Knowledge and Belief - The Epistemic Band

Manidipa Sanyal

Epistemic notions may be viewed in this era as band-members of an instrumental group. Knowledge enjoys the most prestigious position and has always believed as its close cognate by its side. Question may arise about the type of knowledge spoken about in the survey of its relation to belief and vice versa. Let us be less ambitious and restrict our discussion of such epistemic notions in the ordinary empirical world. Such notions are viewed as being embedded in a specific context in a social atmosphere, where they are essentially indispensable in all kinds of communicative practices. To be specific, it is the sphere where knowledge and belief are treated as bases for action and judgment.

The closeness of knowledge and belief is viewed in different forms, sometimes even as mutually exclusive. It depends on the perspective to view knowledge either as a form of belief or as that to which belief is subordinate, and each has its own interpretation. How to counter such incompatible alternatives is a separate question.
that appears presently as less promising. But what is interesting is that the apparent innocence of knowledge-belief relation often unexpectedly leads us to view knowledge as “subject to critique”, something which sounds weird in the ordinary usage of the notion of knowledge. It needs a little deeper analysis to reveal the truth of the content. For such revelation it is necessary to counter two views:

(i) knowledge does not entail belief, and
(ii) knowledge gives us certainty.

In fact, these two claims (entailment and knowledge producing certainty) are not totally different ones; rather they may be shown to be clubbed together. The present paper is an attempt to explore the possibility of knowledge-revision which is an apparently counter-intuitive area in epistemology.

I

It is pertinent to start the discussion with a glimpse of historical development of the study of epistemology. Starting with Plato’s *Theaetetus* one may notice the revolutionary change in the prominence of subjectivity in knowledge situation. The next major event is Quine’s theory of naturalized epistemology where psychology is not simply a part, but where “epistemology simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science.” Development of epistemology also records the theories of Virtue Epistemology, Care Epistemology and Evolutionary Epistemology. There was a return from Quine’s theory to normativity of knowledge and intellectual virtues. Some others gave importance to socio-cultural framework in defining knowledge.

History reveals that thinkers often say that knowledge does not require belief of any sort. But defenders of such a view are few in number. The traditional JTB thesis as well as Warrant theory considered belief to be one condition of knowledge. Quine denied the question of justification to be a pertinent question in epistemology. But though he denied the criterion of indubitability of basic beliefs as important, still he never doubted the relation between belief and knowledge, the latter being a process that - in his opinion - should involve a descriptive natural process of providing evidence. Philosophers like Robert Nozick who viewed knowledge as a capacity to reach the truth also accepted the close tie between knowledge and belief:

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“S’s belief that p can be considered knowledge if and only if, if p were false, s would
not believe that p.”

We may also refer to Virtue Epistemology which considered
knowledge proper as a product of the relation between a cognitive agent and
acquisition of true belief.

Acknowledging the category sameness of knowledge and belief defended by
majority of thinkers, let us go into a detailed analysis of the proximity of these two
notions in order to counter the first view (1) mentioned before. To begin with, let us
note one important point mentioned by Sibajiban Bhattacharya. Time has passed a
long way after our general awareness of the fake similarity between knowledge and
belief which says that the sentences ‘I know that p’ and ‘I believe that p’ have
accidental occurrences of the terms ‘know’ and ‘believe’. The real similarity lies in
distinguishing them from doubt in the following way: doubt about the truth of p is the
same as doubt about the falsity of p, but knowledge or belief about the truth of p is
quite different from the knowledge or belief about the falsity of p.

The relation between knowledge and belief may be conceived as any of the
following:

(i) Kap → Bap (entailment)
(ii) ~(Kap & Bap), i.e., (Kap → Bap) (incompatibility)
(iii) ~(Kap → Bap) (denial of entailment)

(i) and (iii) are sharply opposite, (ii) and (iii) stand in a one-way relationship, i.e.,
(iii) → (ii), but not vice versa. D. M. Armstrong distinguishes between the theory of
entailment and its denial in the following way:
A. Kap → Bap (entailment)
A.1 Kap → Cap (entailment—strong sense)
A.2 ~(kap → Cap) (entailment—weak sense)
B. ~(kap → Bap) (denial of entailment)
B.1 Kap → ~Bap (denial of entailment—strong sense)

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The strong sense of entailment asserts certainty in knowledge context while weak sense shows reservation. The strong sense of entailment-denial emphasises absence of belief in knowledge context while weak sense does not so commit. In order to serve the purpose of this paper, it is necessary to show the unacceptability of both the strong and weak sense of entailment-denial. What is even more important is to show the weakness of the strong version of entailment that denies the very possibility of knowledge-revision.

Armstrong’s analysis\(^6\) of the weak-denial theory sounds weird because it needs few steps to prove that it dangerously welcomes its opponent camp, i.e., Kap→Bap:

\[
\begin{align*}
1. & \quad \sim(Kap\rightarrow\sim Bap) & / \text{Therefore, Kap}\rightarrow Bap \\
2. & \quad \sim(\sim Kap \lor \sim Bap) & 1. \text{impl.} \\
3. & \quad \sim \sim Kap \& \sim \sim Bap & 2. \text{DeM.} \\
4. & \quad Kap \& Bap & 3. \text{DN} \\
5. & \quad Bap \& Kap & 4. \text{Com.} \\
6. & \quad Bap & 5. \text{Simp.} \\
7. & \quad Bap \lor \sim Kap & 6. \text{add} \\
8. & \quad \sim Kap \lor Bap & 7. \text{Com.} \\
9. & \quad Kap\rightarrow Bap & 8. \text{Impl.}
\end{align*}
\]

In fact, this symbolic form B.2 i.e., \(\sim (Kap\rightarrow\sim Bap)\) is not the proper intended form of Armstrong’s statement of weak-denial theory. It may be stated as follows: although it is possible to know something but not believe it, knowledge does not “entail” absence of belief. Symbolically expressed it amounts to:

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\text{B.2}^*\quad M (Kap\& \sim Bap) \& \sim (Kap\rightarrow\sim Bap).
\]

Such form is similarly vulnerable as B.2, because the use of the rule of simplification equally provokes B.2* to fall in the same error of embracing the

\(^6\) *Ibid*, p-143.
opponent. We may therefore be more cautious about the formalisation of the weak-denial theory as this: although it is possible to know something but not believe it, it is not necessary that knowledge entails the absence of belief. Symbolically it amounts to: $M(Kap\land \neg Bap) \land \neg L(Kap \rightarrow \neg Bap)$. It is now time to consider the varieties of knowledge-belief relation one after the other.

II
Rejection of Knowledge-Belief Incompatibility

The incompatibility between knowledge and belief may be interpreted in terms of mental states (as found in Cook-Wilson, Price, Prichard), or in relation to objects (as found in Plato), or in respect of statements (as in the early-Austin version which is found rejected in later Austin). There are strong arguments against incompatibility-relation, but it may better be postponed because the present survey can hardly digest such category-difference between knowledge and belief.

Rejection of Entailment-denial Theory

The principle that ‘if one knows that p, then he believes that p’ is called the ‘entailment thesis’. The general claim of entailment-denial therefore is $\neg (Kap \rightarrow Bap)$. The strong version of entailment-denial appears to be akin to incompatibility theory. The reason is, the strong version gives stress on a rigid relation of entailment between knowledge and absence of belief. As has been said earlier, this sort of rigid opponent cannot be unquestionably accepted. The weak-denial theory as

$$M(Kap \land \neg Bap) \land \neg L(Kap \rightarrow \neg Bap)$$

which can be ultimately shown to be a conjunctive statement as follows:

$$M(Kap \land Bap) \land M(Kap \land Bap).$$

Now there is no rule of replacement to show the equivalence of the first conjunct with the whole statement, but the rule of inference, i.e., that of simplification allows the first conjunct to be deduced as consequent of the

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6 Cook-Wilson, J., “The Relation of Knowing to Thinking” in A Phillips Griffiths, Knowledge and Belief, p-18. Price, H.H., “Some considerations about Belief” in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol-35 (1934-35), pp-229-252. To quote Prichard, “We must recognize that whenever we know something we either do, or at least can, by reflecting, directly know that we are knowing it, and that, whenever we believe something, we similarly either do, or can directly know that we are believing it and not knowing it.” Prichard H.A., knowledge and Perception, p-86.

whole statement. As the first conjunct is concerned with the possibility of knowledge and absence of belief, which the basic demand of the entailment-denial, we can concentrate on examining that general claim only.

Such a case of knowledge without belief has been cited by Armstrong. A woman, who has strong evidential support for her knowledge that her explorer husband is dead, admits that she cannot believe it, and accordingly behaves strongly as a woman whose husband is alive.

Similar lines of thought are found in Colin Radford and Lemmon also. Radford’s example is that of a Canadian who believes himself to be ignorant of English History, but his answer to the question about the date of death of Queen Elizabeth came out right that it was 1603. When he was reminded by his friend, he became aware that he eventually knew the answer, though he was uncertain of his knowledge and therefore could not believe the answer. So it is a case of Kap & ~Bap. A similar example in Lemmon also speaks of the possibility of knowledge without the possibility of knowledge of knowledge thereby forbidding the possibility of belief.

Contemporary debates in epistemology show several trends supporting denial of entailment. There is a gradual uprise of contextualist scheme of defining knowledge as sensitive to specific context. There is also the trace of invariantism upholding subject-sensitivity of knowledge. Apart from these non-sceptic attitudes, there is also seen some alignment to scepticism. Views of F. Dretske and R. Nozick tend to show covertly that epistemic closure principle may be denied. According to them, we do not know that we are not a brain in a vat. Though countering entailment-denial is a necessity for the present paper, individual assessment of such attempts may be spared as they depend primarily on definition of knowledge which is not the main concern here. For brevity therefore, it may sound to center round those counter-

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7 The closure principle that Dretske discusses is: If S knows that p and S knows that p ⊢ q, then S has all that it takes, evidentially speaking, to know that q.
examples that do not go against the familiar age-old conjunctive-analysis-definition of knowledge.

There are two approaches: one of admitting both knowledge and belief in such cases, the other of withdrawing the same. Harman’s answer\(^8\) is the first one when he says that the person in Radford’s example does know and believe, but he does not know that he knows. So it is the lack of certainty that accounts for lack of belief though he has both knowledge and belief. The same answer is applicable in Lemmon’s example. Their belief is to be understood, not as avowal-account, but as dispositional account.

The second approach is found in Lehrer’s answer\(^9\). According to him, the person in Radford’s example does not know the answer because he does not accept it. In Lehrer’s term it is the (i) acceptance is a special kind of belief, and (ii) non-acceptance leads to absence of knowledge.

But Lehrer’s view is not unquestionably accepted. Hence though Lehrer may be right to “claim” that the person in fact does not know in the true sense of the term, still it is less convincing to reject Radford’s counter-example. The reason is, the person appears to possess some kind of knowledge since he retains memory of the relevant matter. It is not irrational to say that, to have propositional knowledge that p is to have

(i) the ability to retain the proposition,
(ii) the ability to recall it,
(iii) the ability to use it.

Under such conditions Radford’s subject may be said to know. The second condition is essential because failure to recollect what is learnt while retaining the same will imply that the subject possesses physiological memory but lacks propositional knowledge. In fact, knowledge may be understood in the sense of knowing that, and entailment may be viewed to hold or not to hold between knowing-that and believing-that, though there may be discussion whether instances of

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knowing-how could be undertaken, and more excitingly whether there may be at all, cases of believing-how.

This factor may undeniably rouse a fresh issue of knowledge-belief relation through the intervention of memory\textsuperscript{10}. But it needs elaborate discussion in future survey. As the present discussion aims at the failure of the alleged counter-examples to the weak-entailment theory we may turn to a fare account in defence of weak-entailment in Armstrong’s theory.

Armstrong denies the case of a lady whose husband is dead as an example of ‘Kap& ~Bap’ because of the ambiguity of the phrase “she does not believe it”. The phrase may mean

(i) it is not the case that she believes it, i.e., ‘~Bap’, or,

(ii) she believes that it is not the case, i.e., ‘Bap’. 

Though some episodes witness both events together, still there is no relation of entailment between the two. In this present case, both hold together and it slacks the claim of entailment-denial, because ‘Bap’ is consistent with ‘Bap’ also. There are sufficient reasons for a situation where a person believes both p and ~p on the basis of more or less equal empirical evidences in their favour. But we must be cautious enough not to confuse between such a case and a case of doubt. When we doubt p, we withdraw the truth-claim of p, whereas in believing p we entertain the truth-claim of p.

Now coming to the said case, while entailment-denial theory interprets the situation as “Kap& ~Bap”, Armstrong calls it a case of “Kap&Bap& Bap”. One may object that these two interpretations are based on two different presuppositions, i.e., denial of entailment or entailment itself respectively. To make the situation clear, let us set aside the claim of knowledge, and let us also imagine that though the evidence for her husband’s death seems satisfactory to the woman, they are not really

\textsuperscript{10}Intervention of memory in knowledge-belief context has been discussed by Masaharu Mizumoto in the doctoral Dissertation (Hitotsubashi University) \textit{A Theory of Knowledge and Belief Change—Epistemology Psychologised based on Naturalized AGM} (2003). There also the entailment between knowledge and belief (knowledge in the sense of propositional knowledge) has been defended and established.
At the same time we cannot say that her other unusual behaviour implies that it is not the case that she believes that her husband is dead, i.e., “~Bap”. Hence it is a case of “Bap &~Ba~p”. The previous case therefore, in its full interpretation amounts to “Kap&~Ba~p& Bap”.

It is not so easy to settle the case of Radford as one of “~Ba~p” or “~Bap”. Armstrong here cites two cases and later on a third one:

A. A man who was previously rightly taught about the date of Queen Elizabeth’s death, but who is now ignorant of English History.
B. A man who was wrongly taught about the aforesaid date, and who is now ignorant of English History.
C. A man who was wrongly taught about the aforesaid date, and who is now ignorant of English History.

All of them are asked about the date. A gives a correct guess which is the result of memory of correct teaching. B gives an incorrect guess as a result of his correct memory of incorrect teaching and C gives correct guess due to his incorrect memory of incorrect teaching. Everybody will accept that B is a case of unconscious false belief. But A, which is the case of Radford’s example, is not unanimously accepted as a case of knowledge, not even as a case of unconscious knowledge. It is due to the person’s failure to recognize his own utterance to be the manifestation of knowledge\(^\text{11}\). So the case of A cannot be settled merely with reference to B. C is a case of unconscious true belief. Here C believes that Elizabeth died in 1603 (Bap), and at the same time, he repudiates his guess at conscious level. So in a sense, the person believes that it is not the case that Elizabeth died in 1603 (~Ba~p). Hence Radford’s example may be represented as “Bap &~Ba~p”. And this completes the rejection of the weak-denial theory.

III

\(^{11}\) In order to call a case, a case of knowledge, importance is given on the fact of recognizing the case as a case of knowledge. It is a common assumption that if A knows that p, then it entails that he knows that he knows that p, i.e., ‘Kap→Kakap’.
It is time to focus on the stronger enemy of knowledge-revision, i.e., the strong-assertion theory of entailment. The theory says that knowledge entails being sure. The Ayer-Malcolm legacy points out that absence of surety leads to inevitable absence of knowledge. Ayer\textsuperscript{12} proceeds a few steps further to hold that knowledge implies both being sure and having the right to be sure.

Now the apparently paradoxical possibility of knowledge with the absence of surety may be surprisingly found to be factually corroborated. It can very well happen that one is not sure of what one knows. Philosophical analysis reveals ambiguity of the phrase ‘right to be sure’. As Chisholm points out\textsuperscript{13}, ‘right to be sure’ cannot be identified as ‘right to terminate inquiry’ because of its unreasonableness. No account of knowledge can approve of closing the mind in respect of further information. This hint is enough to uphold that there is nothing called complete knowledge, meaning thereby that the phrase “knowledge-revision” is not a misnomer. The phrase has also significance in the context of probability.

There is much controversy among thinkers whether “being confident”/“being sure” is a necessary condition of knowing. It is a fact that feeling of confidence plays an important role in knowledge-ascription to oneself. But, as Wozzley rightly points out\textsuperscript{14} that “being sure” is a necessary condition not of knowledge, but of justified knowledge-claim. It is a fact that one may be rationally justified in denying knowledge of \(p\) without feeling sure of \(p\), but ascription of knowledge of \(p\) to that person is quite compatible with the person’s feeling of absence of surety. Examples of such ascription is well evidenced in the case of viva-voce examinations, where candidates are recorded to know such and such things only on the basis of materially correct answers they give though they may not be sure of the answers. It reveals that the commonly accepted relation between knowledge and feeling of certainty is backed merely by the dogmatic presupposition that knowledge is normally accompanied by apparent confidence. But the picture is just the reverse. We may recall analogically that, in logic where we try to make a valid inference of \(q\) from \(p\), it is not sufficient to know that ‘if \(p\) then \(q\)’ and ‘\(p\)’, but that both of them are true.

\textsuperscript{13} Chisholm, R.M., \textit{Theory of Knowledge} (1977), Prentice Hall of India Limited, New Delhi.
\textsuperscript{14} Wozzley, A.D., “Knowing and Not Knowing” in Phillips Griffiths \textit{Knowledge and Belief}(1968).
Max Black rejects Wozzley’s exposition by considering the duo, i.e., knowledge and absence of surety as inconsistent and thereby a dishonest one. But it is hard to consider it to be successfully aiming at Wozzley’s view, because, according to Wozzley, this inconsistency is merely “epistemological absurdity”. This “epistemological absurdity” can be defended in the same way as Hintikka\textsuperscript{15} has responded to Moore’s paradox “p, but I do not believe that p” as “doxastically defensible”. Hence we can safely conclude that there is no inevitable tie between knowledge and feeling of surety.

**IV**

We may still nurture the tendency to dissociate knowledge from belief by following the Rylean distinction between capacity verb and tendency verb. Ryle rejected the claim that knowledge is a species of belief because he rejected the theory of entailment altogether. But even Ryle cannot deny the fact that though in some cases of belief where evidence is inconclusive, we withdraw the claim of knowledge, still belief, in a wider sense, is close to knowledge. In case of rational belief, we can easily say that when I know that p, I entertain p and I am disposed to assert that p. The thing now is to decide whether we can accept both of the following:

(a) knowledge entails belief (weak sense),
(b) knowledge is a species of belief.

A well-knit compromise is available in Chisholm’s theory where he accepts the former and rejects the latter. According to him, the adverbs ‘firmly’, ‘reluctantly’ ‘hesitatingly’ are applicable in cases of belief but not in cases of knowledge. Like Ryle, Chisholm also accepts Austin’s distinction between how-questions and why-questions - the former relevant in knowledge-context and the latter in belief-context. All these imply that knowledge is not a species of belief. But it remains a fact that knowledge entails belief though not in Chisholmean sense.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15}Hintikka, J., *Knowledge and Belief* (1962), Cornell University Press, New York.

\textsuperscript{16}To quote Chisholm, “the relation of knowing to believing ...is not that of falcon to bird or of airedale to dog; it is more that of arriving to travelling. Arriving entails travelling – a man cannot arrive unless he has travelled – but arriving is not a species of travelling.” Chisholm, R.M., *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* pp-16-18. Chisholm’s analogy however is severely rejected as a bad analogy.
I have tried to argue that the epistemic band of knowledge and belief performs well if coupled with another member, i.e., contingent relation between knowledge and certainty. The presence of doubtfulness in knowledge is supported by the twentieth-century philosopher B. Russell also, “…all knowledge is in some degree doubtful, and we cannot say what degree of doubtfulness makes it cease to be knowledge, any more than we can say how much loss of hair makes a man bald.”\textsuperscript{17} One may say that it is just diverting the question of admittance of knowledge proper. It is a fact that science starts with hypotheses and the conclusions reached there are often amenable to further criticisms. But to question the authenticity of knowledge only on the basis of this fact is virtually to question the validity of inductive knowledge as a whole. And this is counter-intuitive.

So, in knowledge-context, we can say two things. We can say either that what is known cannot be falsified, or that if it is falsified, it is not knowledge proper. The present survey favours the latter. Though knowledge is the best thing we can achieve, we have to entertain in Russellean manner that there is an element of doubt in knowledge. To accept the contingent relation between knowledge and certainty is however not to give concession to contextualism or to invariantism. The reason is simple. Contextualism may approve of a particular piece of knowledge acquired by different individuals in similar contexts as final, or invariantism may mark a piece of knowledge acquired by a person as complete and beyond revision as another acquired by the same person in similar context. But the possibility of belief-revision together with knowledge-belief knot tends to extend the possibility of knowledge-revision to the “relative finality thesis” of context-sensitive and subject-sensitive cases of knowledge. It is to be noted that possibility of revision does not equate the status of knowledge and that of belief as epistemic notions, because there is no point in identifying them unless one tries to spoil the show. And undoubtedly, such identification would have been something least imagined by a responsible thinker even in dreams.

The inevitable question that arises here is: Is it possible for the defenders of knowledge-belief category-sameness to accommodate the challenging notion of

\textsuperscript{17} Russell, B., \textit{Human Knowledge}, p-516.
knowledge-revision? Any positive answer to this question compels the theory-maker to construct a model of such notion. Any negative answer will bring the charge of contradiction. The task remains for future survey to find out whether and how to accommodate the issue of knowledge-revision if knowledge and belief are to be treated as performers of the same band.

This charge can be met in the following way. Knowledge under normal usage has a pragmatic sense. It can be said: X can know p until further revision. Even when I am in pain, what I claim is my being in pain, not the knowledge of the pain. Contextually we may refer to Austin’s view that the phrase ‘I know’ speaks of the highest possible cognitive claim and it functions as the phrase ‘I promise’.

Notes and References:

5. Armstrong D.M., Belief, Truth and Knowledge, p-139.
6. Ibid, p-143.
7. Cook-Wilson, I., “The Relation of Knowing to Thinking” in A Phillips Griffths, Knowledge and Belief, p-18.
9. To quote Prichard, “We must recognize that whenever we know something we either do, or at least can, by reflecting, directly know that we are knowing it, and that, whenever we believe something, we similarly either do, or can directly know that we are believing it and not knowing it.” Prichard H.A., knowledge and Perception, p-86.
13. The closure principle that Dretske discusses is: If S knows that p and S knows that p |= q, then S has all that it takes, evidentially speaking, to know that q.
16. Intervention of memory in knowledge-belief context has been discussed by Masaharu Mizumoto in the doctoral Dissertation (Hitotsubashi University) A Theory of Knowledge and Belief Change—Epistemology Psychologised based on Naturalized

AGM (2003). There also the entailment between knowledge and belief (knowledge in the sense of propositional knowledge) has been defended and established.

17. In order to call a case, a case of knowledge, importance is given on the fact of recognizing the case as a case of knowledge. It is a common assumption that if A knows that p, then it entails that he knows that he knows that p, i.e., ‘Kap → Kap’.


22. To quote Chisholm, “the relation of knowing to believing … is not that of falcon to bird or of airedale to dog; it is more that of arriving to travelling. Arriving entails travelling – a man cannot arrive unless he has travelled – but arriving is not a species of travelling.” Chisholm, R.M., Perceiving: A Philosophical Study pp-16-18. Chisholm’s analogy however is severely rejected as a bad analogy.
