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Tamala L. Endriss

University of Missouri-St. Louis, tltvfb@mail.umsel.edu

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Justify This! The Roles of Epistemic Justification

Tamala L. Endriss
B.A. Philosophy and English, Siena College — Loudonville, 2015
A.S. Business Administration, Lake Superior College — Duluth, 2011

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Advisory Committee

Gualtiero Piccinini, Ph.D.
Chairperson

Jon McGinnis

Lauren Olin

[J]ustification is primarily a status which knowledge can confer on beliefs that look good in its light without themselves amounting to knowledge.

Timothy Williamson(2000),p. 9.

0. BACKGROUND

Suppose that Smith and Jones have applied for a certain job.¹ And suppose that Smith has strong evidence for the following conjunctive proposition:

(i) Jones is the man who will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his pocket.

Smith's evidence for (i) might be that the president of the company assured him that Jones would in the end be selected, and that he, Smith, had counted the coins in Jones's pocket ten minutes ago. Proposition (i) implies:

(ii) The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.

Let us further suppose that Smith sees the implication from (i) to (ii) and accepts (ii) on the grounds of (i), for which he has strong evidence. In this case, Smith is clearly justified in believing that (ii) is true.

But imagine, further, that unknown to Smith, he himself, not Jones, will get the job. And, also, unknown to Smith, he himself has ten coins in his pocket. Proposition (ii) is then true, though proposition (i), from which Smith inferred (ii), is false. In our example, then, all of the following are true: (ii) is true, Smith believes that (ii) is true, and Smith is justified in believing that (ii) is true. But it is equally clear that Smith does not *know* that (ii) is true; for (ii) is true in virtue of the number of coins in Smith's pocket, while Smith does not know how many coins are in Smith's pocket, and bases his belief in

¹ The following case study is taken directly from Edmund Gettier's (1963/2008) "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Some minor changes have been made to remove elements of the original language that are unnecessary for this paper.

(ii) on a count of the coins in Jones's pocket, whom he falsely believes to be the man who will get the job.

The above example, originally presented by Gettier (1963/2008), is one of many commonly used cases that philosophers present when discussing whether an agent has knowledge, and what the necessary and sufficient conditions are for an agent to have knowledge. Since Gettier's (1963) paper, epistemology has exploded with ideas of how to overcome the Gettier Problem. That is, epistemologists have actively sought out how to get around cases where an agent has a justified true belief, and yet, does not have knowledge.

Some epistemologists, including Nozick and Sosa, have tried to escape the Gettier Problem by stating knowledge is true belief plus something else, whereby removing the rather tricky element of justification, which seems to be the key player in Gettier Problems. Nozick (2008) considers variation and adherence conditions; Sosa (2008) highlights sensitivity and safety as possible additions to true belief—though he pushes for a revised safety condition; and still others suggest that any addition to true belief will cause issues.²

I side with Zagzebski, who contends that there is an issue between justification (or any addition to true belief) and truth, since what counts as justification can either be true or false, or completely unrelated to the proposition that the justification is intended to justify.³ The fact that the standard notion of justification permits that justification be true or false leads me to defend Timothy Williamson's (2000) view that knowledge is not

² See Zagzebski (2008) for more on issues associated with attaching additions to true belief.

³ However, as a brief aside, I would also suggest that including belief as part of the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge poses similar problems that justification has, since beliefs can also be true or false, or completely unrelated to the proposition.

analyzable, and therefore, justification is not a necessary condition of knowledge.

Knowledge, according to Williamson, is the most basic state of mind; it is a factive state of mind that cannot be explained away by analyzing it and picking it apart into smaller pieces. The reason we struggle to define knowledge, says Williamson, is that it is not neatly definable—at least in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Knowledge attaches to something in the actual world. Justification has no such requirement, nor does belief, which is the problem with thinking that justified true beliefs, or true beliefs plus something else, lead to knowledge.

The goal of this paper is to articulate the role that epistemic justification plays with respect to beliefs, not knowledge. I argue that justification has a pragmatic role as it relates to the believer, not only the belief, namely, that justification (I) is used to form beliefs and (II) can be used to alter the beliefs of others. To do this, I turn to Williamson's view of knowledge to show that justification is not a necessary condition for knowledge. Williamson's view paves the way for my contribution by reinforcing the idea that justification is not a necessary condition for knowledge and promoting a restricted view of justification.

First, I briefly elaborate on Williamson's view of knowledge as a factive mental state to make explicit the account of knowledge for which I am vying and to use as background information to aid in understanding Williamson's view on justification. Williamson's view will shed light on what I will argue, namely, that justification is beneficial for belief alteration for the agent as well as for others. Next, I move on to discuss justification. In this section I discuss what justification is and why it is a problem if we consider it one of the conditions of knowledge. I highlight the standard view of

justification as well as Williamson's (2000) view, and promote Williamson's (2000) account of justification—that justification is not just a good reason, or a set of good reasons, but a reason that is always known and true. Finally, I present some of the pre-existing roles of justification, namely, that justification leads an agent closer to true belief and, according to Williamson, justification justifies what is not known—e.g., a belief. I add to these pre-existing roles to suggest that justification plays a key role with respect to the *believer*, not just the belief, in belief formation and alteration.

I. KNOWLEDGE AS A FACTIVE MENTAL STATE

First, a brief recap of Timothy Williamson's (2000) knowledge-first view. Williamson proposes that knowledge is a factive mental state (FMS). This means that knowledge is only about truths (it implies truth), is stative and not a process, means that a person must grasp/understand the proposition before one can come to know it, is unanalyzable (i.e., is not a mental state plus some extra-mental state, and is the most basic FMS), and that all other FMSs imply knowledge.

In order to clearly grasp Williamson's view and its importance, we need to distinguish two different types of states of mind: factive mental states (FMS) and non-factive mental states (nFMS). As mentioned previously, FMSs imply truth, nFMSs do not. If we are in an nFMS and that nFMS connects to a proposition that is true, then we are in an nFMS that has a non-mental component. Why? Because if we are in an nFMS, then we are in an nFMS that includes some extra-mental condition (in the environment, such as truth). Such an example would be to "believe truly". "Believing" is a non-factive mental state because it *does not imply* truth (belief can be directed toward a proposition

that is either true *or* false), and truth is a non-mental component of the environment. So "believing truly" is a (non-factive) mental state, belief, plus a non-mental component, truth.

Williamson wants to make the distinction between FMSs and nFMSs clear. If he does not, then we may (continue) to presume knowledge is an nFMS plus a non-mental component.⁴ An example of an account of knowledge that construes it as including a non-mental component would be knowledge as justified true belief. We have an nFMS (belief) plus an extra-mental component (truth).⁵ Williamson does not agree that knowledge equates to justified true belief and supports his claim by defending Gettier who argued against the idea that justified true belief equals knowledge.⁶

Williamson thinks knowledge cannot be an nFMS for another reason. Recall that not all mental states lead to truth—we can have an attitude toward a false or a true proposition. If knowledge is an nFMS, then we can know a proposition that is true and we can know a proposition that is false. *But who is willing to accept that we can know something false?* We take knowledge to be much closer to truth than that. We think of knowledge as factual and reliable. You cannot rely on something that is false as if it were true. So, if knowledge is not an nFMS, then, Williamson argues, knowledge is a FMS. Knowledge is a FMS because an agent who knows that *p* has an attitude that is *always* directed toward the true proposition that *p*.

⁴ Williamson (2000) p. 28-30.

⁵ Williamson does not address whether justification is considered a mental state or an extra-mental component. However, he does make the claim that truth is not a mental state because it does not refer to a subject, like belief does. He only claims that because "believes truly" is non-mental, therefore "has a justified true belief" is likewise non-mental, namely because of the non-mental component of truth. In other words, regardless whether justification is mental, because it is attached to a non-mental component, truth, the concept "has a justified true belief" is non-mental, as is "believes truly". See Williamson (2000) p. 29 for more on this matter.

⁶ Gettier (1963/2008).

II. JUSTIFICATION—WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT CAN BE

Williamson's knowledge-first proposal should allow us to see some of the problems with thinking that justification is a necessary condition of knowledge. But, before we dive into why justification is an issue, I must first make it plain what I mean by "justification". There are two critical views of justification that I will take into account in this paper. The first is the standard view of justification, which claims that justification is having a good reason. I will elaborate on this standard view shortly. The second view concerning what justification is comes to us from Williamson's (2000) *Knowledge and Its Limits*. Williamson agrees that justification is having a good reason, however, he restricts what can count as justification. Williamson claims that what counts as justification is what is known, which also implies that it is also always true. That is, justification for Williamson is not merely having a good reason, but is also having a *known* (and therefore true) reason—i.e., premises that count as justification *must* be known. The standard view of justification has no such restriction. Justification, according to the standard view, is not *required* to be true.

II.1 THE STANDARD VIEW

As previously mentioned, we need to understand what I mean by "justification" before we can state why it is unnecessary for knowledge. First, epistemologists distinguish between propositional and doxastic justification. Propositional justification is when an agent has justification for a belief in a proposition. To put it another way, it is when an agent has a good *reason(s)* to believe a proposition. Recall the opening example.

Smith has good reasons to believe that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket, and that Jones will get the job. His propositional justification (his reasons, evidence) for this belief might be that: (i) the president of the company assured him that Jones would in the end be selected, and (ii) that he, Smith, had counted the coins in Jones's pocket ten minutes ago. Based on reasons (i) and (ii), Smith is propositionally justified to believe that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket, and that Jones will get the job.

Doxastic justification, on the other hand, is when an agent not only has reason(s) to believe a proposition (i.e. propositional justification), but also believes the proposition and believes it, at least in part, because of the reason(s) (i.e. propositional justification) he has. For the Smith and Jones case, Smith not only has propositional justification (i) and (ii) for the proposition, but he also believes the proposition at least in part because of (i) and (ii). That is, Smith not only has a reason to believe that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket, and that Jones will get the job, but he believes that this will be the case, at least in part because of reasons (i) and (ii).⁷

The problem with both types of justification, and with inferential justification in general, is that when an epistemologist thinks the agent has knowledge simply because an agent is doxastically justified and the proposition is true. That is, the problem with justification is that *justification is merely having a good reason(s) to believe a proposition, or reason(s) why we believe a proposition.*⁸ An agent can have a justified belief and the belief could be true; but, like in the Smith and Jones case presented above,

⁷For more on justification, see Hasan (2016).

⁸ Note: this is the rough definition of the standard view of justification, namely, that justification is merely having a good reason(s) to believe a proposition, or reason(s) why we believe a proposition.

the agent may be *lucky* to come to a true conclusion. Just because her belief is justified and true it does not imply that she *knows* the conclusion.

Note, that the mental state directly involved with justification is belief, not knowledge. That is, justification is *aimed* at making sure that the *belief(s)* that we hold are *more likely* to be true than false.⁹ Justification does not always guarantee that a belief *is* true, but simply that it is more *likely* to be true. Let's break this down. As previously mentioned, justification can either be true or false. Since justification can be either true or false, justification cannot *guarantee* that the belief it justifies *is* true (or even closer to the truth), because justification can be false. If justification is to lead a belief closer to truth, then justification should not be false—since its job is to lead to truth. If we say that justification that is false can lead to a true belief (or a belief that is closer to truth), then what work is justification doing for leading the belief closer to truth that belief could not do without the justification? If justification does not guarantee that the agent will obtain truth, and therefore the agent will obtain knowledge, then justification is not good enough for us to say that it leads to knowledge, when in many cases it can lead us to a false proposition—and an agent cannot claim to know a proposition that is false.

As happens daily, despite our best efforts, some of our pieces of evidence (which we use as justification)—be they from our senses, from the testimony of a witness of a crime, or from our own armchair conceptions—are simply false—and sometimes, we do not even realize that they are false at the time we use those pieces of evidence to justify a proposition. This lack of knowledge about the truth-value of justification is an issue if we

⁹ Watson (2016).

want to say that the justification we use is intended to lead us closer to truth, if, in fact, it may not do so because the justification may be (knowingly or unknowingly) false.

An agent can only be said to know p , if p is true. Under the standard view, justification can lead to either a true or false conclusion, which means that we either have a justified belief that is true by luck (the belief is luckily true because nothing guarantees its truth—we can have equally good reasons to believe something and that belief would be false), or we have a justified false belief.¹⁰ What, then, is leading the agent from a lucky, justified true belief to knowledge?¹¹ In short, justification is not a necessary condition of knowledge, so we need to say something different about it.

II.2 WILLIAMSON'S VIEW

Since the standard view of justification allows for justification to be false, which allows for the possibility that the belief it justifies to likewise be false, I propose that we take a look at Williamson's conception of what justification is to see whether we can refine justification in such a way that it will increase the likelihood that it will lead beliefs to truth, and therefore, knowledge. Williamson (2000) informs his readers that knowledge as a FMS "makes no use of such concepts as *justified*, *caused*, and *reliable*".¹²

Williamson is aware that knowledge is "sensitive" to justification, but this does not mean

¹⁰ Think of the Smith and Jones case above. Though Smith has a justified true belief that the person who has ten coins in his pocket will get the job, he does not know the conclusion because 1) Smith's belief is based on justifying why Jones will get the job, not him; and 2) Smith is lucky that the conclusion applies to him. So, Smith has a lucky, justified true belief because the justification for the conclusion and the conclusion *happen* to apply to him (without him knowing).

¹¹ Goldman writes about justification in his (1988) article "Strong and Weak Justification" in which he states: "Justification does not logically imply truth, so even if one has a justified belief it is still a matter of luck whether one gets truth, and hence a matter of luck whether one attains knowledge" (p. 64).

¹²Williamson (2000) p. 41.

that in order for an agent to have knowledge there needs to be justification.¹³ Let's cash out what Williamson means when he says knowledge is *sensitive* to justification.

Williamson directs our attention to justification early on in his (2000) book. He tells us that knowledge is what justifies, *not* what gets justified.¹⁴ So, knowledge can itself justify a proposition or a belief, but knowledge itself need not be justified. Here's why: earlier in his book, Williamson says that what counts as evidence is what is known.¹⁵ Something similar happens with justification: only what is *known* (or counts as evidence) can be used as justification. That is to say, agent A can justify proposition *p* if *and only if* what justifies *p* is known.¹⁶ But wouldn't this make knowledge self-justifying? Williamson does not think so. He explicitly states,

The account might be thought to make all knowledge self-justifying in an absurdly trivial way: one's knowledge is justified absolutely if and only if it is justified relative to itself. This objection would be fair if *the point of justification were to serve at its best as a condition for knowledge*. But on the present account that is not the point of justification. Rather, *justification is primarily a status which knowledge can confer on beliefs that look good in its light without themselves amounting to knowledge*.¹⁷

What Williamson says is that justification is not a condition *for* knowledge—i.e. knowledge need not be justified. Justification is needed for what is not known; what is known does not *need* to be justified, though what is known can be justified. Williamson also suggests that inferential justification might be crucial "to being in some mental

¹³ Ibid, p. 41 and Ch. 2.3-2.4 for further elaboration.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 185-86.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁷ Ibid; emphasis is mine.

states; [i.e.] having a proof is clearly a factive mental state".¹⁸ Because a proof consists of known propositions (i.e. a proof has proper justification), then we can be said to be in a FMS because a proof implies truth (knowledge and justification under Williamson's view) and a mental state that implies truth is a FMS.

While justification may bring it about that an agent is in a FMS, justification does not *necessarily* bring it about, nor is justification a necessary condition *for* knowledge. Let's walk through this.

(1) Justification may bring about a FMS. Williamson explains this in terms of proofs. A proof is a FMS because proofs are justified by known premises. That is, proofs are FMSs because each premise of the proof counts as a justification. Since what counts as a justification is what is known, then a proof that counts as justification, is also known. And if it is known, then it is a FMS. From these known premises, if they imply truth because they're known (under Williamson's view), we can infer a known conclusion.¹⁹ And if we have a conclusion (proposition) that implies truth, then we are in a factive mental state.

(2) Justification is *not* a necessary condition for an agent to be in a FMS. Simply put, if knowledge is a FMS, justification (or the evidence offered up) has to be *known* to count as justification, and knowledge cannot be self-justifying, then justification cannot be a necessary condition for an agent to be in a FMS.

Williamson says that justification is not required for an agent to have knowledge. We do not *need* justification if all that is necessary for knowledge is being in a FMS

¹⁸Ibid, p. 41.

¹⁹Arguments can be made against known logical consequence, but that is a debate that I will not get into here. See Dretske (2008) and Stine (2008) for more discussion on closure.

(which itself implies knowledge). Since being in a FMS implies truth (and knowledge), you don't *need* anything to *justify* knowledge, be it evidence or justification.

Justification, then, is not a necessary condition for knowledge. Justification is being in a FMS, which is only possible because knowledge is the most basic FMS, and having knowledge is the only way one can have justification (or evidence). The agent *only* has knowledge when s/he is *in* the appropriate mental state that implies truth.

III. ROLES OF JUSTIFICATION

Before we move on to discuss the roles of justification, let's recap what we know about justification. First, the standard view claims that justification is merely having a good reason(s) to believe something, with the jury still out on what counts as a "good" reason. The standard view claims that justification aids in directing beliefs closer to truth. The closer to truth a belief is, the closer to knowledge the belief is. From this stems the idea that knowledge can be broken down into justified, true belief. However, as it has been demonstrated by Gettier (1963/2008) and others, including Williamson (2000), the standard formulation of justified true belief equals knowledge does not hold up.²⁰ Many issues stem from the standard view of justification's inability to always (or at least reliably) lead an agent to truth, and therefore, knowledge, because what counts as justification can be false, and what is false cannot—i.e., has yet to be proven—lead to a true conclusion. In a similar vein, justification that is true does not necessarily lead to a true conclusion either—as Gettier showed. Since the standard view of justification cannot help us to discern the difference between a lucky, justified true belief and a justified false

²⁰ Gettier (1963/2008) (and Socrates before him in the *Theaetetus*) argued that justification is not sufficient for knowledge. Williamson makes the claim that justification is not necessary for knowledge. If both are correct, we need to find what epistemic role justification does play.

belief, justification is not doing the work it is claimed to do and it is not a necessary condition for knowledge.

Williamson's view is that justification, while not a necessary or sufficient condition on knowledge, can aid an agent in obtaining more knowledge via closure.²¹ As Williamson states, inferential justification might be crucial "to being in some mental states; [e.g.] having a proof is clearly a factive mental state".²² So, while Williamson's view of justification does not lead us to have justification as a condition for knowledge, it does have a benefit over the standard view of justification because Williamson's view of justification allows us to obtain knowledge under closure, a principle that the standard view of justification does not (consistently) have access to—since justification under the standard view does not have to be known.

III.1 PRE-ESTABLISHED ROLES OF JUSTIFICATION

Now, let's move on to discuss what justification *can* do for us, assuming that it is not a condition for knowledge. In what follows, I will discuss the roles that justification plays with respect to beliefs according to the standard view and Williamson's view.

The standard view is that justification aids in getting beliefs closer to the truth, and the closer to the truth a belief is, the closer it is to knowledge. But, because justification is only having a good reason(s)—whatever that means—and is not necessarily true (or known), it does not *guarantee* that the agent will be closer to the truth, nor can it reliably (or consistently) lead an agent closer to truth because we can use

²¹ The standard view of justification cannot rely on closure as a way to lead to knowledge because justification under the standard view is not necessarily true. That is, what counts as justification under the standard view does not have to be known, so we cannot rely on closure as a means of obtaining more knowledge—at least not reliably/consistently.

²² Williamson (2000), p. 41.

false premises as justification. And as of yet, false premises do not lead to true conclusions.²³ The problem with the standard view is that we could be using false premises—even though they may be "good reasons" to justify our claims without knowing that they are false. Which means, even if we get to a true conclusion, as in the Smith and Jones case, it will be difficult to argue that you have knowledge of the conclusion, especially when it is based on false justification! That is, you can easily have good reasons to believe something, which may be false, and those reasons will *not* lead you to a known conclusion, let alone a true conclusion—which is the entire point of having justification.

To demonstrate this, recall the Smith and Jones case from earlier. Smith has good reasons to believe that Jones will get the job: (i) he counted the coins in Jones' pockets and (ii) the boss told him that Jones would get the job. So, it makes sense that these good reasons would lead Smith to believe that (a) Jones will get the job and (b) that the person who will get the job has 10 coins in his pocket. But notice that the *justified* reasons (i) and (ii) do not lead him to *know* that (a) Jones will get the job, since (a) is false, and you can't know a false proposition. So, these justified reasons lead Smith *away* from the truth, not closer to it. And, secondly, Smith is *lucky* to know conclusion (b) from justified reasons (i) and (ii) since those reasons, though justified according to the standard view, are not the reasons *why* conclusion (b) is true. Conclusion (b) is true because Smith got the job and Smith has 10 coins in his pocket (neither of which Smith knows). Smith's reasons may lead him closer to the truth of (b), but he certainly does not know (b). He is merely *lucky* that the two reasons he has—(i) and (ii)—lead him to the truth of (b).

²³ I understand that even if justification were necessarily true, it does not guarantee the truth of what it justifies. But, the fact that what we can count as justification can be false, is more of an immediate problem to me at this point.

According to Williamson, justification's role is not to lead an agent to knowledge, but instead justification's role pertains to beliefs, and those things (e.g. propositions) that are unknown. He says the role of justification is to justify what is not known, such as beliefs.²⁴ Essentially, it is similar to the role the standard view of justification claims except that the restricted type of justification that Williamson proposes is more reliable²⁵ since what counts as justification is not merely having a good reason, but a known and true reason. What is not known—e.g. beliefs that do not amount to knowledge—is justified by what is known and true, which makes the unknown belief more likely to be true²⁶ and more compelling to others, since the belief is justified by true and known premises.

I must admit that though Williamson's view is better than the standard view of justification, it is not without flaws. The upside to Williamson's view is that we are able to get rid of the possibility that what counts as justification is a false premise. False premises, so far as we know, cannot reliably lead to true (let alone known) conclusions. So, if we want to say that justification's role is to lead a belief closer to truth, we need to restrict justification in such a way as to increase the likelihood that the justified belief is true. To do that, we need to eliminate the possibility that a false premise counts as justification. If we adopt Williamson's view of justification, we can do this.

The issue with Williamson's view is that justification that is true does not necessarily lead to a true conclusion, so even if we have all true and known premises,

²⁴ Williamson (2000), p. 41.

²⁵ For "reliable" think consistent and trustworthy, at least more so than something that can be false, since what is false does not lead to a true and known conclusion, but what is true has the potential to lead to a true and known conclusion.

²⁶ More likely to be true than if it were justified under the standard view of justification since, again, the standard view permits that a false premise can count as justification.

they may not lead us to a true or known conclusion. However, the likelihood that true and known premises will lead to true and known conclusions is greater than the likelihood that false premises will do so. So, Williamson's view of justification cannot guarantee that if we have all true and known premises, we will have a true and known conclusion, but at least we *know* that what we are counting as justification is not false. There may be something wrong with the inference made from premise (justification) to conclusion,²⁷ or some other reason, but we can be assured that the premises we are working with are not false—and having known and true premises is a much better place to start if we have to figure out (if) why our conclusion is not true than with having to question whether our premises are true.

III.2 JUSTIFICATION'S ROLES

We have discussed at length beliefs that are justified for a given agent. What about the formation of beliefs and how justification of beliefs can influence others? I will take up this question in what follows. I think that Williamson is right to restrict justification to what is known and say that restricted justification can be used to justify beliefs. However, I think justification is a key component to belief formation especially with respect to how others' beliefs are formed and altered.

²⁷ Were there space enough to discuss this, I would argue that this is what happens in the proposed Smith and Jones case. Unfortunately, I do not have the space to elaborate on this here. The Smith and Jones case can be seen as a semantic referent issue pertaining to the conclusion: that is, the person who gets the job who has ten coins in his pocket *only* refers to Jones, and never Smith. So, the conclusion Smith comes to know that (b) the person who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket (because Smith gets the job and has 10 coins in his pocket) is actually *not* true because "the person" and "his" referred to in (b) is Jones, not Smith [author unknown]. Mizrahi (2016) makes a similar claim, though with a different referent in mind, that Gettier cases are really a semantic or reference failure and not an epistemic failure.

First, I discuss beliefs. Beliefs are a distinct mental state. For Williamson, beliefs are an nFMS. That is, beliefs can be either true or false. I can believe, truly, that Smith is the one who will get the job, or I can believe, falsely, that Jones will get the job. In either case, I have a particular mental state that is non-factive. Another characteristic of beliefs is that beliefs are more than mere guesses, hopes, or wishful thinking. The agent who has a belief must accept the belief as true, or at least, the agent needs to accept that the belief is plausible/likely to be true. That is, an agent needs to be at least convinced that the belief is true. Why would an agent believe something they thought was not true? Let's look at an example to demonstrate my point. Take Smith and Jones again. Smith *believes* that Jones will get the job. Smith believes this proposition because he thinks it is true—and he has reason to think so. Smith is not simply sitting in a room full of candidates and picking one then claiming, "Jancy, over there, will get the job". If he did make such an exclamation with no reason for it, he would be merely guessing—he does not care what the outcome would be and he has no reason upon which to base his claim. His claim is simply random and he is epistemically indifferent to its truth value.

Notice, Smith does have (1) reasons to think that Jones will get the job and (2) the truth of that claim is epistemically valuable to him. If he is wrong, then perhaps the boss lied to him—which may be useful information should he be the one who is hired. If he is right that Jones will get the job, it means that he, Smith, will not. Not only is this important for him, personally, but the truth-value of his claim is important to him epistemically because it can lead him to form or justify other beliefs: such as, his new boss has lied to his face at least once, or he will have to look for another job, etc. Since Smith believes that Jones will get the job, he may seek out other possible job offers. If

Smith had no such belief, he may continue to hope that he will get this job and postpone looking for other jobs until he knows the outcome of this job—or at least, until he forms a belief that would cause him to question whether he will get this job. Smith's current belief can impact the beliefs that he forms later on. So, he is epistemically invested in the truth of the proposition.

Why does this matter? It means that beliefs are formed when one has reasons.²⁸

This is important not only for what the agent in question believes—say, Smith—but also for altering or influencing (i.e. forming) the beliefs of others. Having reasons for beliefs is important for a person because (1) we know that they actually have a belief and they are not merely guessing, and (2) because the agent can use these reasons (whether they are good or not) to convince people that they have a good belief.

Likewise, once we have a belief, we tend to share those beliefs with others—sometimes we share those beliefs to persuade them to change their beliefs so that they match our own. Being able to influence the beliefs of others is possible because, recall, belief formation stems from having reasons. Since justification is a type of reason,²⁹ this means that we can use our reasons to convince our comrades that they should believe what we do. This exchange—sometimes occurring in the form of an argument—is done by either removing or adding reasons. And, recall from the Smith and Jones example above, if Smith has a belief, he can use it to have other beliefs: if he believes Jones will

²⁸ Note, I did not say "good" reasons. We can form beliefs with bad reasons: such as "I don't think my daughter killed so-and-so because she just isn't the type of person who would do that". Bad reasons that lead to beliefs could be constituted as denial. Since we can form beliefs in such ways, we cannot say that only good reasons—whatever that means—lead to belief formation. This also means that if we accept the standard view of justification (as merely having good reasons), then any formed belief is not necessarily a justified belief, because not all formed beliefs stem from having "good" reasons.

²⁹ We have "good", "bad", and justified reasons to believe a proposition. I take "justified reasons" to mean Williamson's restricted view of what counts as justification. "Good" reasons are those reasons that would count as justification under the standard view.

get the job, he may believe he needs to look for a different job because this one is going to Jones.

Justification, then, can not only help us to justify beliefs, but it can also help us to alter the beliefs of others! That seems obvious—we do this all the time. Take Smith and Jones again as a prime example. Smith can convince Jones that the person who gets the job will have 10 coins in his pocket. Curious, Jones could inquire why Smith has the belief he does. Smith may reply: because (i) the boss told me that you are going to get the job and (ii) you have 10 coins in your pocket. Jones, previously unaware that the boss informed Smith that he would get the job, can now add (i) and (ii) to his set of beliefs—that is, if he thinks they are true. And, like Smith, *Jones* now has reasons to believe that he will get the job.

Recall that I presented two common views of justification: the standard view and Williamson's view. I also said that I support Williamson's restricted view of justification—that is, justification isn't merely having a good reason(s) to believe something, but what counts as justification must also be known (and, therefore, true). Here is why this distinction is so important and why I support Williamson's view of justification over the standard view: in short, given Williamson's view, justification does more work—that is, necessarily known and true justification is more convincing.

When it comes to convincing others that they should hold the beliefs that *we* have, it is more likely—if they are rational agents—to be persuaded by reasons that are known and true rather than reasons that *may* be true (or may be false).³⁰ If we assume that the

³⁰ I am suggesting that we should endorse Williamson's view of justification because it makes our justification more persuasive because not only do we know that our justification is known and true, but our listeners should also know that our justification is known and true, since what counts as justification is only what is known and true.

standard view of justification is right—that justification is merely having good reasons—then trying to convince our peers to change their mind by accepting our justification may be less influential, since what counts as justification under the standard view can include false premises. So, we could be causing our epistemic peers to change their beliefs because of a false premise(s) (i.e. reasons). That means, we are allowing our epistemic peers to accept false beliefs! Or, at least, accept beliefs that stem from (at least one) false premise. That means we are not moving our epistemic peers' beliefs closer to the truth, but further away—even if we do not intend this. If, however, we follow Williamson's prescription, we make justification more likely to do its job—since we are only accepting known premises as justification.

IV. CONCLUSION

To recap, I suggest that we need to get rid of the idea that justified true belief or justified true belief plus something else leads to knowledge. Gettier showed that justification is insufficient for knowledge and Williamson argues that justification isn't necessary for knowledge. At present, no account of justified true belief plus X accounts for knowledge. Williamson suggests that this is because knowledge is an unanalyzable factive mental state, whereas justified true belief or justified true belief plus X is a non-factive mental state plus a non-mental component(s). The issue I have with knowledge and tying it to justified true belief is that we are dealing with different mental states and no account of a non-mental component has been able to reliably lead us from an nFMS to a FMS. So, we need to separate knowledge from justified true belief.

Once we have separated knowledge from justified true belief, we can say something meaningful about both knowledge and justification. I focus on the role of justification. To begin, I discuss Williamson and the standard view of justification. Under the standard view, what counts as justification is having a good reason (with the jury still out on what constitutes "good"). Williamson proposes to restrict propositions that count as justification to *only* those that are known, and therefore true. So, if the proposition "Tamala is defending her thesis" is a known, and therefore true, proposition, it counts as justification. If the proposition is false or it is not known, it cannot count as justification. It could count as a reason, or even a good reason (perhaps), but not as justification (according to Williamson).

I support Williamson's restriction based on how justification relates to the *believer*, and not just the belief. I claim that justification is epistemically important for pragmatic reasons such as belief formation and alteration. Justification's relation to the believer has two parts: first, how justification forms beliefs, then why we care about the truth-value of justification. To begin, reasons (good, bad, or known) give rise to beliefs and influence ours and others' beliefs. Justification (under either view) is a type of reason. Justification is a means we use to convince others (and sometimes ourselves!) that we have a good (rational) belief, or that *they* should share our belief. If justification means that we have merely reasons (which are not necessarily true), and our peers accept those reasons, they are taking a gamble on accepting false reasons and potentially a false belief. If, however, we restrict what we mean by justification as those reasons which we know, then we will make justification more likely to do its job—leading the belief of an agent closer to truth. If the reasons we supply are much more likely to be true, this also means

that we can help aid our peers in removing any false or unknown beliefs—especially if those beliefs contradict the justified ones we present.

Secondly, the reason we care about justification's truth-value with respect to belief formation is because we want our beliefs to be true—or as close to true as possible. Since justification's overarching job is to lead an agent's belief closer to truth, it is epistemically advantageous to restrict what counts as justification so that it can lead our beliefs to truth more reliably. I claim Williamson's restriction does this because his restriction eliminates (potentially) false propositions as possible justification. That is, under the standard view, a false proposition can count as justification; under Williamson's restriction, these false (or even unknown) propositions cannot. False propositions *cannot* lead to a true and known conclusion, but true propositions can (though they don't always). Despite the fact that true propositions do not always imply true conclusions, the fact remains that true propositions are more likely than false propositions to lead to true conclusions, since false propositions never will. By implementing Williamson's restriction we can get rid of (potentially) false propositions as justification, and this means that our beliefs are more likely to be true and known.

In short, justification has two different types of roles: the first is to justify beliefs (which Williamson discusses), and the other is to form or alter beliefs (which I argue). Justification's overall role is to lead an agent to true beliefs: either after the belief is formed through justifying it or through the formation/alteration of the belief. In either case, for justification to do its job(s) more reliably, justification should not be false because false propositions cannot lead to true and known conclusions. To remove the possibility of having our beliefs formed or justified by false propositions, we need to

restrict what counts as justification to only those propositions that are known, and therefore true.

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