

# The Myth of Factive Verbs

Allan Hazlett  
Fordham University

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## 1. Introduction

At least since the days of ‘ordinary language philosophy’, epistemologists (some more than others) have been interested in knowledge attributions – the meaning or meanings of ‘knows’, the use or uses of sentences of the form ‘S knows p’, and so on. And there has more recently been renewed interest in how ‘knows’ is used.<sup>1</sup> Theorizing about knowledge on the basis of how ‘knows’ is used is, at least in principle, quite different from the epistemological tradition exemplified by the ‘post-Gettier’ literature on the analysis of knowledge. In this tradition, necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge are proposed, and tested against potential counterexamples. Imaginary situations are described, and intuitions (which are presumed correct) are elicited concerning whether or not a character in the story *knows a certain proposition*.<sup>2</sup> Contrast this with the linguistic method: imaginary situations are described, and intuitions (which are presumed correct) are elicited concerning whether or not a character in the story *said something acceptable*.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of this, a theory of the meaning of ‘knows’ is developed. But note that the result of this linguistic method might be a conclusion of the same kind as the result of the post-Gettier method, for one theory of the meaning of a

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<sup>1</sup> See Cohen, S., “How to be a Fallibilist,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 (1988), pp. 91-123, DeRose, K., “Solving the Skeptical Problem,” *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995), pp. 1-52, Lewis, D., “Elusive Knowledge,” in *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 418-45, Schaffer, J., “From Contextualism to Contrastivism,” *Philosophical Studies* 119 (2004), pp. 73-103 and “Contrastive Knowledge,” *Oxford Studies in Epistemology* 1 (2005), pp. 235-72, and Stanley, J., *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford, 2005). Cf. Ludlow, P., “Contextualism and the New Linguistic Turn in Epistemology,” in Preyer and Peter (eds.), *Contextualism in Philosophy* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 11-50.

<sup>2</sup> See Shope, R.K., *The Analysis of Knowing* (Princeton, 1983) and “Conditions and Analyses of Knowing,” in Moser (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 25-70, and more recently, for example, Greco, J., “Knowledge as Credit for True Belief,” in DePaul and Zagzebski (eds.), *Intellectual Virtue* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 111-34 and Pritchard, D., *Epistemic Luck* (Oxford, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> As opposed to deviant. Some prefer to start with intuitions about the truth and falsity of utterances, e.g. DeRose, op. cit., and Stanley, op. cit. I follow Chomsky (via Jonathan Schaffer) in this regard, when he writes that “we cannot in general know, pretheoretically, whether [some] deviance is a matter of syntax, semantics, pragmatics, belief, memory limitation, style, etc.” (*Essays on Form and Interpretation*, North Holland, 1977, p. 4) In other words, it is up to the theorist to hypothesize as to whether an intuitively acceptable utterance is true, or (e.g.) false though acceptable because it is a case of irony, or whatever.

word is simply a definition of it, in the form of necessary and sufficient conditions for its correct (i.e. true) application. So we can, at least in principle, distinguish between two competing methods of theorizing in epistemology – one based on intuitions about knowledge, and the other based on intuitions about language.<sup>4</sup>

Alternatively, a range of ‘value based’ methods have been suggested. Edward Craig proposes a genealogical approach, on which an inquiry into the sources of the concept of knowledge is the starting point for epistemology.<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Kvanvig argues that no theory of knowledge can ignore the question of the value of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> And Sally Haslanger has suggested an “ameliorative” approach to conceptual analysis, which can be applied to the concept of knowledge, on which the theorist identifies “what legitimate purposes we might have (if any) in categorizing [e.g. beliefs in terms of knowledge] and to develop concepts that would help us achieve these ends.”<sup>78</sup>

Nothing speaks against using these various methods in tandem. Kvanvig, for example, favors a combination of the post-Gettier method with a ‘value based’ method, where “the presumption in favor of the value of knowledge is strong enough that it gives reason to abandon even a counterexample-free account of the nature of knowledge if that account leaves no way open for defending the value of knowledge.”<sup>9</sup> But the existence of a plurality of approaches to the question ‘What is knowledge?’ should give us pause – have we any reason to think that there is such a thing as *the* analysis of knowledge? What would make *it* the analysis of knowledge, as opposed to some competing definition? Do we really expect that a single definition of knowledge might be (even relatively) counterexample free, (even relatively) suitable as the ordinary meaning of ‘knows’, *and* (even relatively) successful vis-à-vis the ‘value based’ criteria proposed by

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<sup>4</sup> Another possibility would be an experimental linguistic method – rather than appealing to intuitions about use, the theorist might study use directly, and generate hypotheses about the meaning of ‘knows’ on that basis.

<sup>5</sup> See Craig, E., *Knowledge and the State of Nature* (Oxford, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> See Kvanvig, J., *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding* (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Haslanger, S., “What Are We Talking About? The Semantics and Politics of Social Kinds,” *Hypatia* 20:4 (2005), pp. 10-26, at p. 11. This can be applied to the concept of knowledge, so long as it is a “social kind” – a claim I accept, but won’t argue for here. For dissent see Kornblith, H., *Knowledge and Its Place in Nature* (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> For additional alternatives, see Kaplan, M., “To What Must an Epistemology Be True,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59:2 (2000), pp. 279-304 and Pritchard, D., “Epistemic Deflationism,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 42 (2004), pp. 1-32

<sup>9</sup> Kvanvig, op. cit., p. 5

Craig, Kvanvig, and Haslanger? At this stage one begins to wonder what the *point* of giving a definition of knowledge would be.

In any case, it is within this context that I propose to criticize the following thesis:

**(Factivity)** Certain two-place predicates, including ‘knows’, ‘learns’, ‘remembers’, and ‘realizes’, which denote relations between persons and propositions, are *factive* in this sense: an utterance of ‘S knows p’ is true only if p, an utterance of ‘S learned p’ is true only if p, and so on.

Standard analyses of knowledge include a truth condition (S knows p only if p is true) and this element of the analysis is often justified (nowadays, anyway) by appeal to Factivity – a decidedly linguistic thesis. If I’m right in my criticism of Factivity, then epistemologists will have to look elsewhere for support for the truth condition. But more importantly, if I’m right, then epistemologists may have reason to stop looking at linguistic phenomena altogether – at least if they want to keep working on anything like the standard analysis of knowledge. The concept of knowledge that epistemologists have been interested in since the *Meno* is a factive concept (in the sense that nothing false can be known). But, if I’m right, the concept of knowledge that serves as the meaning of ‘knows’ in ordinary talk isn’t. This is strong prima facie evidence that traditional epistemology shouldn’t be especially interested in the concept of knowledge that serves as the meaning of ‘knows’ in ordinary talk. The same can be said about the thesis of ‘pragmatic encroachment’, according to which (roughly) the prudential value of a belief (for the believer) may determine whether or not it is (or counts as) a case of knowledge.<sup>10</sup> If this is supported by consideration of ordinary language, so much the worse for supporting epistemological claims by appeal to ordinary language. For the epistemologist is interested in an *epistemic* concept of knowledge, if she is interested in a concept of knowledge at all.<sup>11</sup> What I’m claiming is that epistemologists have every right to insist that knowledge (as they understand it) is factive – but the price to pay for this (which many will be happy to incur) is to give up the linguistic method described above.

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<sup>10</sup> See Stanley, op. cit., Fantl and McGrath, “Evidence, Pragmatics, and Justification,” *Philosophical Review* 111:1 (2002), pp. 67-94, and Hazlett, A., “Knowledge as Something Everyone Wants,” unpublished manuscript.

<sup>11</sup> One option is to lessen one’s interest in knowledge (perhaps conceding that it is not a purely epistemic concept), and focus on epistemic justification (which is, as it were, pure by definition). Note that this won’t work if there is ‘pragmatic encroachment’ on justification as well; see Fantl and McGrath, op. cit.

I'm suggesting, in other words, a divorce for the linguistic theory of knowledge attributions and traditional epistemology.<sup>12</sup>

I've called factive verbs a myth, and I mean something by that. Compare a myth (which, though false, captures something true) with a dogma (which is just plain wrong). Factivity captures something true, and it is a large part of my task here to explain the true content of this 'myth' – the important linguistic phenomena that the 'myth' is useful in capturing.

In §2 I describe some intuitively acceptable utterances that, if (possibly) true, are counterexamples to Factivity. In §3 I present and criticize two arguments for Factivity, and one for the related claim that nothing false can be known. The appeal of these arguments partly explains the appeal of Factivity. In §4 I focus on 'knows' in particular, and defend the claim that a non-factive concept of knowledge is the best candidate to serve as the meaning of 'knows' in ordinary talk. Explananda for a theory of knowledge attributions are proposed. In §4.1 I present my preferred non-factive theory of knowledge attributions. Crucial here will be a Gricean explanation of fact that one who utters 'S knows p' typically implies that p is true, which provides further explanation of the appeal of Factivity, and additionally accounts for its status as a 'myth'. §4.2 discusses a traditional theory of knowledge attributions, and §4.3 discusses an alternative both to my theory and the traditional theory, and concludes the section.

## 2. Non-Factive Uses of 'Factive Verbs'

The utterance of the following sentences does not strike ordinary people as deviant, improper, unacceptable, necessarily false, etc.:

- (1) Everyone knew that stress caused ulcers, before two Australian doctors in the early 80s proved that ulcers are actually caused by bacterial infection.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Consider the natural and appropriate divorce between linguistic theorizing about the word 'free' and the metaphysical issue of free will. If you like, this is ordinary language philosophy plus metaphilosophical pluralism. I propose developing a concept of knowledge suitable for the semantics of ordinary language, but I don't say that this project replaces or competes with traditional epistemology.

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Achenbach, J., "Cat Carrier: Your cat could make you crazy," *National Geographic* 208 (2005). Thanks to Keith DeRose.

- (2) He figures anything big enough to sink the ship they're going to see in time to turn. But the ship's too big, with too small a rudder ... it can't corner worth shit. Everything he knows is wrong.<sup>14</sup>
- (3) In school we learned that World War I was a war to “make the world safe for democracy,” when it was really a war to make the world safe for the Western imperial powers.<sup>15</sup>
- (4) I had trouble breathing, sharp pains in my side, several broken ribs and a partially collapsed lung, and I was in the middle of nowhere without any real rescue assets – it was then that I realized I was going to die out there.<sup>16</sup>

Talk of false memories is, I assume, familiar enough. Since these uses of ‘knows’, ‘learns’, ‘remembers’, and ‘realizes’ are unexceptional, and do not strike ordinary people as deviant, I claim that we need some theory of these words on which (1) – (4) are acceptable. I contend that the best working hypothesis is that utterances of these sentences could be true – so we have a *prima facie* threat to Factivity. Ultimately the matter should be decided by consideration of competing theories of ‘knows’, ‘learns’, ‘remembers’, and ‘realizes’; §4 examines ‘knows’, where I’ll argue that the best theory of knowledge attributions says that (1) and (2) could be true. But some objections to this idea can be dealt with immediately.

*Objection:* The uses of factive verbs you appeal to are cases of loose talk.

*Reply 1:* On some views of loose talk, ‘loose’ utterances are literally true, but not ‘strictly’ true, not as accurate as they could be, etc. For example, Peter van Inwagen argues that an ordinary utterance of ‘There are two very valuable chairs in the next room’ could be true (though it is ‘loose talk’), even though ‘strictly speaking’ there are no chairs.<sup>17</sup> If this is the right model of ‘loose talk’, then the objection fails to eliminate the *prima facie* threat to Factivity.

*Reply 2:* A paradigm case of loose talk is an utterance of ‘It’s two-thirty’ when it is, exactly, 2:29. The ‘loose’ utterance is ‘close’ to being true, it ‘approximates’ the truth, etc. The uses of ‘knows’, ‘learns’, ‘remembers’, and ‘realizes’ in the examples above are nothing like that.<sup>18</sup> (It is not as if, for example, Zinn thinks that World War I

<sup>14</sup> Brock to Bodine, in *Titanic* (1997). Thanks to Jeremy Fantl.

<sup>15</sup> Adapted from Zinn, H., “America’s Blindness,” *The Progressive* (April, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Adapted from a quotation in Schloeffel, E., “Airman ‘keeps faith’ during hard times,” Moody Air Force Base Press Release (February 10, 2006), available at [www.moody.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123016634](http://www.moody.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123016634).

<sup>17</sup> van Inwagen, P., *Material Beings* (Cornell, 1991), pp. 98-107.

<sup>18</sup> For conceptions of ‘loose talk’ on which such speech resembles metaphor or pretense, see the discussion of “protagonist projection” in §4,

was close to being, but not precisely or exactly, a war to make the world safe for democracy.)

*Objection:* People's resistance to the truth condition on knowledge is the result of the popularity of relativism, as those "infused with relativistic ideas" will maintain that it was once known that the earth was flat.<sup>19</sup>

*Reply:* According to at least one common (and, it seems to me, mistaken) relativism, it was not only known that the earth was flat, it was also *true* that the earth was flat. The student influenced by this relativism, however, has no quarrel with the claim that 'knows' is factive. It seems to me, furthermore, that one who claims that falsehoods can be known is in a unique position to reject relativism while accommodating some liberal and pluralistic intuitions. Suppose it's right, as we learn from anthropologists and sociologists, that just as there is Western scientific knowledge, there is also tribal knowledge, Greek knowledge (perhaps this includes the knowledge that the earth is flat), and so on; suppose we agree that there are a plenum of incompatible 'epistemologies', each equally legitimate, each just as much a body of knowledge as the others. If nothing false can be known, it follows from this that there are a plenum of incompatible *truths* – and this is an unlovely relativism that is in civil disobedience of the law of non-contradiction. If, on the other hand, falsehoods can be known, then relativism about knowledge gives us no motivation to slip towards relativism about truth.<sup>20</sup>

*Objection:* The uses of factive verbs you appeal to are cases in which said verbs are used with a different sense than they are often used. 'Knows' and other factive verbs are semantically ambiguous, in some contexts they take a factive sense; in others they take a non-factive sense.

*Reply:* Following Grice, I take the positing of semantic ambiguity to be a vice, *ceteris paribus*, for a linguistic theory.<sup>21</sup> So while ambiguity should not be ruled out, we should first seek a theory on which 'knows' is univocal. After considering three such theories in §4 I'll return to the question of whether 'knows' is ambiguous in §4.3.

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<sup>19</sup> Kvanvig, *op. cit.*, p. xi

<sup>20</sup> Thanks to Catherine Elgin and Simon Feldman for helping me get clear on this.

<sup>21</sup> See section §5. For the details of this principle see Hazlett, A., "Grice's Razor," *Metaphilosophy* 37:5 (2007).

An appealing thought, for many defenders of Factivity, is the idea that (1) – (4) are false, but pragmatically appropriate because they are instances of metaphorical ‘projection’ into the perspective of the ‘knower’, ‘learner’, or ‘realizer’. I reserve discussion of this proposal for §4.2.

### **3. Three Unsound Arguments**

We can distinguish two claims. Factivity, on the one hand, is a claim about the truth conditions of certain utterances. The claim that knowledge is factive (i.e. that nothing false can be known), on the other hand, is a claim about the necessary conditions for knowing. Above I proposed a divorce for the theory of knowledge attributions and epistemology. The terms of this divorce would allow us to say that knowledge (as traditionally understood) is factive, but at the same time say that Factivity is false (and hence that knowledge, understood as that which ‘knows’ refers to, isn’t factive).

In this section I present three unsound arguments. The first two are arguments for Factivity, as stated; the first is based on syntax, and the second is based on the appearance of contradiction in an utterance of ‘I know p, but not-p’. The third is an argument for the claim that nothing false can be known. In criticizing these arguments, I shall partly explain the appeal of Factivity. For these arguments are compelling at first glance, though unsound.

That Factivity has appeal is uncontroversial. It has almost universal appeal for philosophers, and many non-philosophers find it intuitively compelling as well. This is something that the critic of Factivity must explain. But it should not be ignored that, this intuition notwithstanding, most people do not find the claim that nothing false can be known, for example, to be obvious. Now the fact that it isn’t obvious is not a significant mark against the claim; some truths of this sort aren’t obvious to most people. But as far as common sense goes, the best the defender of Factivity can say is that common sense doesn’t have an opinion about Factivity. At worst, common sense is downright hostile to it.

According to Zeno Vendler, philosophers, and not linguists, first claimed that that ‘knows’ and its kin are factive.<sup>22</sup> It’s often said (e.g. by me, above) that the origin of the idea that truth is necessary for knowledge is the *Meno*. The contrast set up there is between knowledge and true belief; the idea that falls out of introducing the concept of knowledge this way is that knowledge is to be defined as true belief plus something else. One thing to note, though, is that it does not follow from the fact that knowledge is more valuable than true belief (insisted upon by Socrates) that truth (or belief) is necessary for knowledge, that truth (or belief) is a ‘component’ of knowledge. Gold is more valuable than lead; it doesn’t follow from this that lead is a component of gold. More important is the fact that the contrast set up in the *Meno* is not natural, as it were, from an ordinary language point of view. The natural contrast is between knowledge and *ignorance*. The alternative to knowledge, in ordinary life, is not ‘mere true belief’, but *no belief at all*. When we say that someone doesn’t know, normally, we are describing someone who doesn’t believe. Though of course we would not describe such a person as someone who ‘doesn’t believe’ – we would just say she doesn’t know! Knowledge denials (e.g. ‘She doesn’t know’) are almost exclusively used to describe cases of ignorance, *not* cases of true belief without proper justification (whatever exactly that comes to), or whatever. One point is familiar enough: that we are happy to describe as knowing someone who is ‘merely’ in possession of the relevant information. But the flip side of this point is important as well: we describe someone as *not* knowing when she doesn’t possess the relevant information – and this is almost always a case in which the person in question believes nothing about the question at hand. The philosopher’s ‘She doesn’t really *know*’, applied to true believers without justification, is just that: a *philosopher’s* phrase. It is rare outside of that context, though the idea that knowledge is true belief plus something is natural in the context of philosophical skepticism – where worries about the epistemic status of our (admittedly correct) beliefs occupy us.<sup>23</sup>

In any case, let us consider the three aforementioned arguments:

**The Argument from Syntax:** The factive verbs are members of a class of expressions with certain syntactic features in common, which we’ll call the *syntactically factive*

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<sup>22</sup> Vendler, Z., *Linguistics and Philosophy* (Cornell, 1967), p. 29

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Bernard Williams on “the examiner situation” in “Deciding to Believe,” in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 136-51, at p. 146

expressions. First, syntactically factive expressions can always be followed by ‘the fact that ...’, while others cannot. Compare:

(5) I remember the fact that I opened the door.

(6) \* I believe the fact that I opened the door.

Second, syntactically factive expressions are always able to be followed by gerunds, whereas others are not. Compare:

(7) I remember having opened the door.

(8) \* I believe having opened the door.

Third, syntactically factive expressions, by contrast with others, cannot be followed by infinitives. Compare:

(9) \* I realize Martin to have opened the door.

(10) I believe Martin to have opened the door.

Given this definition, it is maintained that the class of syntactically factive expressions are factive, in the sense defined at the outset (call this being *semantically factive*).<sup>24</sup>

*Reply 1:* That a class of expressions has certain syntactic features in common is not a good reason to conclude that they have any *particular* semantic feature in common. (Perhaps it is a good reason to conclude that they will have *some* semantic features in common.) So even if the verbs on our list are syntactically akin to one another, this does not provide a reason to conclude that they are semantically factive.

*Reply 2:* The verbs on our list aren’t syntactically factive. As you may have noticed, we had to be careful in selecting verbs from our list to construct these examples, because the verbs on our list do not meet all three criteria. Consider:

(11) \* I know the fact that I opened the door.

(12) \* I learned the fact that I opened the door.<sup>25</sup>

(13) \* I realize the fact that I opened the door.

(14) \* I know having opened the door.

(15) \* I learned having opened the door.

(16) \* I realized having opened the door.

(17) I know Martin to have opened the door.

(18) I remember Martin to have opened the door.

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<sup>24</sup> See Kiparsky and Kiparsky, “Fact,” in Steinberg and Jakobovits (eds.), *Semantics: An interdisciplinary reader* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 345-69

<sup>25</sup> Gilbert Harman suggested ‘I learned of the fact that I opened the door’ as an acceptable alternative. I have mixed feelings about whether ‘I know of the fact that I opened the door’ sounds acceptable. As for the ‘the fact’ condition in general, I’m suspicious of ‘I remember the fact that I opened the door’ as well, which sounds like an unnatural attempt to re-phrase ‘I remember that I opened the door’.

In other words, as Kiparsky and Kiparsky note, ‘knows’ and others are syntactically non-factive. They insist, though, that they are semantically factive in spite of this.<sup>26</sup> But since we are looking for *reasons* to suppose that these expressions are (semantically) factive, this concession is in line with my contention: that syntax gives us no reason to say that ‘knows’ and others are factive.

**The Argument from Contradiction:** Someone who says ‘I know p, but not-p’ contradicts herself. Therefore, ‘knows’ is factive. *Mutatis mutandis* for the other factive verbs.

*Reply:* ‘I know p, but not-p’ is not contradictory, but an utterance of it is Moore paradoxical – to know that p is to believe that p, and ‘I believe p, but not-p’ is paradigmatically Moore paradoxical. It is possible to mistakenly take a sentence, the utterance of which would be Moore paradoxical, for a contradiction. An utterance of ‘I know p, but not-p’ is always improper, but the sentence is not a contradiction. (Notice that, just as ‘I believed p, but not-p’ is not Moore paradoxical, neither is ‘I knew p, but not-p’, as in the case of the rescued airman, above.)

It may be objected that ‘She knows p, but not-p’ also appears to be a contradiction. In §4 I outline what I think are some correct proposals concerning the pragmatics of our use of ‘knows’ – and there I maintain that one who utters ‘S knows p’ typically implies that p is true. This may explain why ‘S knows p, but not-p’ can sound improper. But the *Titanic* case above shows that sentences of this form are sometimes properly assertable. We should also consider the fact that few find that ‘I remember p, but not-p’ and ‘I learned p, but not-p’ sound contradictory.

**The Argument from Infallibilism:** Knowledge requires infallibility: S knows p only if S’s belief that p couldn’t be wrong. No false belief is one that couldn’t be wrong. So knowledge requires truth: S knows p only if S’s belief that p is true.<sup>27</sup>

*Reply:* Infallibilism is false. I reject it for the familiar anti-skeptical reasons, and as such, rejecting it as part of my criticism of Factivity is not out of line, even though it has intuitive appeal. Indeed, if Lewis is right (that the truth condition follows from infallibilism), then the intuitive appeal of the truth condition can be explained by the intuitive appeal of infallibilism. Richard Feldman suggests, alternatively, that fallibilism

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<sup>26</sup> Kiparsky and Kiparsky, *op. cit.*, p. 348n

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Lewis’ derivation of the truth condition from infallibilism, *op. cit.*, pp. 426-27

might encounter resistance from those who mistakenly take it as implying the rejection of the truth condition, i.e. that some might be tempted to reverse Lewis' reasoning, and go from the truth condition to infallibilism.<sup>28</sup> At the least, we can conclude that the intuition that knowledge requires truth is tied up with the intuition that knowledge must be infallible – and I'd be skeptical of any claim of priority for one intuition over the other. I submit only that the view that knowledge requires truth may be appealing (even though it's false) because it is a consequence of the appealing (but false) infallibilism.

#### 4. A Linguistic Defense of a Non-Factive Concept of Knowledge

Suppose we sought a concept of knowledge that would be the best candidate to serve as the meaning of 'knows' in ordinary talk, in other words, the most suitable concept to use in giving a semantics and pragmatics for our ordinary knowledge attributions.<sup>29</sup> What sort of concept would we find? In this section I argue that a non-factive concept is superior to its competitors, when it comes to giving a semantics and pragmatics for our ordinary knowledge attributions. The method here resembles that used in science – rival theories will be described, compared, and a winner chosen on the basis of simplicity, elegance, and explanatory success. The relevant explananda will be intuitively acceptable knowledge attributions, along with their intuitive implications. This last bit is especially important for the defense of a non-factive concept. For it is uncontroversial that, at least typically, one who utters 'S knows p' implies that p is true. In rejecting Factivity, I am rejecting the claim that this implication is explained by an entailment from 'S knows p' to the truth of p. So I must explain the implication some other way.

I'll consider three theories. All three agree that 'knows' is univocal and that a consistent semantics can be given for it.<sup>30</sup> The theories are characterized in terms of their

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<sup>28</sup> Feldman, R., *Epistemology* (Prentice-Hall, 2003), pp. 123-4. Thanks to Andrew Cullison for drawing my attention to the passage.

<sup>29</sup> I don't mean anything weird by talking about 'knowledge attributions' – I just mean utterances of the form 'S knows p', in other words, what are called statements of 'knowledge-that', or 'propositional knowledge'. It is certainly unnatural, outside of a philosophical setting, to say that I have 'attributed knowledge' (to myself?) when I remark that I know that only a handful of NBA players average a double-double each season.

<sup>30</sup> For the theory that 'knows' is ambiguous, see §4.3. See also Weiner, M., "The (Mostly Harmless) Inconsistency of Knowledge Attributions," unpublished manuscript, at <http://mattweiner.net/papers/inconsistency%205-06.pdf>

semantic commitments – in particular, in terms of the conditions they take to be necessary for the truth of knowledge attributions.<sup>31</sup> But an important part of the assessment of these theories will be an evaluation of the sort of pragmatic explanations they need to give to account for *prima facie* counterexamples to their semantic commitments.

First, I'll consider a theory that invokes a non-factive concept of knowledge (call it *the non-factive theory*), which maintains that while an utterance of 'S knows p' might be true even though p is false, the following (at least) are necessary conditions on the truth of knowledge attributions:

**(NF1)** An utterance of 'S knows p' is true only if S believes p.

**(NF2)** An utterance of 'S knows p' is true only if S possesses epistemic warrant for (her belief that) p.

Epistemic warrant is here understood in a non-internalist fashion, on which there is a conceptual connection between epistemic warrant and truth.<sup>32</sup> It is a conceptual truth that epistemically warranted beliefs (or propositions) tend to be true. (Thus the theory proposed here is consistent with the idea that knowledge involves some objective connection to the world, sometimes said to be captured by the truth condition.) For reasons that will become clear in a moment, I will appeal to an unorthodox externalist concept of warrant. (Keep in mind, though, that what we seek is a concept of knowledge that is semantically and pragmatically suitable as the meaning of 'knows' in ordinary language.) On the view I'm proposing, there are a plurality of sufficient conditions for epistemic warrant, including two that will play a role below:

**(Proper Source Warrant)** S's belief that p is epistemically warranted if S's belief that p was formed in a reliable way.

**(Success Warrant)** S's belief that p is warranted if S's belief that p is true.

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<sup>31</sup> Note that it is not part of any of these theories that 'knows' is synonymous with some conjunctive expression. For example, what I call the "traditional" theory does not say that 'S knows p' is synonymous with 'p is true, S believes p, and S is justified in believing p' – not if this implies that you could replace the former with the latter and preserve assertability.

<sup>32</sup> See Chisholm, R., *Theory of Knowledge*, third edition (Prentice-Hall, 1989), p. 76. Internalism is, at least, the thesis that justification is to be defined without reference to truth; a stronger conception of internalism holds that justification is to be defined without reference to any 'external' criterion (including truth).

Either of these sorts of warrant is sufficient for epistemic warrant. And it is left open that there may be other sufficient conditions for epistemic warrant, so long as they do not violate the principle that it is a conceptual truth that epistemically warranted beliefs tend to be true. In any case, given this concept of knowledge, the truth of S's belief that p is sufficient, but not necessary, for that belief to count as knowledge. The theory proposed is neutral on the question of whether the conditions described in NF1 and NF2 are jointly sufficient for the truth of 'S knows p', or on whether there are additional necessary conditions on the truth of 'S knows p' (with the exception of the condition that p is true). The theory is also neutral when it comes to the question of whether the concept of knowledge is 'composite' (definable in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions) or whether it is primitive (as in Williamson's epistemology).<sup>33</sup>

Second, I'll consider a theory appealing to a traditional concept of knowledge (call this *the traditional theory*), which features (at least) these three conditions:

- (T1) An utterance of 'S knows p' is true only if S believes p.
- (T2) An utterance of 'S knows p' is true only if p is true.
- (T3) An utterance of 'S knows p' is true only if S's belief that p is justified.

Because it will not be relevant in what follows, I'll say nothing about the specifics of the traditional condition of justification, and the various forms it might take.

Third, I'll consider a theory based on a non-doxastic concept of knowledge, which I'll call *the non-doxastic theory*. I have in mind a suggestion of Bernard Williams' that finding knowledge concerns "finding somebody who is a source of reliable information about something."<sup>34</sup> This would typically, but certainly not always, involve finding someone with a true belief about the relevant matter, but that "not always" is enough to threaten the belief condition. So the non-doxastic theory maintains that while an utterance of 'S knows p' might be true even though S doesn't believe p, the following are necessary conditions on the truth of knowledge attributions:

- (ND1) An utterance of 'S knows p' is true only if p is true.
- (ND2) An utterance of 'S knows p' is true only if S is a reliable source of information about p, in virtue of there existing an "information-chain which starts

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<sup>33</sup> Thanks to Louise Antony for this point.

<sup>34</sup> Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 146-7. Cf. Craig, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-17

somewhere near the facts themselves” and terminates with S’s reliability vis-à-vis p.

Which of these three theories is best able to explain ordinary uses of ‘knows’? Though I don’t want to suggest that this catalogue is exhaustive, it seems to me that a theory of knowledge attributions should be able to explain the following facts about the use of ‘knows’:<sup>35</sup>

- I. **We use ‘knows’ to relay testimony.** If A and B are police, investigating a recent bombing, for example:  
A: Any information from the FBI about how the bomb was constructed?  
B: They know the bomb was homemade.
- II. **We use ‘knows’ to describe the beliefs of a third party, while presupposing the truth of the proposition in question.** If A and B are prosecutors, for example:  
A: What’s relevant is whether the defendant willingly committed a crime.  
B: Well, she knew that what she was doing was a crime.
- III. **We use ‘knows’ to guarantee the truth of some proposition.** If A and B are inspecting a specimen, for example:  
A: Can we be sure that this one is of the genus *Calcinus*?  
B: I know that this is a specimen of *Calcinus hazletti*.
- IV. **We use ‘knows’ to describe someone’s convictions, without suggesting that they are true,** as in (1) and (2), above.
- V. **We use ‘knows’ to indicate possessors of information who don’t believe.** If A and B are figuring out why the door at the supermarket automatically opens when they walk nearby, for example:  
A: How come it opens only when someone needs to go through?  
B: It has a sensor, which knows when someone’s coming.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> A complete account of ‘knows’ would describe and explain our use of knowledge denials as well. As mentioned above, it seems to me the *primary* use of ‘S doesn’t know p’ is to describe ignorance. Two problematic cases for the non-factive theory that require treatment in the future: (i) cases in which we ‘thought we knew’, for example, where the implication is that we *didn’t* know, despite being warranted in our belief, and (ii) cases in which a claim that someone knows is rejected on the grounds that the subject ‘only thinks that p’. Jack Woods made the importance of these cases clear to me. Space prohibits an adequate discussion here, but a first stab at a reply: the bulk of these will be cases of ‘knowledge-wh’, see §5.

<sup>36</sup> See Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 146. I take this case to be of the same kind as a case of ‘school boy knowledge’ (in which the studious but incredulous student knows the answers to the exam questions). See Radford, C., “Knowledge – By Examples,” *Analysis* 27 (1966), pp. 1-11.

- VI. **We use ‘knows’ to concede the reasonableness of believing something.** If B is resistant to the romantic avowals of A, but A makes a compelling case that his heart is in the right place, for example:  
B: I know you love me, but I just don’t believe it.<sup>37</sup>

It’s important to dwell on the fact that these seven types of cases involve quite different uses of ‘knows’, in the sense that the attribution of knowledge has a quite different purpose in the different kinds of cases. A theory of knowledge attributions should give a semantics for ‘knows’ that explains how this is possible.

#### *4.1 The Non-Factive Theory*

Suppose an utterance of ‘S knows p’ can be true when p is false, and suppose NF1 and NF2 are true. Immediately problematic, it seems, are cases of types I – III, where B implies that the known proposition is true. What explains this implication? I say that the answer to this question is not the same in all cases; this diversity of explanations reflects the diversity of uses that we have for ‘knows’, and I am not ashamed of the lack of parsimony. (Philosophers have made the mistake of focusing too closely on one or another particular way of using ‘knows’.) But the explanations I prefer are all more or less Gricean in flavor. I presuppose the following: that it is mutually assumed by speakers the people generally conform to a principle of conversational cooperation, which requires general, and mutually assumed, conformity to at least three maxims: that of Quality (‘Do not say anything you believe to be false, or which you don’t have reason to believe is true’), that of Quantity (‘Make your contribution to a conversation as informative, and only as informative, as is required’), and that of Relation (‘Make your contribution to a conversation relevant’).<sup>38</sup> Granted the relevance of utterances (1) and (2), explanandum IV is unproblematic.

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<sup>37</sup> Thanks to Elizabeth Barnes for the case. Juan Comesaña suggested, alternatively: ‘I know I’m going to die, but I don’t believe it’. I have to admit having trouble hearing these sentences the right way, but I don’t doubt that it’s just an oddity on my part. Familiar enough is ‘I know, I know’, in response to a persistent interlocutor, but it’s not obvious what to say about such cases.

<sup>38</sup> See Grice, H.P., *Studies in the Way of Words* (Harvard, 1989), pp. 26-9. Note a consequence: counterexamples to the theories considered here cannot be had by finding situations in which it would be inappropriate to attribute knowledge even though sufficient conditions for the truth of an utterance of ‘S knows p’ are met. Not all truths are relevant, and hence not all truths are assertable.

As a first gesture towards vindicating a non-factive concept of knowledge, note that the purpose of B's attribution of knowledge, in the examples for cases I – III, could have been achieved by using an uncontroversially non-factive expression. In the examples for cases I, II, and III, respectively, we could replace B's utterances with 'They said the bomb was homemade', 'She was quite sure that what she was doing was a crime', and 'Trust me, this is a specimen of *Calcinus hazletti*'. At least, these sentences could replace the originals with suitable but minor changes in the stories, e.g. if 'They said the bomb was homemade' were followed by 'But they still are unsure about what sort of timer was used'. Now when I say that we could replace the sentences above (using 'knows') with these other sentences, what I mean is that we could replace them, and something that would not change would be what B implied: that the bomb was homemade, that the defendant committed a crime, and that the creature is a member of *Calcinus*. This suggests – or so I want to suggest to you – that the implications are not to be explained by saying that 'S knows p' entails that p is true. But whether this is plausible hinges on the availability of adequate explanations of these implications.

Consider cases of type I. Since it is mutually assumed that speakers are conforming to Quantity and Relation, B here implies that she believes that the bomb was homemade, and that she wishes her interlocutor to believe this as well – for otherwise she would say, of the FBI, that they *think* that the bomb was homemade, but that they are wrong, or something to that effect. To attribute *knowledge* is to say something that entails that the FBI possesses epistemic warrant for their belief that the bomb was homemade. Recall that A is assuming that B will say (and only say) what is relevant. If B thinks that the bomb was not homemade, despite the FBI's warranted belief that it is, then she should not say anything that entails that their belief is warranted, i.e. anything that would misleadingly suggest to A that their belief is *true*, unless she were to explicitly add that their belief isn't true.<sup>39</sup> Given that she doesn't add that caveat, she implies that the FBI's belief is true. Compare this to another case of implication explained by the mutual assumption of conformity to Quantity and Relation. The local who says that there's a gas station around the corner implies that the gas station is open to the public, but 'There's a

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<sup>39</sup> Williamson writes: "If  $\Phi$  is a FMSO ['factive mental state operator'], the implication from 'S  $\Phi$ s that A' to 'A' is not cancelable." (*Knowledge and its Limits*, Oxford, 2000, p. 35). (1) – (4), above, put the lie to this.

gas station around the corner' does not entail that the gas station is open to the public. If I am right, in cases of type I, one who utters 'S knows p' implies that p is true, but 'S knows p' does not entail that p is true.

Consider, next, cases of type II. A asks about whether the defendant *willingly* committed a crime. Were B to reply that the defendant *thought* that what she was doing was a crime, A would have to ask herself: Why did B say 'thought' instead of 'knew'? As argued above, it would be misleading for one who doesn't believe p to say something that entails that someone else has epistemic warrant for believing p, without a caveat. Given that B *didn't* use 'thought', and *didn't* add a caveat to her knowledge attribution, our listener can assume that B accepts that the defendant committed a crime. This is half of why it would be fair to say that in this conversation it is *presupposed* that the defendant committed a crime – the other half being the form of A's question. Compare this to another case of presupposition. If a student, familiar with O'Brien's lectures, says to a fellow classmate: 'Professor O'Brien resisted the temptation to pontificate today', her presupposition is that O'Brien is prone to pontificate, and that she typically does so. But 'Professor O'Brien resisted the temptation to pontificate today' does not entail that O'Brien is prone to pontificate, nor that she typically does so. By the same token, I contend, the speaker who utters 'S knows p' in cases of type II presupposes that p is true, but 'S knows p' does not entail that p is true.

There are related cases that we could describe as cases of 'knowledge without justification', for example, Williams' case of the illicit lovers. It is perfectly appropriate for B to describe her husband as *knowing* about her affair with A, even if the husband lacks reasons, evidence, or even a reliable process that yielded his jealous belief.<sup>40</sup> The non-factive theory takes these to be cases of belief that enjoys success warrant. The husband's belief is warranted, because true – despite his lack of evidence. It seems to me, though, that what is being *done* by attributing knowledge in this case is the same as what is being done in the case of whether the defendant knew, above – namely, the beliefs of the third party are being described, with their truth presupposed.

Consider, next, cases of type III. Here I follow a suggestion of Austin's that first-person knowledge attributions are typically used to make a guarantee or promise *that*

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<sup>40</sup> Williams, op. cit., p. 147

something is the case, where such promises can be understood by analogy with promises *to do something*.<sup>41</sup> Austin noted that when someone says that *p*, or otherwise commits herself to *p*, and is challenged with something like ‘Do you know *p*?’, she may either affirm that she does know, or she may say: ‘No, but I think *p*’ or ‘No, but I believe *p*’.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, it is open to B, in the example for case III, to respond to A with: ‘I do not *know* whether the creature is a member of *Calcinus*, but I think it is’. It is the fact that B does *not* respond in this way that makes her claim to know a guarantee. Again, to affirm that one knows entails that one possesses epistemic warrant. A guarantee that *p*, in the form of an utterance of ‘I know *p*’, is comparable to a promise to  $\Phi$ , in the form of a utterance of ‘I fully intend to  $\Phi$ ’. In both cases the listener must ask herself: Why is my interlocutor saying what she is saying? And the answer ends up being, respectively: that she must be trying to ensure me that *p*, and that she must be trying to promise to  $\Phi$ .<sup>43</sup> But, just as an utterance of ‘I fully intend to  $\Phi$ ’ may suffice for a promise to  $\Phi$ , even though ‘I fully intend to  $\Phi$ ’ does not entail that I will  $\Phi$ , an utterance of ‘I know *p*’ may suffice (in cases of type III) for a guarantee that *p*, even though ‘I know *p*’ does not entail that *p* is true. (Austin says that if you turn out to be wrong, you did not really know, claiming an analogy with promising: if you fail to perform, you did not really promise. But this is wrong – broken promises are (sadly) a part of life. More to the point, even if I fail to promise (in some strict sense) when I utter ‘I fully intend to  $\Phi$ ’, if it turns out that I fail to  $\Phi$ , my utterance may still have perfectly true (i.e. I really did fully intend to  $\Phi$ ). I say the same about ‘I know *p*’, *mutatis mutandis*.)

This concludes my discussion of the pragmatics of the three cases suggestive of Factivity. The implications described here are common – I would venture to guess that cases of types I – III are the most common uses of ‘knows’ we have<sup>44</sup> – and this may account for the intuition that ‘S knows *p*’ entails that *p* is true. But, on the face of it,

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<sup>41</sup> See Austin, J., “Other Minds,” reprinted in *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 76-116, at pp. 98-103

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 77. See Weiner, M., “Must We Know What We Say?,” *Philosophical Review* 114:2 (2005), pp. 227-51.

<sup>43</sup> See Austin, *op. cit.*, and Searle, J., “Indirect Speech Acts,” in Cole and Morgan (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics III: Speech Acts* (Academic Press, 1975), pp. 59-82

<sup>44</sup> At least of ‘knowledge-that’; see §5.

cases of types V and VI are problematic, given NF1. So the non-factive theory must deal with these challenges to the belief condition.

First, I maintain that cases of type V do not threaten NF1 and the belief condition. For imagine that the sensor malfunctions, opening the door when no one is there. This situation could perspicuously be described as one in which the door ‘thinks there’s someone there, when there’s isn’t’. This is no more (and no less) natural than saying, in the first place, that the sensor knows when someone is coming. So there is no threat to NF1 that derives from this type of case – the connection between knowledge and belief is preserved. (Note that the same can be said for ‘school boy knowledge’ – e.g. ‘Funny that he thought the Battle of Hastings was in 1215, given that he knew the answers to all the other questions’.)

This does not answer the question, though, of what exactly is going on in cases of type V. I am inclined to say that the speaker engages in metaphor. We might say, inspired by Dennett, that an ‘intentional stance’ is adopted towards the door’s electronic sensor. This pretense involves the false (but perspicuous) attribution of propositional attitudes to the sensor (or the schoolboy, or whatever).

Consider, finally, cases of type VI. Given NF1, the speaker is either speaking falsely when she admits knowledge, or when she denies believing. There are cases of ‘knowledge without belief’ that I think are uncontroversial cases of irony or pretense, for example, if I am told that it is ‘really important’ that fill out some very unimportant forms correctly, I might respond with ‘I know, I know’ (picture the nodding). But, or so it seems to me, I am just humoring my interlocutor. I might as well have said, ‘Yeah, yeah’. Now I am unsure if this applies to the case described – ‘I know you love me, but I just don’t believe it’. My charitable instinct is to determine whether people make utterances of this type when they believe p (in which case, attempt to describe how the ‘I don’t believe it’ is an exaggeration) or when they don’t believe p (in which case, attempt to describe how ‘I know’ is some kind of pretense). As things stand, I don’t know which of these is the case.

#### *4.2 The Traditional Theory*

I'll grant that any theory employing a traditional concept of knowledge can handle cases of types I and III. I have addressed Williams' type-II case (of the jealous husband's knowledge) by appeal to an unorthodox externalist account of epistemic warrant, an account which is certainly at odds with traditional accounts of justification. It is open to the defender of a factive concept of knowledge, though, to adopt the notion of warrant I have adopted. Furthermore, the theory is neither better nor worse off when it comes to cases of types V and VI.

Crucial, then, will be the traditional theory's treatment of cases of type IV – the non-factive uses of 'knows'. The most promising route here is suggested by Richard Holton; concerning 'He gave her a ring studded with diamonds, but they turned out to be glass' and 'She knew that he would never let her down, but, like all the others, he did' he writes:

I suggest that these sentences work by projecting us into the point of view of the protagonist; let us call the phenomenon *protagonist projection*. In each case the point of view into which we are projected involves a false belief. We describe the false belief using words that the protagonists might use themselves, words that embody their mistake. So we deliberately use words in ways that do not fit the case.<sup>45</sup>

The details of Holton's account need not concern us.<sup>46</sup> The idea seems basically right above the case of the 'glass diamonds'. But there are several relevant differences between this case, and the cases of (1) and (2).<sup>47</sup> First, the speaker who says 'He gave her a ring studded with diamonds, but they turned out to be glass' will respond negatively to the question of whether the ring was really studded with diamonds. It's not clear how the ordinary person who utters (1) or (2) would respond to such a question (e.g. of whether people really knew stress caused ulcers). Non-factive uses of the other 'factive verbs' don't resemble the case of 'glass diamonds' in this respect. And someone who uttered (3), for instance, would most likely respond *affirmatively* to the question of whether the falsehoods were 'really' learned – though the Austinian question becomes salient here: 'really' learned, as opposed to what?

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<sup>45</sup> Holton, R., "Some Telling Examples: A reply to Tsohatzidis," *Journal of Pragmatics* 28 (1997), pp. 624-28, at p. 626

<sup>46</sup> E.g. the fact that not all "protagonists" are such that they "might use" words.

<sup>47</sup> I don't think the case of (2) can be explained by appeal to protagonist projection – it doesn't fit Holton's description, anyway. But I'll ignore that in what follows.

A second disanalogy is related to this. It is crucial to Holton's account that the false utterances be *deliberate* – i.e. the speaker must know that her utterance is false. This is crucial to distinguish Holton's *explanation* of type-IV cases (where an explanation involves an account of their pragmatic propriety) from an unlovely *dismissal* of type-IV cases (as mistaken misuse of the word 'knows'). Speakers who properly use the sentence 'He gave her a ring studded with diamonds, but they turned out to be glass' believe that no diamonds are made of glass – i.e. that 'He gave her a ring studded with diamonds' is false. But it is not plausible – at least not *as clearly plausible* as in the case of the 'glass diamonds' – to suppose that speakers who properly use sentences like (1) and (2) believe that nothing false can be known, or that 'Everyone knew that stress caused ulcers' is false. For these claims are not obvious to most people, even though most people can use and understand utterances like (1) and (2) perfectly well.

It is compatible with the fact that 'Nothing false can be known' is not obvious to most people that nothing false can be known. People can be wrong about such things. But if this is not obvious to most people, then it can't be that cases of type IV involve protagonist projection, because protagonist projection must be deliberate, and to be deliberate, speakers must know that nothing false can be known.

Finally, a third difference between the two cases. Diamonds (I suppose) are a natural kind, studied by geologists (or whatever); so we have independent scientific reason to believe that no diamonds are made of glass. It's on the basis of this prior knowledge that we conclude that 'He gave her a ring studded with diamonds, but they turned out to be glass' must be false. Knowledge (I submit) is not a natural kind, and even if it is, I don't think we have anything like *scientific* grounds on which to believe that nothing false can be known. The boundaries of the concept of diamonds are, in some significant sense, not ours to draw – nature draws them for us. But the boundaries of the concept of knowledge are not like this.

A further, and perhaps more important, reason we should prefer the non-factive theory, to the traditional theory plus a theory of protagonist projection, is that charity enjoins us to avoid positing systematic falsehood in ordinary talk.<sup>48</sup> If the Gricean explanations given above are adequate, as I've argued they are, then the traditional theory

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<sup>48</sup> See Hazlett, "Grice's Razor," §3.

takes on an *additional* cost that the non-factive theory does not. (Even though both, perhaps, will employ the notion of pretense in an account of type-IV cases.) I think this, along with the three differences noted above, is enough to turn the tide in favor of the non-factive theory.

#### 4.3 *The Non-Cognitive Account, Ambiguity, and the Conclusion of this Section*

What about the non-cognitive theory described above? I'll grant that it can nicely explain cases of types I, III, V, and VI. (Although, as mentioned, I'm not sure what's going on in cases of type VI.) The special problem for this theory, it seems to me, arises with cases of types II and IV, for in cases like this we use 'knows' to attribute belief to a subject – and this is one of the primary uses we have for knowledge attributions.<sup>49</sup> Now the problem is not that B's utterance in case II, for example, turns out to be false on this theory. It needn't – perhaps the defendant was a reliable source of information. The problem is that B has clearly implied that the defendant *believed* that she was committing a crime. That was the purpose of her utterance. If 'S knows p' doesn't entail that S believed p, whence the implication?

Just as any theory employing a non-factive concept of knowledge must explain why one who utters 'S knows p' typically implies that p is true, any theory employing a non-doxastic concept of knowledge must explain why one who utters 'S knows p' typically implies that S believes p. I appealed above to a conceptual connection between epistemic warrant and truth, to account for the former implication. But there is not – so far as I can tell – any such conceptual connection between knowledge, as conceived of by the non-doxastic theory, and belief. In any case, the least that can be said is this: I've tried to provide an account of the fact that one who utters 'S knows p' typically implies that p is true. The non-doxastic theory presently owes us an account of why one who utters 'S knows p' typically implies that S believes p.

As with the traditional theory, the non-doxastic theory must adopt some account – such as Holton's theory of protagonist projection – to deal with cases of type IV. It might

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<sup>49</sup> Note that this is not to say that knowing is believing. To use an example from above, one of the primary uses we have for first-person intention attributions is to make promises. But intending is not promising.

be argued that this cost is off-set by the fact that the non-doxastic theory needs no special pragmatic account of type-V cases. But, as argued above, it would be natural to attribute belief in such cases, as well as knowledge, so the non-doxastic theory claims no distinct advantage there.

Of these competitors, the non-factive theory is the best. It needs to attribute systematic falsehood in relatively few cases, and can elegantly explain the typical implication from knowledge attributions to the truth of the proposition known. But it is now time to reconsider a suggestion mentioned above: doesn't all this show that 'knows' is ambiguous? While I don't have anything like a proof that this is wrong, it may be helpful to consider what would be gained by this. Suppose knowledge (in one sense) involves epistemically warranted belief, and knowledge (in another sense) involves justified true belief, and knowledge (in a third sense) involves the possession of reliable information. Particular uses of 'knows', then, pick out one of these concepts. While this is inelegant, I don't think there's any obvious way to argue against it. But note well: Factivity promised to vindicate the traditional analysis of knowledge. The thesis of semantic ambiguity for 'knows' can't do that, for what we get on this picture is not one definition of knowledge but three. If 'knows' has a plurality of meanings, then from the linguistic point of view there's nothing about the traditional definition that makes it *the* definition, other than epistemological tradition! From the point of view of epistemological tradition, of course, that definition looks special. But linguistically it's just one among many. The upshot here is that *if* the truth condition is supposed to get linguistic support, *then* dismissing non-factive uses of 'knows' on the grounds that 'knows' is ambiguous will not work – for this undermines the supposed support for the truth condition.

In this section I've argued that a non-factive concept of knowledge is the best candidate to serve as the meaning of 'knows' in ordinary talk. Because I also claim no deep semantic kinship between the supposedly 'factive verbs', the argument of this section is not directly relevant to questions about the best semantics for 'learns', 'remembers', and 'realizes'. A treatment of these other words might look quite different from the treatment I've given for 'knows'. And again, the description of the various uses of 'knows' provided here (along with the theory designed to explain those uses) is not

claimed to be comprehensive – it represents a first attempt at, but I think a fair approximation of, an adequate description and theory of our ordinary use of ‘knows’.<sup>50</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

One of my aims here has been to convince you to abandon the idea that the ‘factive verbs’ form a *sui generis* semantic or syntactic category. Perhaps there is some *sui generis* semantic or syntactic category of expressions that deserves the name ‘factive verbs’ or ‘factive expressions’, but the list that philosophers usually offer does not comprise such a category. I have made as strong a case as I can for denying the claim that an utterance of ‘S knows p’ is true only if p is true, i.e. that ‘knows’ is factive. There are other expressions that are often called ‘factive’, including other two-place predicates relating a person to a proposition (e.g. ‘is aware’, ‘regrets’, ‘takes into account’, ‘forgets’), adjectives (e.g. ‘significant’, ‘tragic’, ‘relevant’), two-place predicates relating a proposition to a person (e.g. ‘bothers’, ‘amuses’), and nouns (e.g. ‘tragedy’, ‘coincidence’). What I have said so far is consistent with some or all of these expressions being ‘factive’, in some sense, though I am not worried if many or all of these turn out to be non-factive, given the line of reasoning presented here. Similarly, I am not worried that one can argue, by parity of the reasoning used here, against the idea that ‘sees’ (and others) are ‘success verbs’, i.e. against the idea that an utterance of ‘S sees x’ is true only if x exists.<sup>51</sup>

What I’ve proposed is consistent with the thesis that ‘knowledge-wh’ attributions (e.g. ‘S knows whether ...’, ‘S knows who ...’, ‘S knows what ...’, ‘S knows where ...’, and so on) *are* factive. Compare uncontroversially non-factive ‘telling-wh’ claims (e.g. ‘S told us whether p’) with ‘telling-that’ claims (e.g. ‘S told us that p’), which are standardly taken to be factive.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps the factivity of ‘knowledge-wh’ attributions has suggested the factivity of ‘knowledge-that’ attributions, but it should do this no more than

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<sup>50</sup> At least our use of ‘knows-that’; see below.

<sup>51</sup> Thanks to Tamar Gendler for this point.

<sup>52</sup> See Karttunen, L., “Syntax and Semantics of Questions,” in Hiz (ed.), *Questions* (Dordrecht, 1978), pp. 165-210 and Vendler, Z., “Telling the Facts,” in Searle, Keifer, and Bierwisch (eds.), *Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics* (Dordrecht, 1980). Note that the Gricean account of factivity appealed to above would not work for ‘telling-wh’.

the factivity of ‘telling-wh’ expressions should suggest the factivity of ‘telling-that’ expressions.<sup>53</sup> (Jonathan Schaffer, employing Google, measures the frequency of ‘knowledge-wh’ attributions at *four times* that of ‘knowledge-that’ attributions.) Note that none of this means that ‘knows’ or ‘tells’ is ambiguous, just that ‘S knows whether p’ has different semantic features than ‘S knows p’ – which is no surprise, and no threat to the univocality of ‘knows’.<sup>54</sup>

I’ve argued for a Gricean account of the fact that one who utters ‘S knows p’ typically implies that p is true, and against Factivity. By contrast with the Gricean account, Factivity is a *lexical account* of the typical implication – lexical, because the implication is explained by appeal to facts about ‘knows’ in particular – in this case, a necessary condition on the truth of ‘S knows p’. There is an alternative lexical account, however, that deserves consideration. This is the idea that the use of ‘factive verbs’ (e.g. an utterance of ‘S knows p’) always *presupposes* the truth of p. This thesis is standard among linguists. (Philosophers prefer the formulation in terms of entailment, criticized above.) This might be explained by appeal to the semantic meaning of ‘factive verbs’, or perhaps by appeal to the notion of conventional implicature – the important idea here is that it is something about ‘knows’, *in particular*, that explains the typical implication from an utterance of ‘S knows p’ to the truth of p.<sup>55</sup>

I leave open the question of whether the arguments above speak against this thesis, as I have claimed they speak against Factivity. But I’ll argue that a plausible lexical account of factivity, in terms of presupposition, does not support Factivity – and therefore, that it does not support the traditional truth condition on knowledge.

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<sup>53</sup> This picture is threatened by Jonathan Schaffer’s proposal that ‘S knows p’ is true iff S knows whether p is the answer to the contextually salient question. If this is so, then ‘knowledge-that’ attributions would ‘inherit’ the factivity of ‘knowledge-wh’ attributions. See “Contrastive Knowledge,” in Gendler and Hawthorne (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology, Volume 1* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 235-72 and “Knowing the Answer,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* forthcoming. While the thesis that ‘knowledge-that’ attributions and ‘knowledge-wh’ attributions are differently factive (as it were) is inconsistent with Schaffer’s reduction of knowing-that to knowing-wh, the thesis proposed here is not thereby committed to the view that knowing-wh reduces to knowing-that. *That* view is aptly criticized by Schaffer in “Knowing the Answer,” §2. It’s beyond the scope of this paper to discuss Schaffer’s many arguments for the reduction of knowing-that to knowing-wh; see “Contrastive Knowledge,” pp. 249-252 and “Knowing the Answer,” §5.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. the discussion of ‘French’ in Grice, H.P., “Aristotle on the Multiplicity of Being,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (1988), pp. 175-200, at p. 193.

<sup>55</sup> Thanks to Jennifer Nagel and Jim Pryor for suggesting this alternative. This is a quite different conception of presupposition than the conception employed in my discussion of type-II cases (§4.1). Cf. Stalnaker, R., “Pragmatic Presuppositions,” in *Context and Content* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 47-62.

Lexical presupposition is typically characterized as preserved under negation – if sentence  $S$  is one whose utterance always presupposes  $p$ , then an utterance of  $\sim S$  presupposes  $p$  as well. This is intuitively right in the case of ‘S knows  $p$ ’. An utterance of ‘S knows  $p$ ’ presupposes the truth of  $p$ , but in the same way, and to the same extent, as an utterance of ‘S doesn’t know  $p$ ’ presupposes the truth of  $p$ . To take our type-II example, just as B’s utterance of ‘She knew that what she was doing was a crime’ presupposes that what the defendant did was a crime, so would an utterance of ‘She didn’t know that what she was doing was a crime’.<sup>56</sup> Now I don’t know what exactly to say about utterances of these sentences when what the defendant did wasn’t a crime (in terms of their truth value), but I’m sure that no one will want to say that the truth of  $p$  is a necessary condition on *not* knowing that  $p$ , on the grounds that an utterance of ‘S doesn’t know that  $p$ ’ is true only if  $p$  is true, on the grounds that an utterance of ‘S doesn’t know  $p$ ’ always presupposes that  $p$  is true. But then no one should want to say that the truth of  $p$  is a necessary condition on knowing that  $p$ , on the grounds that an utterance of ‘S knows  $p$ ’ is true only if  $p$  is true, on the grounds that an utterance of ‘S knows  $p$ ’ always presupposes that  $p$  is true.

It seems to me, though, that the Gricean account proposed in §4 is superior to the thesis that an utterance of ‘S knows  $p$ ’ (or of ‘S doesn’t know  $p$ ’) always presupposes the truth of  $p$ . One reason why a non-lexical account is superior, if its explanations are adequate, is that its explanations appeal only to general claims about language and how we use it. As Robert Stalnaker notes, we “reduce the burden on semantics” if we can explain linguistic phenomena “in terms of truisms about conversation as a rational activity.”<sup>57</sup> In this respect, the Gricean account is simpler than the standard lexical accounts of factivity.

I have argued that a non-factive concept of knowledge is superior to competitors, when it comes to giving a theory of ordinary knowledge ascriptions. This means that traditional epistemology cannot appeal to ordinary language for justification for the standard truth condition on knowledge. But, moreover, given all this, traditional

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<sup>56</sup> See Grice, *op. cit.*, p. 279

<sup>57</sup> Stalnaker, R., “On the Representation of Context,” in *Context and Content* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 96-113, at p. 113. See Grice, *op. cit.*, p. 47 and 291, Davis, W., *Implicature* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 19, and Hazlett, *op. cit.*

epistemology and ordinary language epistemology (as we might call the theory of knowledge attributions) would both be best served by going their separate ways. We should not be dismayed, however, if we accept a plurality of concepts of knowledge – each suitable to the purposes and presuppositions of the theorist who proposes it. If anything, we should examine why we thought there was such a thing as *the* concept of knowledge in the first place – a project in genealogy that I wouldn't even know how to begin.\*

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