

Knowledge and Skepticism. Edited by Joseph Keim Campbell, Michael O'Rourke, and Harry S. Silverstein. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. Pp. 367. Hardback, ISBN: 978-0-262-01408-3; paperback, ISBN: 978-0-262-51396-8.

This edited volume collects (descendants of) fourteen select papers presented at the 2004 Inland Northwest Philosophy Conference, along with an introduction by the editors. Appearing as it does six years later, not all of the work is state of the art, but some of it still is, and much of it is still worthy of consideration. The volume lacks a unifying focus. It is most suitable for researchers working in contemporary epistemology; it would not be ideal as a text in a graduate course; it would be unsuitable as a text for undergraduates. In what follows, I briefly describe each paper's central aim, and then focus in a bit more detail on three of them.

In "Knowledge and Conclusive Evidence," David Hemp defends the Dretskean thesis that if you know P based on evidence, then your evidence must be conclusive, by which he means "evidence that *shows* that" P is true. In "Theorizing Justification," Peter Graham offers a new taxonomy of theories of justification. In "Truth Tracking and the Problem of Reflective Knowledge," Joe Salerno defends Nozick's truth-tracking condition on knowledge from well-known criticisms leveled by Jonathan Vogel and Ernest Sosa, arguing that they trade on a subtle confusion of how to interpret the relevant counterfactuals. In "Contextualism, Skepticism, and Warranted Assertability Maneuvers," Duncan Pritchard defends an anti-skeptical invariantist explanation of some linguistic data on knowledge ascriptions, responding to a challenge posed to invariantists by Keith DeRose. In "Knowledge In and Out of Context," Kent Bach argues that contextualists have failed to provide a satisfactory account of skeptical arguments, and provides invariantist explanations of relevant data, in contrast to those offered by contextualists and subject-sensitive invariantists. In "Contextualism in Epistemology and the Context-Sensitivity of 'Knows'," Robert Stainton argues that we can preserve the spirit of epistemic contextualism without positing that the cognitive verb 'knows' is context-sensitive. In "Locke's Account of Sensitive Knowledge," George Pappas offers a reinterpretation of Locke's theory of perceptual knowledge in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In "Revelations," Joseph Tolliver argues that perceptual experience doesn't reveal the true nature of colors to us, but is instead characterized by "manifest colors," which do reveal their true nature to us, and "present" colors to us by doing so. In "Knowing It Hurts," Fred Dretske offers a hypothesis on how we know that we're in pain, according to which being (at least nearly) perfectly reliable at detecting when you're in pain is a precondition on having the concept of awareness. In "Reasoning Defeasibly about Probabilities," John Pollock makes a sophisticated initial attempt to explain how humans reason about probabilities when our knowledge of the relevant probability distributions is incomplete or the relevant calculations far too complex for us to perform. In "Anti-Individualism, Self-Knowledge, and Why Skepticism Cannot be Cartesian," Leora Weitzman argues that antiskeptical arguments predicated on anti-individualism about mental content presuppose more than is obvious at first glance, and ultimately have serious shortcomings. In "Is There a Reason for Skepticism?" Joseph Cruz argues that the most plausible Cartesian skeptical argument is self-defeating, since it relies on a principle that, if consistently applied, contradicts the skeptical conclusion. In "Skepticism Aside," Catherine Elgin argues that skepticism is inconsistent with agency, so it is reasonable to assume that skepticism is false in order to accomplish things, including

doing epistemology. In “Hume’s Skeptical Naturalism,” Peter Fosl advances a new interpretation of the relationship between Hume’s skepticism and Hume’s naturalism, arguing along the way that others have misunderstood this relationship.

Weitzman focuses on a question intensely debated over the past twenty years, namely, what, if any, are the anti-skeptical consequences of an anti-individualist theory of mental content? An anti-individualist theory of mental content says that the content of (at least some) mental states is determined by factors external to the individual whose thought it is. According to such a view, you could not, for example, have a thought about water unless water exists. Combine this with the thesis of privileged access — namely, that you can know the contents of your own thoughts just by reflecting from the armchair — and it is tempting to conclude that you could know by reflection alone that water exists, and thus that an external world exists. Weitzman argues that the skeptic should reject this argument, on either of two grounds. On the one hand, the skeptic might insist that we’re now faced with the question of how we know we’re thinking thoughts whose contents are externally individuated in the envisioned way. On the other hand, the skeptic could argue that the most the anti-individualist is allowed to claim, without begging the question, is that the content of some thoughts is determined by factors external *to the thought itself*, which needn’t be external *to the individual herself*. Thus there is no easy route from content externalism and privileged access to anti-skepticism.

Epistemologists have tended to find the following sort of epistemic principle plausible: if it appears to me as if P, then it’s reasonable for me to believe P. So, for example, to take an example Moore made famous, if it appears to me as if I have two hands, then it’s reasonable for me to believe that I have hands. Cruz claims that the most plausible skeptical challenge to this and other beliefs rests on “the discriminating evidence principle,” which says that if your evidence doesn’t discriminate between competing alternatives P and Q, then it’s not reasonable for you to believe either alternative. So if ‘P’ is ‘I have hands’ and ‘Q’ is ‘I am merely having a perfectly realistic dream that I have hands’, then P and Q are competing alternatives that your evidence fails to discriminate between, and it isn’t reasonable for you to believe that you have hands, contra Moore. It is notoriously difficult to say exactly how one should respond to this argument. Cruz argues that the argument fails because it is self-defeating: the discriminating evidence principle can be applied to the skeptical argument itself. For instance, it certainly seems possible that the skeptic might be *misapplying*, in a way he wouldn’t notice, the principle to the ordinary beliefs that he attempts to invalidate. But then the skeptic himself is faced with the following indiscriminable alternatives: *the principle has the relevant skeptical consequences* versus *the principle merely seems to have the relevant skeptical consequences*. Thus it is, by the skeptic’s own lights, unreasonable for the skeptic to believe that the principle has the relevant skeptical consequences.

Stainton aims to place epistemic contextualism on a securer footing than has been provided heretofore. Epistemic contextualism is the view that the truth conditions for knowledge-ascriptions are context sensitive. Take two speakers in different contexts, referring at the same time to the same subject S and proposition P. Contextualists say that the one speaker could say ‘S knows that P’ while the other speaker could say ‘S does not know that P’ and *both speak truthfully* because something about their respective contexts prevents them from literally contradicting one another (compare what would happen if I said (when in Toronto) ‘It is raining here’ and you said at the same time (in Orlando) ‘It is not raining

here': we could both speak truthfully, even though it might superficially appear that we're contradicting each other).

In virtue of what are knowledge-attributions context-sensitive? Up till now, contextualists have hypothesized that it is because 'knows' is a context-sensitive term — perhaps it is an indexical like 'I' or 'today', or perhaps it is like a gradable adjective such as 'tall' or 'flat'. But each of these hypotheses faces serious problems, because 'knows' doesn't share the linguistic profile of either indexicals or gradable adjectives. Does this mean that contextualism is doomed as an ad hoc semantic proposal?

Not necessarily, Stainton argues, because knowledge ascriptions might still be context-sensitive even if 'know' isn't a context-sensitive expression. Stainton makes the case that *in general* the truth-conditions of expressions are context-sensitive, since there are "pragmatic determinants" of what is claimed by uttering a sentence. For example, if you ask me in the morning 'Are you hungry?' and I respond 'I ate breakfast', I thereby conversationally implicate that I'm not hungry. But this implication takes hold only if, by uttering those words, I assert that I ate breakfast *today*. But the fact that I asserted *I ate breakfast today* can't simply be read off the literal meaning of my words, so something about the context enriches my words, as it were, and enables me to express the proposition *I ate breakfast today*, rather than the proposition *I have at some previous time eaten breakfast*. Knowledge attributions could thus be context-sensitive as a special case of this general phenomenon of pragmatic determination of what is asserted by an utterance. And this would be true even if 'knows' was no more context-sensitive than 'eat'.

John Turri
University of Waterloo
john.turri@gmail.com