrent. However, by KNA-Suff*, they do not know occurrently, since they cannot assert $p$ properly. Therefore, this kind of case does not constitute a counterexample to ET.

Against my argument, two objections could be raised. The first is based on the intuition that awareness entails knowledge. However, there is no decisive evidence for the claim that awareness entails knowledge, since we can explain the intuition without appealing to it. The second opposes the intuition that it is improper for the subjects in question to assert the relevant propositions. However, the linguistic patterns support the link between belief and assertion.

Therefore, ET withstands close theoretical scrutiny.

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[10]At this point, one might suspect that I have ended up supporting *the presence-of-belief account*. However, my suggestion here is merely dialectical. What I show is that if opponents of ET appeal to prior knowledge, it is highly implausible that they can deny the existence of the corresponding prior belief. There is no need for me to commit to the existence of the prior belief.

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