

Kumārila and knows-knows¹

This paper defends a principle that promises to help illuminate the nature of reflective knowledge. The principle in question belongs to a broader category called knows-knows principles, or KK principles for short – such principles say that if you know some proposition, then you’re in a position to know that you know it.

KK principles were prominent among various historical philosophers and can be fruitfully integrated with many views in contemporary epistemology and beyond – and yet almost every contemporary analytic epistemologist thinks that they are false.

Regarding their historical pedigree: they’ve been endorsed by Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Averroes, Aquinas, Spinoza, and Schopenhauer, among others [20].

Regarding integration with contemporary epistemology: as I will show in a later section of this paper, the particular KK principle I will be defending can be seen as a natural extension of contemporary work regarding testimony, the transparency of belief, and epistemic disjunctivism.

Regarding integration with views beyond contemporary epistemology: many working in the philosophy of language, game theory, and computer science assume the existence of common knowledge. Common knowledge involves everyone knowing some proposition, everyone knowing that everyone knows it, everyone knowing that everyone knows that everyone knows it, and so on – something that popular arguments against KK principles would deem impossible [16, 169-70].

Unfortunately, KK principles have fallen out of favor in contemporary analytic epistemology. As Timothy Williamson writes, “It is widely, though not universally, acknowledged that the KK principle is false” [35, 147]. Louise Antony refers to KK as “the principle, roundly rejected by epistemologists of almost every stripe ...” [3, 12].

But as I hope to show in this paper, KK principles have more going for them than many in contemporary analytic epistemology suppose. In

¹Thanks for comments to Dan Arnold, Robert Audi, Paul Blaschko, Blake Roeber, John Taber, Fritz Warfield, and three anonymous referees for this journal.

particular, as I will argue, there is a plausible KK principle defended by a seventh-century Indian philosopher named Kumāṛila.

One distinctive thing about Kumāṛila's KK principle is that it is externalist in character.² As I shall be using the term, *internalists* think that the key components of knowledge depend on our introspectable states, while *externalists* deny this. Traditionally, defenders of KK principles have been internalists. As David Hemp puts the point in an encyclopedia article on KK principles:

It is natural for internalists to endorse something like the KK principle. For knowing that one knows that p is primarily a matter of knowing that one's belief that p is warranted, and it is natural for internalists to say that one is always in a position to know whether one's beliefs are warranted. ... It is also natural for externalists to reject this principle. For, if warrant may be external to our cognitive perspective, then there is no special reason to expect those who know that p to be in a position to know that their belief that p is warranted. [19].

In the course of defending Kumāṛila's KK principle and the account in which it is embedded, I will show how it harmonizes with several contemporary views from the externalist tradition, some of which Kumāṛila himself anticipated.

My paper proceeds as follows. First, I introduce three popular arguments against KK principles. Next, I introduce Kumāṛila's KK principle and some related views of his regarding knowledge, which allows me to show how Kumāṛila can respond to the three arguments, assuming his views on knowledge are plausible. Finally, I show that Kumāṛila's views on knowledge are both plausible and a natural extension of recent work in contemporary analytic epistemology.³

² Thanks to Dan Arnold for comments which helped me to see that I should emphasize this point.

³ At the outset, one might have the following worry: there are multiple KK principles, so perhaps the disagreement here is merely verbal. In other words, perhaps contemporary analytic epistemologists reject one sort of KK principle and those outside contemporary analytic epistemology accept a different sort of KK principle. In response, it's worth noting that I will discuss three arguments against KK principles: the demandingness argument, the independent check argument, and the safety argument. The first, the demandingness argument, is avoided simply by endorsing KK principles of a particular

1. Three popular arguments against KK

Let me start by stating three popular arguments against KK principles made by contemporary analytic epistemologists. (In laying them out in the way I do, especially with regards to the second and third argument, I am closely following the work of Daniel Greco, who is also engaged in the project of defending KK principles [16], [17]. His work has also influenced the way I initially framed the contrast between contemporary analytic epistemologists, who are quite negative regarding KK principles, and others, who are much more positive.)⁴

I call the first argument the “Demandingness Argument.” KK principles say that in order to know, you must meet some conditions. The demandingness argument says that these conditions are too demanding – they’re too hard to meet. In particular, animals and small children cannot meet them.

What makes the conditions so demanding? KK principles say that in order to know some proposition, one must be in a position to know that one knows it. The proponents of this argument add a key premise: being in a position to know that one knows something requires an awareness of one’s mental states. After all, how could I know that a belief of mine amounts to knowledge if I don’t even have an awareness of my own beliefs? Unfortunately, young children and animals arguably lack an awareness of their own mental states. So, if the key premise is right, and being in a position to know that one knows requires an awareness of one’s mental states, KK has

sort, rather than of a different sort. But the demandingness argument is not the strongest argument against KK principles. Timothy Williamson, one of the people I cited as rejecting KK principles, himself notes that there are KK principles that avoid the demandingness argument [34, 115] and Louise Antony, the other person I cited, formulates several KK principles, one of which avoids the demandingness argument [3, 12]. Rather, the two I cited as rejecting KK principles rely on the other arguments; Williamson relies on the safety argument [34, 114-9], while Antony defends her claim by citing a paper by Georges Rey [3, 16], who in turn relies on the independent check argument [28, 36]. The safety argument and the independent check argument threaten the principle accepted by Kumārila, thus the disagreement between Kumārila and those like Williamson and Antony is not merely verbal. Thanks to Ted Warfield for pressing me on this point.

⁴Thanks to an anonymous referee for this journal for suggesting I clarify that my paper is meant to help advance this project that Greco is also working on.

the implausible consequence that animals and little children lack knowledge.⁵

I call the second argument, following, Daniel Greco, the “Independent Check Argument” [16, 171]. This argument assumes that in order to come to know that a belief amounts to knowledge you must use a different source from the source of the original belief. For example, suppose you believe that your cat is on the couch because you see her there. To come to know that this belief amounts to knowledge, you need to use a different source, e.g. having your eyes checked.

When the source of your belief that the cat is on the couch (sight) is different from the source of your belief that you know (having your eyes checked), it’s possible for one source to be faulty and the other not. For instance, it’s possible for your sight to produce knowledge that the cat is on the couch, because your sight is working well, but for the vision check not to produce knowledge that your vision is working well, because your optometrist is, unbeknownst to you and despite appearances to the contrary, a fraud.⁶ So, if the key premise is right, and in order to come to know that a belief amounts to knowledge you must use a different source from the source of the original belief, then it follows that KK principles will be false in some cases, viz. those in which one source is faulty and the other not.

I call the third argument, again following Greco, the “Safety Argument.” This argument, which comes from Timothy Williamson, rests on a principle that says that knowledge is safe from error. More fully, the principle says that if you know a proposition, then you could not easily have believed a proposition on a similar basis and been mistaken.⁷ This sort of principle is known as a “safety principle.”

Williamson’s argument is rather complicated. The basic idea behind the argument is that if the safety principle is right, then being in a position to know that you know will require more than knowing. In particular, being in a position to know that you know some proposition requires not merely that you know the proposition, but also that you’re in a position to be safe from error in believing that you know it. And Williamson has a key premise, viz. that there are cases in which you know a proposition but are not in a position to be safe from error in believing that you know it. Williamson defends his

⁵ For this sort of argument, see e.g. [16, 173-4].

⁶Thanks to an anonymous referee for this journal for helping me clarify this example.

⁷ Here’s a more formal statement of this principle from Williamson: “If at time t on basis b one knows p , and at a time t^* close enough to t on a basis b^* close enough to b one believes a proposition p^* close enough to p , then p^* should be true” [34, 102].

key premise by invoking a complex example; I have saved exposition of this example for Section 3.

In sum, in this section we have seen three popular arguments against KK principles, each of which has a key premise. The first argument says that KK principles are overly demanding. It relies on the key premise that being in a position to know that you know requires having an awareness of your mental states. The second argument says that KK principles face a problem thanks to the fact that different sources of belief can differ in their reliability. It relies on the key premise that in order to be in a position to know that a belief amounts to knowledge, you must use a different source from your source for the original belief. The third argument says KK principles are incompatible with safety principles. This argument relies on the key premise that there can be cases in which you know a proposition but are not in a position to be safe from error in believing that you know the proposition.

2. Kumārila's statement of KK and a response to the first two arguments against KK

In this section, I will introduce Kumārila's KK principle and explain how he can respond to the first two arguments against KK. In the next section, I will explain how he can respond to the third argument against KK. In these sections I will not be defending Kumārila's views, but simply introducing them – in my final section, I show how the views may be defended.

In order to understand Kumārila's KK principle, we have to understand his doctrine of Svataḥ Prāmāṇya.⁸ Explanation of this doctrine is somewhat difficult for two reasons: (i) he wrote in Sanskrit and there are some questions about how to translate Sanskrit into English, (ii) the relevant passage in Kumārila's text is somewhat obscure – different commentators interpret him in different ways. Regarding translation from Sanskrit to English: I will use a translation that I think is arguably faithful, with an eye towards producing a defensible account. Regarding interpretation: various scholars, such as Daniel Arnold [4], [5] and John Taber [31] argue that the best interpretation of Kumārila's doctrine of Svataḥ Prāmāṇya is that of Pārthasārathi, who wrote in the tenth century and I will follow them in using Pārthasārathi's interpretation.

⁸For a helpful textual exegesis, see [21].

I will first introduce the doctrine of Svataḥ Prāmāṇya with an example. Suppose you see your pet cat from five feet away sitting on the couch and form the belief that she is on the couch. Then you begin to wonder, “does my belief count as knowledge?” On one view, in order to know that you have knowledge, you have to draw on some other source of knowledge, e.g. getting your eyes checked to confirm that your vision is accurate. On another view, you are in a position to know that you know she’s on the couch merely through seeing her there. You don’t need to gather any more information or perform any other checks.

It is this second view that a defender of Svataḥ Prāmāṇya would endorse. “Prāmāṇya” means the property of being knowledge, and “Svataḥ” means intrinsic. A defender of Svataḥ Prāmāṇya would say that your being in a position to know that you have knowledge that your cat is on the couch is svataḥ (intrinsic) to its pramāṇa (source of knowledge) that your cat is there. In other words, it comes from your perception of the cat; you don’t need an additional source to be in a position to know that you know. More generally, Svataḥ Prāmāṇya is the idea that whenever one acquires knowledge one is thereby in a position to know that one has knowledge. And one’s being in a position to know comes entirely from the original source of knowledge; no additional checks are required.

In order to further clarify this doctrine, it is helpful to note that Kumāriḷa means to be denying a view held by certain Buddhists that in knowing, one is always aware of one’s own mental states [31, 213]. Instead, as John Taber writes (using slightly different epistemic terminology):

... the validity of a cognition is something to be read off from the object, not from the cognition itself. Certainly, when a cognition occurs, there is no awareness explicitly referring to the cognition of the form ‘I am a valid cognition; validity belongs to me’ ... The object absorbs all our attention in cognition; cognition itself is invisible ... and does not present itself to our awareness [31, 213-4].

In other words, according to Svataḥ Prāmāṇya, it is not the case that when you look at the cat you are provided with an awareness of your mental states. Rather, when you do so you also have some sort of reason for thinking that your cognition amounts to knowledge. In other words, you have the key

epistemic components required for knowing that you have knowledge that the cat is on the couch.⁹

Given this, I can clarify what I mean by the term “position to know.” As I will use the term, it means possessing the epistemic properties required for knowledge. This is similar to the way David Chalmers uses the term when he writes: “A subject *s* at time *t* is in a position to know *S* when it is possible that *s* comes to know *S* at some later time *t*’, starting from *s*’s position at *t* and without acquiring any further empirical information” [9, 49].

On this use of “position to know,” one can be in a position to know *p* even if one does not believe *p*. Likewise, one can be in a position to know *p* even if one does not possess the concepts required to formulate the thought that *p*. For example, suppose Ann learns that her father has a sister. Even if she lacks the concept ‘aunt’ or does not have a belief as to whether she has an aunt, she is still in a position to know that she has an aunt – at least as I am using the term “position to know.” This is because she possesses the epistemic properties required for knowledge; it is possible to come to know that she has an aunt starting from her position and not acquiring any further empirical information.¹⁰

In sum, we can state the KK principle endorsed by Kumāriila as follows: whenever one acquires knowledge via a source of knowledge, one is thereby in a position to know that one knows. And one’s being in a position to know comes entirely from the original source of knowledge; no additional checks are required. In saying that one is in a position to know, what is meant is that one possesses the epistemic properties required for knowledge.

Once we see this, we can immediately see how Kumāriila can respond to the first two arguments against KK. First, there is the Demandingness Argument. This relied on the key premise that being in a position to know that you know requires having an awareness of your mental states. But Kumāriila can reject this premise simply by understanding the notion of being

⁹ At this point, the account is still somewhat abstract; it could be filled in further by elaborating the nature of this reason. But for my purposes this is not crucial; I can explain how Kumāriila would respond to the three arguments against KK without making reference to exactly how he understands the nature of the reason. But for those who are curious: as Pārthasārathi interprets him, Kumāriila’s view is that in perceiving we have “a distinct sense of the reality or ‘thusness’ of the object” [31, 214]. Thanks to Paul Blaschko and John Taber for suggesting I elaborate on this.

¹⁰ Thanks to Robert Audi for encouraging me to clarify the relationship between belief, concept possession, and being in a position to know.

in a position to know in a particular way – in a way on which being in a position to know does not require this awareness. In other words, the particular KK principle that I am attributing to Kumārila uses a sense of “position to know” on which this premise is false. So Kumārila can avoid the implication that children and small animals lack knowledge.

Second, there is the Independent Check Argument. This relied on the key premise that in order to come to know that a belief amounts to knowledge you must use a different source from the source of the original belief. But this is a premise that Kumārila explicitly denies, thanks to his view that one’s being in a position to know that one knows comes entirely from one’s original source of knowledge. So long as this view is well-motivated, he will have a response to this argument. Just to be clear, at this point I am not defending this view of Kumārila’s, but simply pointing out that, assuming it is plausible, he has a response to the Independent Check Argument. In my final section, I will argue that this view is plausible.

Section 3. More on Kumārila’s view of knowledge and a response to the third argument against KK

In order to understand how Kumārila can respond to the third criticism of KK, we will have to say a little more about Kumārila’s view of knowledge. In particular, we will have to say something about the way he understands perceptual error. At one point, Kumārila talks about perceptual error using an example in which one looks at mother-of-pearl, but mistakenly comes to believe it is silver. In this sort of case, according to Kumārila, one correctly perceives the mother-of-pearl, but then misapplies the concept ‘silver.’ Importantly, then, misperception is not a type of incorrect perception. Rather, Kumārila thinks that all perceptions are accurate – the mistake here arose out of a misapplication of a concept. As John Taber puts the point, “... erroneous perceptual cognitions are effectively excluded from the category of perception. ... The idea ... is simply that perception is the arising of a cognition that *accurately represents* its object” [32, 59].¹¹

Just to be clear, the point is not that perception and misperception always yield internal differences. On the contrary, at least initially, a hallucination

¹¹ See also [27, 76]. As Śabara, another philosopher writing in the tradition puts the point, “what is real perception is never wrong and what is wrong is not perception” [27, 76].

may seem the same from the inside as a veridical perception. Rather, the idea is that the way we individuate sources of knowledge is externalist, so that what counts as my source of knowledge doesn't merely depend upon what is going on internally.¹²

With this idea in place, I can explain how Kumārila would respond to the third argument against KK. The explanation is a little technical, so if you don't like technical explanations, you should just skip to the end of the section; nothing in subsequent parts of this paper hangs on your understanding the explanation.

Here is the explanation. Recall that Williamson's argument relies on a key premise that there are cases in which you know a proposition but are not in a position to be safe from error in believing that you know it. In other words, there are cases in which both (i) you believe a proposition on some basis, b_1 , and could not easily have mistakenly believed a proposition on a similar basis to b_1 and (ii) you are not in a position to believe that you know the proposition on some basis, b_2 , in such a way that you could not easily have mistakenly believed a proposition on a similar basis to b_2 .

Williamson defends this key premise by spelling out such a case. His case involves a character named Mr. Magoo, who is looking out his window at a tree and making judgments about how tall the tree is. As a matter of fact, the tree is 666 inches tall. Mr Magoo has good enough eyesight that he can tell certain things, e.g. that the tree is not 60 or 6000 inches tall, but his eyesight is not sharp enough to tell the height to the nearest inch. [34, 115].

To make his case work, Williamson has to rely on the crucial claim that, for any height in inches, i , the following two beliefs have similar bases: Mr Magoo's belief that he knows the tree is not i inches tall, and Mr Magoo's belief that he knows the tree is not $i + 1$ inches tall. This crucial claim is supposed to follow from the fact that Mr Magoo's eyesight is not sharp enough to tell the height to the nearest inch. Thanks to this fact, according to Williamson, beliefs regarding the height of the tree that differ merely by an inch are similar enough to count as being formed on similar bases. [34, 115].

Using this crucial claim, Williamson can argue that he has provided a case in which Mr Magoo has a belief that amounts to knowledge and yet is not in a position to believe that this belief amounts to knowledge in a way that is safe from error. In particular, take the largest i below 666 such that Mr Magoo's belief that the tree is not i inches tall amounts to knowledge.

¹²Thanks to an anonymous referee for this journal for pressing me on this.

Call it h . By assumption, then, Mr Magoo's belief that the tree is not h inches tall amounts to knowledge. So all Williamson has to show is that Mr Magoo is not in a position to believe that he knows the tree is not h inches tall in a way that is safe from error.

Suppose Mr Magoo forms a belief that he knows the tree is not h inches tall. By the crucial claim regarding bases, this belief will be formed on a similar basis to the belief that Mr Magoo knows the tree is not $h + 1$ inches tall. But this second belief is false. By assumption, h is the largest i such that Mr Magoo's belief that the tree is not i inches tall amounts to knowledge, thus his belief that the tree is not $h + 1$ inches tall does not amount to knowledge. And so it follows from Williamson's safety principle that Mr Magoo's belief that tree is not h inches tall does not amount to knowledge. So we have a case in which Mr Magoo's belief is safe from error, but his belief that he knows is not safe from error.

On Kumārila's account, Williamson's crucial claim is mistaken. Recall that the crucial claim is that, for any height in inches, i , the following two beliefs have similar bases: Mr Magoo's belief that he knows the tree is not i inches tall, and Mr Magoo's belief that he knows the tree is not $i + 1$ inches tall. Kumārila's KK principle says that whenever one acquires knowledge via a source of knowledge, one is thereby put in a position, thanks to the same source of knowledge, to have knowledge that one knows. Applied to this case, it says that when Mr Magoo comes to know the tree is not h inches tall (by perception), he also comes to be in a position to know that he knows this, and this also comes via perception. Meanwhile, Williamson's argument assumes that when Mr Magoo believes the tree is not $h + 1$ inches tall, he lacks knowledge. Thus, he is misperceiving, and thus, as we saw in this section, according to Kumārila's account, he is using a different basis than perception. In short, his belief that the tree is not h inches tall is formed via perception and his belief that it is not $h + 1$ inches tall is not formed via perception, so they are formed on different bases. It is worth noting that this response allows Kumārila to reject Williamson's key premise without rejecting safety principles.

Again, it is worth pointing out that at this point I am not defending this view of Kumārila's about difference in bases, but simply pointing out that, assuming it is plausible, he has a response to the safety argument.

In sum, Kumārila can answer the safety argument, which means he has responses to all three of the popular arguments against KK, assuming his views on knowledge are plausible.

4. Defense of Kumārila’s views

I have now explained how Kumārila can respond to three arguments against KK principles. While his response to the demandingness argument simply relied on interpreting “position to know” in a particular way, his second two responses relied on certain of his views about knowledge. So they will only be defensible if these views are defensible. But there is good reason to think they are.

Let us start with Kumārila’s response to the independent check argument. This relied on the view that in being in a position to know, one did not need an additional check. That is, it relied on the view that whenever one acquires knowledge via a source of knowledge, one is thereby in a position to know that one knows and one’s being in a position to know comes entirely from the original source of knowledge.

I will outline two ways to defend this view, one that appeals to similar views in the epistemology of testimony, another that appeals to similar views regarding the transparency of belief.

First testimony. A core issue regarding the epistemology of testimony results from what Jonathan Adler calls the “Vulnerability Problem,” viz. that often in cases of testimony, we depend on the word of others and cannot independently verify their accuracy [1]. In an effort to avoid skepticism about testimonial knowledge, many endorse the view that C. A. J. Coady calls “non-reductionism,” viz. that one can gain knowledge from testimony without using another source to confirm that the testifier is reliable [10, 149].¹³

It is natural to extend this idea to knowledge about testimonial knowledge. Just as we often cannot independently verify the accuracy of testifiers, we often cannot independently verify that we’ve gained knowledge via testimony. Again, in an effort to avoid skepticism about knowledge that one knows via testimony, it seems plausible to endorse the idea that one can gain knowledge that some belief acquired via testimony amounts to knowledge without using another source to confirm that one has indeed gained knowledge.

Just to be clear, one does not have to take this natural step; it’s possible to hold that in cases in which we’re vulnerable, we gain knowledge via testimony,

¹³ For a list of many who endorse this view, see [22, 186].

but are not in a position to know that we know. What I'm emphasizing here is that avoiding this natural step seems to leave us in a somewhat skeptical position. For example, suppose that I am visiting a new city with a friend. Lost, I stop a stranger and ask for directions. I then go back to my friend who hasn't heard my exchange with the stranger. My friend, wondering if I got the information, asks me, "Now do you know if it's to the right or to the left?" It would be somewhat unusual to respond: "I don't know if I know or not; I wasn't able to verify the stranger's reliability."

Typically, it would be more appropriate to respond: "Yes; now I know it's to the right." Assuming there is a tight connection between the appropriateness of asserting something and being in a position to know it, e.g. that it's only appropriate to assert something if you're in a position to know it,¹⁴ this evidence suggests that we often think testimony, even in positions of vulnerability, puts us in a position to know that we know things, as opposed to merely allowing us to know them. In particular, because this utterance is appropriate, it follows that I am in a position to know what is asserted, viz. that I know it's to the right, and thus it follows that I am in a position to know that I know it's to the right.

Once one endorses this sort of view in the case of testimony, it seems natural to extend it to other domains, such as perception. For example, it appears that one has a similar vulnerability regarding perception: it is typically hard to independently verify that our perceptual faculties are accurate. Thus, to avoid undue skepticism, it seems plausible to endorse the idea that one can gain knowledge that some belief acquired via perception amounts to knowledge without using another source to confirm that one has gained knowledge. Indeed, the case regarding perception is, if anything, more compelling than the case regarding testimony because it is hard to see how one can independently verify that one's perception is reliable; what other source could one use that wouldn't in some way rely on perception?¹⁵

¹⁴ The position that an assertion is only appropriate if you're in a position to know is endorsed by Jonathan Kvanvig, Jennifer Lackey, Ishani Maitra and Brian Weatherson among others. Some endorse the even stronger rule that an assertion is only appropriate if you know; this has been defended by Jonathan Adler, Keith DeRose, Pascal Engel, John Hawthorne, Steven Reynolds, Jonathan Schaffer, Jason Stanley, and John Turri, among others. For a list of references, see [25].

¹⁵ This sort of argument regarding perception has been given by some recent epistemologists, most notably William Alston [2]. The parallel between testimony and perception here has been noted by Dan Arnold [4].

It is worth noting that this sort of motivation I have sketched regarding testimony was part of Kumāriḷa’s reason for endorsing his KK principle. In particular, he was concerned to show that one could know one was gaining testimonial knowledge from certain religious texts – the Vedas [31, 204-5]. And he stressed that in the absence of principles like his KK principle, one would be forced into skepticism on various matters, thanks to an inability to independently verify one’s sources of knowledge [31, 204].

Another way to defend Kumāriḷa’s view comes from parallels with transparency. A number of epistemologists have endorsed an idea called “transparency about belief.” There are several different formulations of this idea, one popular one is that determining whether you believe p just amounts to determining whether p . For example, if someone asks: “do you believe the cat is on the couch,” a natural way to respond is to check whether the cat is on the couch. Once one has determined that the cat is on the couch, one can respond “yes.” One has thereby determined whether one believes it; no further inquiry is required. As Gareth Evans, who is often credited with the original statement of the idea, puts the point:

If someone asks me, ‘Do you think there is going to be a third world war?’, I must attend, in answering him, to precisely the same outward phenomena as I would attend to if I were answering the question ‘Will there be a third world war?’ I get myself into the position to answer the question whether I believe that p by putting into operation whatever procedure I have for answering the question whether p . [11, 225].¹⁶

This idea can be extended to knowledge.¹⁷ We can understand transparency about knowledge as the view that determining whether you know p just amounts to determining whether p . For example, if someone asks: “do you know that the cat is on the couch,” a natural way to respond is to check whether the cat is on the couch. Once one has determined that the cat is on the couch, one can respond “yes.” One has thereby determined that one knows it; no further inquiry is required.

This parallel can be strengthened by noting other ways in which arguments for transparency about belief and transparency about knowledge align.

¹⁶ See also [7, 82-3], [12, 355], [14, 50-1], [15, 65], [23, 66], and [29, 602].

¹⁷ I don’t know of anyone who does so, though Alex Byrne argues that it can be extended from belief to all mental states [8]. This serves to extend the idea to knowledge so long as knowledge is conceived as a mental state, as it is by some, e.g. Timothy Williamson [34].

For example, some defend transparency about belief by pointing out that it nicely explains why certain sentences – so-called Moorean sentences about belief – sound strange. Moorean sentences about belief, are sentences of the form “P but I don’t believe P,” for instance, “The cat is on the couch but I don’t believe the cat is on the couch.” The strangeness of these sentences is thought to lend credence to transparency about belief.¹⁸

Transparency about knowledge can be defended in a similar way to this.¹⁹ Moorean sentences about knowledge are of the form “P but I don’t know P,” e.g. “The cat is on the couch but I don’t know the cat is on the couch.” They sound equally strange, and this can be thought to lend credence to transparency about knowledge.

In sum, we have seen two ways to defend the view Kumārila needed to respond to the independent check argument. Now, let us look at how he can defend the view he needed in responding to the safety argument. Recall that the view he needed here said that perceiving is a different belief-forming process from misperceiving. This sort of view is known as “epistemic disjunctivism” and there are a number of contemporary epistemologists who endorse such a view, including John McDowell [26, 7].

As it stands, epistemic disjunctivism is somewhat unpopular, but in fact there are good reasons to endorse it. One is that it provides an elegant response to various skeptical arguments – indeed, in large part for this reason, Duncan Pritchard calls it the “holy grail of epistemology” in his book-length defense of it [26, 1].

One such skeptical argument arises from odd quantum-mechanical scenarios, discussed by John Hawthorne among others [18]. Here is a modified version of one of Hawthorne’s scenarios: the particles in my hand rearranged themselves into a non-hand so recently that I have yet to register any effects. It’s worth noting that this is a scenario that quantum mechanics says is possible.

The crucial thing about this scenario is that it seems like it could easily have obtained. Just to be clear, I’m not saying that this scenario is likely to have obtained, but rather that it could easily have. In nearby worlds talk, what I’m saying is that there’s a nearby world in which it obtained; I’m not denying that most nearby worlds are ones in which it didn’t obtain. Compare: if I have a lottery ticket in a large lottery for which a drawing was

¹⁸ See e.g. [6, 3], [14, 45], [33].

¹⁹ For similar thoughts, see e.g. [30].

recently held, I'm unlikely to have won, but I could easily have; there's a nearby world in which I won although most nearby worlds are ones in which I lost.

This scenario causes problems if we endorse the safety principle that I discussed while explaining the Safety Argument. Recall that this safety principle says that if I know a proposition, then I couldn't easily have falsely believed a proposition on a similar basis. Because the scenario could easily have obtained, I could easily have falsely believed I have hands, and thus it looks as if I'm pressed via the safety principle to accept the skeptical conclusion that I don't know I have hands. The only way out, assuming we endorse both (i) the safety principle and (ii) that this scenario could easily have obtained, is to endorse epistemic disjunctivism and hold that the basis for my belief that I have hands differs between the actual world and the world in which this scenario obtains. Doing so allows me to hold that I could not easily have falsely believed that I have hands *on a similar basis to the one I actually use*.

Of course, one could respond to this skeptical argument by rejecting the safety principle in question and going fallibilist – saying that knowledge doesn't require that one couldn't easily have made an error on a similar basis, but rather that it merely requires that one be unlikely to have made an error on a similar basis. But if one does reject this safety principle, then one rejects the third argument against KK which relies on it. In this case, one can simply accept Kumārila's KK principle and his view about independent checks, which by themselves allow for an adequate response to the first two arguments against KK, without having to supplement these with his account of perception that was required to get out of the third argument. So rejecting safety principles is not a good way of causing trouble for Kumārila's defense of KK.

Another reason for endorsing epistemological disjunctivism is that it fits with the way we speak – and the way that speakers of many other languages speak as well. As Jennifer Nagel notes, summarizing evidence about various languages, including English, Korean, Tibetan, Turkish, Wintu and Northern Embera:

There is no natural evidential category that is, for example, neutral between seeing that you have hands and hallucinating that you do – the category 'made on the basis of either veridical perception or internal visual seemings' is not a natural way of conceptualizing grounding ... [24, 9]

Thus, the idea that perception is a different belief-forming process from misperception is plausible so long as it is plausible that one should formulate one's account of knowledge in harmony with natural language.

A third reason for endorsing epistemological disjunctivism is that it fits well with a popular view in the philosophy of mind about the object of perception. On this view, which is known as “naïve realism,” when one perceives some ordinary object like a cat, what one directly perceives is the cat itself, as opposed to some internal object like qualia or sense data. It is worth noting that on this view the object of perception in a normal case – a cat – is quite different from the object of perception in the case of illusion or hallucination.

There are various reasons to endorse naïve realism. One is that it fits well with common sense – normally people think when I'm looking at a cat, what I see is the cat itself, not some internal state. For this reason, naïve realism has also been given the title “common-sense realism.”

Naïve realism doesn't entail epistemological disjunctivism, but it is closely related; if you think that the objects you are directly perceiving in a normal case of perception are quite different from the objects you directly perceive in the case of hallucination or illusion, this will naturally lead you to think that perceiving is a different sort of belief-forming process from hallucination or illusion. As William Fish puts the point: “What might lead someone to endorse disjunctivism? ... the typical motivation has been to make room for a ‘naïve realist’ theory of veridical experience” [13].

This is a motivation that Kumārila would have found attractive. Kumārila is a naïve realist; he is highly critical of the Buddhists who think that in cognition one cognizes a form (*ākāra*) of an object rather than the object itself [31].²⁰

In short, as we have seen in this section, the views that Kumārila can use to respond to arguments against KK principles are independently plausible and in fact a natural extension of recent work in contemporary analytic epistemology regarding testimony, the transparency of belief, and epistemic disjunctivism. So KK principles are not as implausible as contemporary analytic epistemologists would have us believe.

²⁰Thanks to John Taber for suggesting I emphasize this point.

References

- [1] Jonathan E. Adler. Contextualism and fallibility: pragmatic encroachment, possibility, and strength of epistemic position. *Synthese*, 188:247–272, 2012.
- [2] William P. Alston. *The Reliability of Sense Perception*. Cornell University Press, 1993.
- [3] Louise Antony. A naturalized approach to the a priori. *Philosophical Issues*, 14:1–17, 2004.
- [4] Daniel Arnold. Intrinsic validity reconsidered: A sympathetic study of the mīmāṃsaka inversion of buddhist epistemology. *Journal of Indian philosophy*, 29:589–675, 2001.
- [5] Daniel Arnold. Kumāriila. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014.
- [6] David James Barnett. Inferential justification and the transparency of belief. *Noûs*, 2015.
- [7] Alex Byrne. Introspection. *Philosophical Topics*, 33(1):79–104, 2005.
- [8] Alex Byrne. Transparency, belief, intention. *Aristotelian Society: Supplementary Volume*, 85:201–21, 2011.
- [9] David Chalmers. *Constructing the world*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- [10] C. A. J. Coady. Testimony and observation. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 10:149–55, 1973.
- [11] Gareth Evans. *The varieties of reference*. Oxford University Press, 1982.
- [12] Jordi Fernández. Privileged access naturalized. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 53(212):352–72, 2003.
- [13] William Fish. Disjunctivism. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2009.
- [14] André Gallois. *The world without, the mind within*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

- [15] Robert M. Gordon. Simulation without introspection or inference from me to you. In Martin Davies and Tony Stones, editors, *Mental simulation*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1995.
- [16] Daniel Greco. Could kk be ok? *The Journal of Philosophy*, CXI(4):169–197, 2014.
- [17] Daniel Greco. Iteration and fragmentation. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Forthcoming.
- [18] John Hawthorne. *Knowledge and Lotteries*. Oxford University Press, 2004.
- [19] David Hemp. The kk (knowing that one knows). *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, January 2014.
- [20] Jaakko Hintikka. *Knowledge and belief: An introduction to the logic of the two notions*. Cornell University Press, 1962.
- [21] Kei Kataoka. *Kumārila on truth, omniscience, and killing*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010.
- [22] Jennifer Lackey. It takes two to tango: Beyond reductionism and neo-reductionism in the epistemology of testimony. In Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa, editors, *The epistemology of testimony*, pages 160–89. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- [23] Richard Moran. *Authority and estrangement*. Princeton University Press, 2001.
- [24] Jennifer Nagel. Knowledge and fallibility. In *7th Annual Midwest Workshop in Epistemology*, 2013.
- [25] Peter Pagin. Assertion. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014.
- [26] Duncan Pritchard. *Epistemological disjunctivism*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- [27] Srinivasa Rao. *Perceptual error: The Indian theories*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1998.

- [28] Georges Rey. A naturalistic a priori. *Philosophical Studies*, 92(1/2):25–43, 1998.
- [29] Nishi Shah and J. David Velleman. Doxastic deliberation. *Philosophical Review*, 114(4):497–534, 2005.
- [30] Declan Smithies. Moore’s paradox and the accessibility of justification. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 85(2):273–300, 2012.
- [31] John Taber. What did kumārila bhaṭṭa mean by svataḥ prāmāṇya? *Journal of the American Oriental society*, 112(2):204–21, 1992.
- [32] John Taber. *A Hindu critique of Buddhist Epistemology*. Routledge, 2005.
- [33] John N. Williams. Moore’s paradox, evans’s principle, and iterated beliefs. In Mitchell Green and John N. Williams, editors, *Moore’s paradox: New essays on belief, rationality, and the first person*, pages 90–113. Clarendon Press, 2005.
- [34] Timothy Williamson. *Knowledge and its Limits*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- [35] Timothy Williamson. Improbable knowing. In *Evidentialism and its Discontents*. Oxford University Press, 2011.