STAKES-SHIFTING CASES RECONSIDERED—WHAT SHIFTS? EPISTEMIC STANDARDS OR POSITION?

Kok Yong LEE

ABSTRACT: It is widely accepted that our initial intuitions regarding knowledge attributions in stakes-shifting cases (e.g., Cohen's Airport) are best explained by standards variantism, the view that the standards for knowledge may vary with contexts in an epistemically interesting way. Against standards variantism, I argue that no prominent account of the standards for knowledge can explain our intuitions regarding stakes-shifting cases. I argue that the only way to preserve our initial intuitions regarding such cases is to endorse position variantism, the view that one's epistemic position may vary with contexts in an epistemically interesting way. Some had argued that epistemic position is incompatible with intellectualism. In reply, I point out that position variantism and intellectualism are compatible, if one's truth-relevant factors with respect to p can vary with contexts in an epistemically interesting way.

KEYWORDS: contextualism, stakes-shifting cases, relevant alternative, epistemic standard, intellectualism, sensitivity

1. Introduction

Let us say that S knows that p only if S's *epistemic position* with respect to p satisfies the *standards for knowledge* in play. I take S's epistemic position with respect to p to be a *placeholder* indicating the properties the having enough of which will render S's true belief that p knowledge.[1] It is customary to talk about the *strength* of S's epistemic position with respect to p or to compare the strength of S_1's epistemic position with respect to p to the strength of S_2's epistemic position with respect to q. The standards for knowledge specify how strong S's epistemic position with respect to p has to be in order for S to know that p.

We may call the view that the standards for knowledge may vary with contexts in an epistemically interesting (non-trivial) way 'standards variantism.' *Epistemic contextualism* is a kind of standards variantism. On contextualism, the

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[1] See Keith DeRose, *The Case for Contextualism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 7.

standards for knowledge vary with the *attributor* context.[2] What John MacFarlane calls *relativism* is also a kind of standards variantism.[3] On relativism, the standards for knowledge vary with the *assessor* context.

Many have argued that standards variantism (contextualism in particular) is directly supported by ordinary cases of knowledge attributions of the following sort:

> *Airport.* Mary and John are at the L.A. airport contemplating taking a certain flight to New York. They want to know whether the flight has a layover in Chicago. They overhear someone ask a passenger Smith if he knows whether the flight stops in Chicago. Smith looks at the flight itinerary he got from the travel agent and responds, "Yes, I know—it does stop in Chicago." It turns out that Mary and John have a very important business contact they have to make at the Chicago airport. Mary says, "How reliable is that itinerary? It could contain a misprint. They could have changed the schedule at the last minute." Mary and John agree that Smith doesn't really know that the plane will stop in Chicago. They decide to check with the airline agent.[4]

Suppose that Smith believes truly that the flight stops in Chicago. Intuitively, both Smith's knowledge attribution "I know the flight stops in Chicago" and Mary and John's attribution "Smith does not know that the flight stops in Chicago" seem true. This intuition is puzzling since Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago is held fixed, and the only difference between Smith's situation and Mary and John's is that the stakes in whether the flight stops in Chicago are high for Mary and John but low for Smith. Stakes are pragmatic, non-*truth-relevant*, factors that seem to have no direct bearing on whether one knows or not (at least initially).

Many have claimed that standards variantism offers the best explanation of our intuitions regarding knowledge attributions in *stakes-shifting cases*[5] such as *Airport*; stakes-shifting cases are supposed to provide *prima facie* support for standards variantism. Call this *the standards-variantist assumption*.

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[2] See David Kaplan, "Demonstratives: An Essay on the Semantics, Logic, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Demonstratives and Other Indexicals," in *Themes from Kaplan*, eds. Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 481–566.

[3] See John MacFarlane, "The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions," in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 197–233.

[4] Stewart Cohen, "Contextualism, Skepticism, and the Structure of Reason," *Philosophical Perspectives* 13 (1999): 58.

[5] This term is from Jonathan Schaffer, "The Irrelevance of the Subject: Against Subject-Sensitive Invariantism." *Philosophical Studies* 127, 3(2006): 87-107.

In this paper, I argue against the standards-variantist assumption. My first thesis is that preserving our initial intuitions regarding knowledge attributions in stakes-shifting cases requires us to endorse *position variantism*, the view that the subject's epistemic position with respect to p varies with stakes-shifting cases. I will first reconstruct the main argument for the standards-variantist assumption (Section 2). I will then argue that no prominent account of the standards for knowledge can account for our stakes-shifting cases (Sections 3-6).

One might argue that position variantism is incompatible with *intellectualism*,[6] a view that the factors that turn one's true belief into knowledge are exclusively truth-relevant. I reject this argument. More precisely, my second thesis is that position variantism is compatible with intellectualism if one's truth-relevant factors with respect to p vary with stakes-shifting cases. I will point out that the last view is far from being implausible. I will first argue that the position-variantist explanation can account for our intuitions regarding stakes-shifting cases (Section 7). I will also consider an important objection to position variantism (Section 8).

2. The Argument for the Standards-Variantist Assumption

Contextualists argue that stakes-shifting cases provide *prima facie* support for contextualism. For instance, Keith DeRose has claimed that stakes-shifting cases are "the best ground"[7] for the contextualist theory:

> [Stakes-shifting cases] provide us with the best possible type of evidence you could ask for that 'know(s)' is context-sensitive in at least roughly the way contextualists claim it is.[8]

Similarly, Stewart Cohen also claims that:

> [*Airport*], and others like it, strongly suggests that ascription of knowledge are context-sensitive. The standards that determine how good one's reasons have to be in order to know are determined by the context of ascription.[9]

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[6] The term is from Jason Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). Stanley's formulation is slightly different from the one offered here. Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath have discussion a very similar view, which they call 'purism about knowledge.' See Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, *Knowledge in an Uncertain World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Also see Footnote 35 below.

[7] DeRose, *The Case for Contextualism*, 47.

[8] DeRose, 67.

[9] Cohen, "Contextualism, Skepticism, and the Structure of Reason," 59.

DeRose's and Cohen's remarks are misleading at best. Even if stakes-shifting cases did indicate the variability of the standards for knowledge, they would remain neutral to different forms of standards variantism. Specifically, they do not support DeRose and Cohen's favorite type of standards variantism (i.e., contextualism) over other types of standards variantism (e.g., nonindexical contextualism, relativism[10]).

Other standards variantists regard stakes-shifting cases as directly supporting standards variantism. Here are MacFarlane's remarks:

> If I was speaking literally both times [in stakes-shifting cases] and didn't make a mistake, then *presumably the standards I must meet in order to count as "knowing" must have changed*. I met the laxer standards that were in play [in the first case], but not the stricter ones that come into play [in the second case].[11]

Standards variantists often take the standards-variantist assumption for granted, so much so that few have bothered to justify the assumption. Most effort, rather, has been dedicated to showing that stakes-shifting cases, when elaborated, support one type of standards variantism over another.

Many non-standards variantists also are sympathetic to the standards-variantist assumption. Richard Feldman, for instance, has hypothesized the variability of the standards for knowledge:

> It may be that knowledge attributions are context dependent. Perhaps the ordinary standards for knowledge are somehow flexible. Perhaps, setting aside the typical skeptical problems for a moment, it is sometimes true to say that a person knows a proposition and sometimes true to deny that the person knows that same proposition. Thus, for example, maybe the standards for knowledge shift in such a way that in casual conversation just prior to an election for which there are reliable polls indicating a clear winner, it is correct to say that we know what the outcome will be. Maybe in other contexts stricter standards apply and it is not correct to say that. That makes contextualism correct.[12]

Why has the standards-variantist assumption been so widely accepted? The remainder of this section elaborates what I take to be the main argument for the standards-variantist assumption.

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[10] For nonindexical contextualism, see Berit Brogaard, "In Defence of a Perspectival Semantics for 'Know,'" *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86, 3 (2008): 439–59 and John MacFarlane, "Nonindexical Contextualism," *Synthese* 166 (2009): 231–50. For relativism, see MacFarlane, "The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions" and Mark Richard, "Contextualism and Relativism," *Philosophical Studies* 119 (2004): 215–42. Both nonindexical contextualism and relativism are able to explain (most) stakes-shifting cases in much the same way as contextualism does.

[11] MacFarlane, "The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions," 201; my italics.

[12] Richard Feldman, "Contextualism and Skepticism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 45 (1999): 111.

Let us begin with analyzing the stakes-shifting cases, which are abundant in recent literature.[13] Such cases are designed to share two features: (a) the same knowledge-attributing sentence, say, 'S knows that p,' seems true when uttered in a context C_1 but false when uttered in another context C_2, and (b) C_1 and C_2 are basically identical except that someone's stakes in whether p are high in C_2 but low in C_1. Let us call C_1 and C_2 'LOW' and 'HIGH' respectively (indicating low-stakes and high-stakes contexts respectively).

Let us focus on *Airport*. We intuitively think that:

(1) Smith's utterance "I (Smith) know that the flight stops in Chicago" is true in LOW, and Mary and John's utterance "Smith does not know that the flight stops in Chicago" is true in HIGH.[14]

On the standards-variantist assumption, (1) directly supports standards variantism; standards variantism provides the best explanation of (1).

The truth value of "S knows that p" is determined by whether S knows that p or not. Traditionally, whether S knows that p or not is regarded as depending on (a) whether S believes that p or not, (b) whether p is true or not, and (c) whether S's epistemic position with respect to p satisfies the standards for knowledge in play or not.

(A) and (b) are not the issues here, since they remain constant across stakes-shifting cases. For instance, Smith believes truly that the flight stops in Chicago in both LOW and HIGH. Our target is (c). That is, the variability of the truth value of "S knows that p" in stakes-shifting cases is generated by S's epistemic position with respect to p satisfying the standards for knowledge in LOW but not in HIGH.

The following, hence, is plausible:

(2) If (1), then Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in*

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[13]For instance, the *Bank Case* from Keith DeRose, "Contextualism and Knowledge Attributions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52, 4 (1992): 913–29 and the *Train Case* from Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, "Evidence, Pragmatics, and Justification," *The Philosophical Review* 111, 1 (2002): 67–94. Also see Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests*, 3–5.

[14] Joshua May et al., "Practical Interests, Relevant Alternatives, and Knowledge Attributions: An Empirical Study," *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 1, 2 (2010): 265–73; Wesley Buckwalter, "Knowledge Isn't Closed on Saturday: A Study in Ordinary Language," *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 1, 3 (2010): 395–406. For reply, see Keith DeRose, "Contextualism, Contrastivism, and X-Phi Surveys," *Philosophical Studies* 156 (2011): 81–110, and Jonathan Schaffer and Joshua Knobe, "Contrastive Knowledge Surveyed," *Noûs* 46, 4 (2012): 675–708. It is not my intention to settle the issue here. Those who do not think that (1) is our intuitive judgment regarding *Airport* are invited to consider the present thesis as a conditional claim: if (1) is indeed our intuitive judgments, then it is best explained by position variantism.

> *Chicago* satisfies the standards for knowledge in play in LOW but fails to do so in HIGH.

The consequent of (2) can be satisfied in two prominent ways:

(2a) Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* varies with LOW and HIGH.

(2b) The standards for knowledge in play vary with LOW and HIGH.

Hence, I assume that:

(3) If Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* satisfies the standards for knowledge in play in LOW but fails to do so in HIGH, then either (2a) Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* vary with LOW and HIGH, or (2b) the standards for knowledge in play vary with LOW and HIGH.

It is tempting to deny the first disjunct of the consequent of (3):

(4) Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* does not vary with LOW and HIGH.

(4) seems plausible. After all, Smith's relation to *The flight stops in Chicago* is held fixed across LOW and HIGH—Smith's evidence for *The flight stops in Chicago*, for instance, seems to remain the same in LOW and HIGH (however, I will argue that we should deny (4). See Section 7).

(1)-(4) entail:

(5) The standards for knowledge in play vary with LOW and HIGH.

(1)-(5) constitute a very strong argument for the standards-variantist assumption. The argument is valid, and all of its premises seem plausible. No wonder the standards-variantist assumption is widely accepted.

The argument is not sound, however. The following four sections examine all prominent accounts of the standards for knowledge. I argue that all of them fail to support (5). Admittedly, such an argument strategy does not offer any conclusive objection against standards variantism. But if what is said below is correct, it will at least show that standards variantism is ill-motivated.

3. The Nature of the Standards for Knowledge

On the standards-variantist assumption, the difference in linguistic dispositions between Smith and Mary/John is best explained by the difference in the standards for knowledge between LOW and HIGH. This provides us with a basis to test the standards-variantist assumption. That is, if our intuitions concerning Smith's and Mary and John's knowledge-attribution dispositions manifest the systematic

differences predicted by the variation of the standards for knowledge, standards variantism offers (or at least is in a position to offer) a proper explanation for stakes-shifting cases; otherwise, not.

A question immediately arises: what is the nature of the standards for knowledge? Without knowing what the standards for knowledge are, the standards-variantist assumption is simply non-evaluable. Here, my strategy is to examine all (prominent) accounts of the standards for knowledge, evaluate them individually, and see whether or not they can account for our intuitions concerning knowledge attributions in stakes-shifting cases.

Jonathan Schaffer has offered a useful framework for my project.[15] As Schaffer points out, the term 'the shift of the standards for knowledge,' when used by contextualists, may mean three different things: in his terms, the shift of 'threshold,' 'standard,' or 'alternative.' Schaffer focuses mainly on contextualism, but his framework can be extended to cover standards variantism in general without losing its plausibility. At any rate, this is how I will proceed. A caveat: the following will focus on how *contextualists* characterize epistemic standard rather than how other *non-contextualist* epistemologists characterize epistemic standard. While it is worth extending the following argument to cover what non-contextualists epistemologists have to say on this topic, this goes beyond the scope of the present study. As will become clear, we will have enough on our plate.

Following Schaffer's framework, I will distinguish two main accounts of the standards for knowledge, which I call the *general* and *particular accounts*. According to the general account, the shift of the standards for knowledge will affect any proposition with a certain property. The effect of the standards for knowledge over the logical space is, in Schaffer's term, "globally encompassing." The particular account contends that the shift of the standards for knowledge affects only a specific set of propositions that does not form a globally encompassing logical space. The effect of the standards on the logical space is, in Schaffer's term, "pointlike."

As a start, it is useful to describe the structure of my argument: according to our intuitions, a certain knowledge attribution, say, "S knows that p," is true in LOW but false in HIGH. In principle, we can find a proposition q (q ≠ p) such that q is an *epistemic counterpart of p for S* in LOW, while q is an epistemic counterpart of p for S in C if and only if the strength of S's epistemic position with respect to q is on epistemic par with the strength of S's epistemic position with respect to p in C. Suppose that S believes truly that q. Intuitively, we take "S knows that q" to be true in LOW as well. I will construct a certain epistemic counterpart q

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[15] See Schaffer, "What Shifts? Thresholds, Standards, or Alternatives?"

of p for S in LOW such that we intuitively think that "S knows that p" is false in HIGH, but that "S knows that q" is true in HIGH. I then argue that neither the general nor particular account is able to account for our intuitions regarding such knowledge attributions. More precisely, the general account has no resources for predicting that "S knows that q" is true in HIGH, while the particular account has no non-arbitrary way of making the prediction.

4. The Linear Account

There are two types of the general account. Call them the *linear* and *spherical accounts*. The linear account takes the standards for knowledge as specifying a *threshold* for S's epistemic position with respect to p such that S can be truthfully described as "knows that p" only if S's epistemic position with respect to p meets the threshold.

Two prominent linear accounts suggest themselves. According to the *evidentialist account*, the standards for knowledge set the threshold for the strength of evidence such that the strength of S's evidence for p must reach a certain threshold in order for S to be counted as "knows that p." On the *reliabilist account*, by contrast, the standards for knowledge set the threshold for the degree of reliability of belief-forming processes such that the degree of reliability of the process that forms S's belief that p must meet the threshold in order for S to be counted as "knows that p." I will focus on the reliabilist account, but the same point also applies to the evidentialist account.

Suppose that, in LOW, the degree of reliability of the belief-forming process of Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago is .80 ('the degree of reliability of Smith's belief is .80' in short). Moreover, suppose that, according to the standards for knowledge in play, the threshold of the degree of reliability in HIGH is .95, while the threshold in LOW is .75. The reliabilist account typically explains *Airport* as follows:

> Smith's knowledge claim "I know that the flight stops in Chicago" is true in LOW since the degree of reliability of Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago meets the (low) threshold for the degree of reliability. By contrast, Mary and John's denial of knowledge "Smith does not know that the flight stops in Chicago" is also true in HIGH since the degree of reliability of Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago is held fixed, and the latter does not meet the (high) standards in play in HIGH.

To test the reliabilist account's explanation, let us consider the epistemic counterparts of *The flight stops in Chicago* for Smith in LOW, i.e., Smith's beliefs whose degree of reliability is also .80 in LOW.

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Consider:

Airport'. Everything is like *Airport* except that Mary and John and Smith are friends, and that Mary and John know that Smith is a Lakers fan. Suppose that Mary knows that the Lakers won yesterday, and she also knows that Smith believes that the Lakers won yesterday since she saw him reading today *The New York Times*. Suppose that, in LOW, Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* is epistemically equivalent to his epistemic position with respect to *The Lakers won yesterday*. Suppose that, on their way to find the airline agent to check on the flight schedule, Mary and John are chatting. John asks Mary whether Smith knows that the Lakers won yesterday.

Consider two possible situations:

Airport(a). Mary says to John, "Yes, Smith knows the Lakers won yesterday."

Airport(b). Mary says to John, "No, he doesn't. Smith believes truly that the Lakers won yesterday, but he does not know."

Intuitively, *Airport(a)*, rather than *Airport(b)*, is the natural reply. I contend that a correct account of the standards for knowledge should be able to handle *Airport'*.

Unfortunately, however, the way the reliabilist account handles *Airport* cannot be employed to account for *Airport'*. Let us elaborate.

Airport' is so stipulated such that:

(6) In LOW, Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* is epistemically equivalent to his epistemic position with respect to *The Lakers won yesterday*.

On the reliabilist account, the strength of one's epistemic position with respect to p should be characterized by the degree of reliability of one's belief that p. Hence, from (6), the reliabilist account implies:

(7) In LOW, the degree of reliability of Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago is the same as the degree of reliability of Smith's belief that the Lakers won yesterday.

It is worth noting that standards variantism is compatible with position variantism. Proponents of standards variantism, however, usually assume that one's epistemic position does not vary with stakes-shifting cases—most (if not all) standards variantists are position invariantists. This assumption seems natural given that the standards-variantist assumption implies that one's epistemic position is *not* responsible for the shift in our intuitions regarding knowledge attributions in stakes-shifting cases. At any rate, proponents of standards variantism have endorsed:

(8) Smith's epistemic position with respect to p does not vary with LOW and

> HIGH.

(7) and (8) entail:

> (9) In HIGH, the degree of reliability of Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago is the same as the degree of reliability of Smith's belief that the Lakers won yesterday.

Arguably, (9) leads to:

> (10) In HIGH, Smith knows that the flight stops in Chicago if and only if Smith knows that the Lakers won yesterday.

But, according to our initial intuitions regarding *Airport'*, it seems that:

> (11) In HIGH, Smith does not know that the flight stops in Chicago.

From (10) and (11), we can conclude:

> (12) In HIGH, Smith does not know that the Lakers won yesterday.

This argument is valid. Proponents of the reliabilist account, as I see it, must accept all the premises. However, (12) indicates that *Airport(b)* rather than *Airport(a)* is the natural follow-up of *Airport'*. Counterintuitive.

Since infinitely many counterexamples can be constructed along this line and against another linear account such as the evidentialist account, the prospect of the linear account is dim. Without further ado, let us consider the other type of the general account.

5. The Spherical Account

On the spherical account, possible worlds can be ordered to form a certain "sphere" with the actual world serving at its center. The distance between possible worlds is often regarded as a function of the (overall) similarity between them.[16] The strength of S's epistemic position with respect to p is determined by the number of possible worlds in (or the area of) a possible-world sphere in which S can maintain a certain (epistemic) relation R to p. The stronger S's epistemic position with respect to p, the larger the number of possible worlds in (or the area of) the possible-world sphere in which S can maintain a relation R to p in the possible-world sphere.

The standards for knowledge specify an *area* of a sphere, which can be used to evaluate different spheres. A sphere may have an area identical to, smaller than, or larger than the one specified by the standards for knowledge. S's epistemic

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[16] See Duncan Pritchard, *Epistemic Luck* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2005); Wolfgang Freitag, "Safety, Sensitivity and 'Distant' Epistemic Luck," *Theoria* 80 (2014): 44–61.

position with respect to p satisfies the standards for knowledge if and only if S can maintain a relation R to p in the sphere whose area is no smaller than the area specified by the standards. Using the notion of an area of a sphere, the same standards for knowledge can be applied to different subjects and/or different propositions. For instance, to say that the strength of S_1's epistemic position with respect to p is stronger than the strength of S_2's epistemic position with respect to q (where $S_1 \neq S_2$ and $p \neq q$) is tantamount to saying that the area of the sphere with respect to which S_1 can maintain a relation R to p is larger than the area of the sphere with respect to which S_2 can maintain a relation R to q.

Different spherical accounts will formulate the (epistemic) relation R differently. In this section, I will only examine the *sensitivity account*, which is the most prominent spherical account. On this account, S's epistemic position is determined by the *sensitivity* of S's belief that p with respect to a sphere s, where S's belief that p is sensitive with respect to s if and only if S believes truly that p in the center world and, for all possible worlds w in s, (i) p is false in w, and (ii) S does not believe that p in w.[17] That the strength of S_1's epistemic position with respect to p is stronger than S_2's epistemic position with respect to q implies that the area of the sphere with respect to which S_1's belief that p is sensitive is larger than the area of the sphere with respect to which S_2's belief that q is sensitive. The standards for knowledge specify an area r such that the area of the sphere with respect to which S's belief that p is sensitive must not be smaller than r in order for S to be counted as "knows that p." In other words, S's epistemic position with respect to p satisfies the standards for knowledge if and only if the area of the sphere with respect to which S's belief that p is sensitive is no smaller than the area specified by the standards. Hence, to say that the standards for knowledge are context-sensitive amounts to saying that the area of the sphere with respect to which one's belief that p must remain sensitive in order to be counted as "knows that p" may vary with contexts.[18]

The sensitivity account typically explains *Airport* as follows:

The flight stops in Chicago in the actual world. The possible worlds in which the flight does *not* stop in Chicago form a possible-world sphere s with the actual world serving as its center. Let the possible-world sphere s' be a subset of s such that, for all w' in s', Smith does not believe that the flight stops in Chicago in w', and the possible-world sphere s'' be a subset of s and of which s' is a proper subset such that, for some w'' in s'', Smith believes that the flight stops in Chicago in

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[17] See Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

[18] See Keith DeRose, "Solving the Skeptical Problem," *Philosophical Review* 104, 1 (1995): 1–52.

w''.It follows that Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago is sensitive with respect to s' but insensitive with respect to s''.

In LOW, the standards for knowledge are relatively low such that they specify a (relatively small) area r, whichis smaller than the area of s'. Since Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago is sensitive with respect to s', his belief satisfies the standards for knowledge in LOW. Therefore, "Smith knows that the flight stops in Chicago" is true in LOW.

However, in HIGH, the standards for knowledge are stringent such that they specify a (relatively large) area r', which is larger than the area of s''. Since Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago is insensitive with respect to s'', his belief does not satisfy the standards for knowledge in HIGH. Therefore, "Smith does not know that the flight stops in Chicago" is also true in HIGH.

The way the sensitivity account handles *Airport*, however, cannot be employed to account for *Airport'*. Let us elaborate.

Airport' is so stipulated such that:

(6) In LOW, Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* is epistemically equivalent to his epistemic position with respect to *The Lakers won yesterday*.

According to the spherical account, to say that S_1's epistemic position with respect to p is epistemically equivalent to S_2's epistemic position with respect to q amounts to saying that the area of the sphere with respect to which S_1's belief that p remains sensitive is identical to the area of the sphere with respect to which S_2's belief that q remains sensitive. That is, (6) is tantamount to:

(13) The area of the sphere s' with respect to which Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago remains sensitive in LOW is identical to the area of the sphere v with respect to which Smith's belief that the Lakers won yesterday remains sensitive in LOW.

As noted, standards variantists assume that:

(8) Smith's epistemic position with respect to p does not vary with LOW and HIGH.

(8) and (13) entail:

(14) The area of the sphere s' with respect to which Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago remains sensitive in HIGH is identical to the area of the sphere v with respect to which Smith's belief that The Lakers won yesterday remains sensitive in HIGH.

On the sensitivity account's explanation of *Airport*, the following holds:

(15) In HIGH, Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago is insensitive.

(15) indicates that the area of the sphere s' with respect to which Smith's belief that the flight stops in Chicago remains sensitive is smaller than the area specified by the standards for knowledge in HIGH. However, given (14), it follows that the area of the sphere v with respect to which Smith's belief that the Lakers won yesterday remains sensitive is also smaller than the area specified by the standards for knowledge in HIGH. That is, from (14) and (15), we get:

(16) In HIGH, Smith's belief that the Lakers won yesterday is insensitive.

Since S knows that p only if S's belief that p is sensitive, (16) thus implies:

(12) In HIGH, Smith does not know that the Lakers won yesterday.

The argument above is valid. Proponents of the sensitivity account, as I see it, must accept all the premises. (12), however, indicates that *Airport(b)* rather than *Airport(a)* is the natural follow-up of *Airport'*. Counterintuitive.

Since infinitely many counterexamples can be constructed along the similar line, the argument above indicates that the sensitivity account fails to explain our intuitions regarding cases like *Airport* (and *Airport'*). Hence, the spherical account is not promising in accounting for stakes-shifting cases, either.

Let us take stock. We have seen that the general account fails to predict the variations of the attributor's linguistic disposition in stakes-shifting cases. Both the linear and spherical accounts have suffered from a similar problem, namely, they fail to account for our intuitions regarding some epistemic counterparts q of p for S in stakes-shifting cases. In the present case, they mistakenly take *Airport(b)*, as opposed to *Airport(a)*, as the natural follow-up of *Airport'*. The moral, I take it, is this: in stakes-shifting cases, we intuitively think that the attributors' linguistic dispositions do not undergo a global variation. When the attributor counts the subject as "know that p" in LOW but "does not know that p" in HIGH, the attributor does not, at least not always, also take the subject as "does not know that q" in HIGH for all epistemic counterparts q of p for S in LOW. The fundamental flaw of the general accountis its implication that the attributors exhibit a certain global variation in their linguistic dispositions in stakes-shifting cases.

6. The Particular View

Some standards variantists opt for the particular account according to which the variations of the standards for knowledge do not have a global impact on the attributor's linguistic dispositions. The most prominent particular account is the *relevant alternative account (of the standards for knowledge)* (hereafter 'the RA account'). The RA account characterizes the variations of the standards for knowledge in terms of the variations of the set of *relevant alternatives*. The idea is

that the subject S counts as "knowing that p" only if S's epistemic position with regard to p enables S to rule out all relevant alternatives to p, specified by the standards for knowledge in play.

The RA account typically explains *Airport* as follows:

> In *Airport*, Smith's evidence is unable to rule out the proposition that *The itinerary contains a misprint*. In LOW, however, the standards for knowledge do not specify the proposition to be a relevant alternative. As a result, Smith counts as "knows that the flight stops in Chicago" even though he is unable to rule out *The itinerary contains a misprint*. By contrast, the standards for knowledge in HIGH do specify *The itinerary contains a misprint* to be a relevant alternative. Accordingly, Mary and John's utterance "Smith does not know that the flight stops in Chicago" is true in HIGH.

Some might offer a similar RA account's explanation for *Airport'*:

> In *Airport'*, Smith's evidence is unable to rule out the proposition, say, that *The New York Times contains a misprint*. In HIGH, however, the standards for knowledge do not specify the proposition to be a relevant alternative. As a result, Smith counts as "knows that the Lakers won yesterday" in HIGH.

The core of the RA account's explanation of *Airport* and *Airport'* consists of:

> RA1: The alternative *The flight itinerary contains a misprint* is relevant in HIGH.

> RA2: The alternative *The New York Times contains a misprint* is irrelevant in HIGH.

Obviously, proponents of the RA account need to explain *why* RA1 and RA2 hold. Otherwise, the RA account's explanation is just an *ad hoc* story tailor-made to account for whatever our intuitions are with respect to stakes-shifting cases. What we need are principles that determine whether an alternative is relevant or not. Call them 'principles of relevance.' The importance of specifying the principles of relevance cannot be overemphasized. "The success of the RA approach," as Vogel puts it, "depends upon there being a principled distinction between relevant and irrelevant alternatives."[19]

David Lewis was the first to articulate a complex system of principles of relevance (hereafter 'the Lewisian system').[20] For the present purposes, it is appropriate to focus on the Lewisian system, since it remains one of the most comprehensive accounts on the market.

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[19] Jonathan Vogel, "The New Relevant Alternatives Theory," *Philosophical Perspectives* 13 (1999): 168.

[20] David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74, 4 (1996): 549–67.

A key feature of the Lewisian system is that its principles are motivated solely by our pre-theoretically intuitive judgments concerning knowledge attributions, an approach much like what Roderick Chisholm calls "particularism."[21] Such a particularist approach is especially dubious if our intuitions lead to theoretically incoherent principles, or if they generate conflicting judgments. Indeed, such problems crop up in the Lewisian system. As Lewis notices, some of his principles will lead to skepticism if not restrained by certain *ad hoc* conditions[22]—Lewis bravely and blatantly admits that he has no solution to this problem. Lewis also considers the possibility that people may have intuitions incompatible with the Lewisian system's verdicts, and his response, surprisingly again, is simply to give in and conclude that "we have reached a standoff."[23]

While I believe that such general problems are very serious—and they may very well be the root of all the problems the Lewisian system eventually faces—I will not pursue the issue further. Instead, I will continue the argumentative strategy of this paper and focus on the question whether or not the Lewisian system can account for stakes-shifting cases involving epistemic counterparts such as *Airport'*. My answer is that it cannot.

I offer two reasons. First, the most promising Lewisian principle to handle RA2 (i.e., the *reliability principle*; see below) has failed to do it job. Second, and perhaps worse, even granted that the reliability principle can handle RA2, the principle still has an undesirable result of falsifying RA1, and there seems to be no way, not according tothe Lewisian system anyway, to get rid of this undesirable result. I will elaborate them respectively.

Recall that if RA2 is to hold at all, it has to be sanctioned by the principles of relevance specifying the sufficient condition for an alternative being irrelevant. Lewis calls them "permissive principles." He listed four such principles, but only one of them is particularly relevant to RA2. Here is how Lewis characterizes the principle: "Within limits, we are entitled to take [perception, memory, and testimony] for granted."[24] We may formulate this principle as follows:

> *The reliability principle*. If an alternative p is incompatible with the assumption that perception, memory, and testimony do not fail, then, defeasibly, p is not relevant.

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[21] Roderick Chisholm, *The Foundations of Knowing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 66.

[22] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 556.

[23] Lewis, 561.

[24] Lewis, 558.

The reliability principle appears to handle RA2 quite well. The alternative *The New York Times contains a misprint* is incompatible with the assumption that Smith's testimony (i.e., *The New York Times*) does not fail. Hence, *The New York Times contains a misprint* is irrelevant in HIGH.

Appearances are deceptive, however. A closer scrutiny reveals that there is in fact no room for the Lewisian system to account for RA2. To elaborate, notice that the reliability principle is defeasible—some other principles may overthrow its verdict. Morerover, it does seem that the reliability principle's verdict on RA2 is overthrown by two other Lewisian principles.

"The possibility that actually obtains," according to Lewis, "is never properly ignored."[25] Hence, the following holds:

> *The actuality principle.* If p is true in the actual world, then, defeasibly, p is always relevant.[26]

Moreover, Lewis also thinks that if an alternative resembles another, and if "one of them may not be properly ignored, neither may the other."[27] This gives us:

> *The resemblance principle.* If p saliently resembles q, and p is relevant (in virtue of principles other than this one), then, defeasibly, q is relevant.

The actuality and resemblance principles together imply that RA2 does not hold. The actual world in which *The New York Times* does not contain a misprint saliently resembles the counterfactual world in which *The New York Times* contains a misprint—after all, the only difference between these two worlds is that *The New York Times* contains a misprint in one but not in the other. By the actuality principle, *The New York Times does not contain a misprint* is relevant. Moreover, since *The New York Times does not contain a misprint* is relevant, the alternative *The New York Times contains a misprint* is also relevant, by the resemblance principle. That is, the actuality and resemblance principles overthrow the reliability principle's verdict on *The New York Times contains a misprint*.

Lewis himself has also noted that the application of the actuality principle and the resemblance principle has to be restricted; otherwise they will lead to skepticism.[28] Unfortunately, Lewis admits that he does not know how to give a non-ad-hoc restriction. While this is surely a vice for the Lewisian system in general, it might be interpreted as a virtue for the particular account, as proponents of the particular account can then claim that the aforementioned denial of RA2 is

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[25] Lewis, 554.

[26] By actuality, Lewis means the subject's actuality, see Lewis, 554.

[27] Lewis, 556.

[28] Lewis, 556–57.

implausible as it is based on an unrestricted usage of the actuality principle and the resemblance principle. Whether this is a promising reply depends on whether a non-ad-hoc restriction on the usage of these two principles can be offered. However, this just brings us back to the problem Lewis is facing. And it seems that the prospect of solving it is dim.

Worse, even if we granted that the reliability principle is able to account for RA2, the Lewisian system still fails to account for *Airport'*. In fact, the reliability principle is too strong: not only does it rule that the alternative *The New York Times contains a misprint* is irrelevant in HIGH (i.e., RA2), it also rules that the alternative *The flight itinerary contains a misprint* is irrelevant in HIGH (i.e., the denial of RA1). For not only is the alternative *The New York Times contains a misprint* incompatible with the assumption that (Smith's) testimony (i.e., *The New Yorks time*) does not fail, the alternative *The flight itinerary contains a misprint* is also incompatible with the assumption that (Smith's) testimony (i.e., the flight itinerary) does not fail. In other words, the reliability principle is able to obtain RA2 only at the expense of RA1.

As far as I can tell, there is only one way to get around this problem, that is, to argue that the reliability principle's verdict on *The flight itinerary contains a misprint* is overthrown by other principles of relevance. In what follows, I will examine two most promising candidates that can do the job. I find both of them wanting. More precisely, each of the proposed principles is either implausible on its own or too strong such that not only does it overthrow the reliability principle's verdict on *The flight itinerary contains a misprint*, it also overthrows the principle's verdict on *The New York Times contains a misprint*. In other words, either the proposed principles are implausible, or they are able to handle RA2 only at the expense of RA1.

First, on Lewis's account, "[an alternative] not ignored at all is *ipso facto* not properly ignored."[29] That is:

> *The attention principle.* If an alternative p is entertained (or is not ignored), then, defeasibly, p is relevant.

The attention principle implies both RA1 and RA2. On the one hand, since Mary and John are considering whether the flight itinerary contains a misprint, *The flight itinerary contains a misprint* is relevant in HIGH (thereby overthrowing the reliability principle's verdict, as desired). On the other hand, since *The New York Times contains a misprint* has not been entertained, its status of relevance is not affected.

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[29] Lewis, 559.

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This reply is problematic since whether *The New York Times contains a misprint* is relevant or not does not seem to depend on whether the possibility of *The New York Times* containing a misprint is entertained in HIGH or not. For instance, suppose that we modify *Airport(a)* as follows:

> *Airport(a)*.* Mary says to John, "Yes, Smith knows that the Lakers won yesterday. *The New York Times* rarely misprints the result of basketball games."

Intuitively, *Airport(a)** is still more natural than *Airport(b)*. Yet, in *Airport(a)**, *The New York Times contains a misprint* is not ignored and should be counted as relevant in HIGH by the attention principle, contradicting RA2.

More importantly, the attention principle is implausible. It is widely agreed that merely entertaining an alternative does not automatically render it relevant.[30] John Hawthorne mentions a possible refinement:

> *The attention principle'.* If an alternative p is *seriously* entertained, then, defeasibly, p is relevant.[31]

Arguably, Mary and John have entertained seriously *The flight itinerary contains a misprint* but not *The New York Times contains a misprint*. Hence, the attention principle' predicts that the former is a relevant alternative (thereby overthrowing the reliability principle's verdict, as desired), while leaving the latter's status of relevance intact. Unfortunately, the attention principle' is still implausible as serious attention is not always a sufficient condition for the relevance of alternatives. For instance, a paranoiac agent could entertain remote alternatives seriously, but that does not automatically render them relevant.[32]

Let us look at another proposal. Lewis also thinks that "when error would be especially disastrous, few possibilities are properly ignored."[33] Hence:

> *The high-stakes principle.* If the stakes of p are high, then, defeasibly, few alternative q to p are irrelevant.

Mary and John's stakes in whether or not the flight itinerary contains a misprint are high, but their stakes in whether or not *The New York Times* contains a misprint are low. At first sight, the high-stakes principle appears to correctly predict that *The flight itinerary contains a misprint* is a relevant alternative in

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[30] John Hawthorne, *Knowledge and Lotteries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 63–64; Michael Blome-Tillmann, "Knowledge and Presuppositions," *Mind* 118, 470 (2009): 246–47.

[31] Hawthorne, *Knowledge and Lotteries*, 64.

[32] See Vogel, "The New Relevant Alternatives Theory," 164ff for more objections to the attention principle.

[33] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 566, Footnote 12.

HIGH (thereby overthrowing the reliability principle's verdict, as desired) while leaving the status of relevance of *The New York Times contains a misprint* intact.

The high-stakes principle's prediction of RA1, however, is problematic. Specifically, the way the principle renders *The flight itinerary contains a misprint* relevant can be exploited to show that it would be too difficult for Mary and John to obtain the knowledge of the flight's layover. Suppose that Mary and John go to check the flight schedule with the airline agent and learn that the flight stops in Chicago. Intuitively, they thus know that the flight stops in Chicago—but wait, since the stakes are very high, the alternative that the airline agent has misread the flight information on the screen should also be relevant, and Mary and John are not in a position to rule this alternative out. So, they should not know that the flight stops in Chicago after all. Suppose that Mary and John ask the airline agent to double check and are told the same answer. Do they know now? Not if they are able to rule out the alternative that the airline agent has been impatient with them and does not double-check properly—since the stakes are high, this alternative should be relevant as well. But they are in no position to rule out that alternative. So, they still do not know whether the flight stops in Chicago… This shows that the high-stakes principle is not a very plausible explanation of RA1 in the first place.

Let us take stock. In this section, we consider whether or not the RA account (or, more precisely, the Lewisian system) is able to handle stakes-shifting cases involving epistemic counterparts. Specifically, we ask the question whether or not the Lewisian system can give rise to RA1 and RA2. Our examination tells us that it cannot. On the one hand, the Lewisian system does not seem to have the theoretical resources to handle RA2 in the first place, as the reliability principle's verdict is overthrown the actuality and resemblance principles. One the other hand, granted that the reliability principle can handle RA2, the Lewisian system now has difficulties handling RA1. Either the principles that get us RA1 are implausible on their own (i.e., the attention principle, the attention principle', the high-stakes principle) or they are able to handle RA1 only at the expense of RA2 (i.e., the reliability principle, the attention principle).

I conclude that the Lewisian system (the RA account) is unable to give a non-ad-hoc explanation of why RA1 and RA2 hold. The Lewisian system (the RA account), hence, fails to account for stakes-shifting cases like *Airport'*.

7. Position Variantism and Stakes-Shifting Cases

Where are we now? We have seen that the standards-variantist assumption is supported by the argument (1)-(5). If the previous three sections are correct, the conclusion (i.e., (5)) is threatened.

Since (1)-(5) is valid, (at least) one of (1)-(4) has to be rejected. Which one? Arguably, (2) and (3) are safe. (2) relies on two intuitive ideas. Firstly, the widely accepted account of knowledge that S knows that p if and only if S believes truly that p, and S's epistemic position with respect to p satisfies the standards for knowledge in play. Secondly, S believes truly that p in both LOW and HIGH. (3) is also unproblematic, since it seems plausible that Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* and the standards for knowledge in play do *not* vary with both LOW and HIGH. At any rate, I will not challenge (3) here.

This leaves us (1) and (4); either the truth value of "Smith knows that the flight stops in Chicago" does not vary with LOW and HIGH (i.e., not-(1)), or Smith's epistemic position with respect to p does vary with LOW and HIGH (i.e., not-(4)). Put more generally, either we reject our initial intuitions regarding knowledge attributions in stakes-shifting cases—i.e., the truth value of "S knows that p" varies with LOW and HIGH—or we endorse what we may call *position variantism*, the view that the subject's epistemic position with respect to p may vary with contexts in an epistemically interesting way (in particular, S's epistemic position with respect to p may vary with LOW and HIGH).

I suggest that we should opt for position variantism, if only to respect our initial intuitions. I will not develop a full-fledged account of position variantism here. What I will do, rather, is to point out that position variantism is very promising in explaining stakes-shifting cases. This gives us the incentive to be serious about the view.[34] I will then discuss and reject one possible objection to position variantism (Section 8).

On the position-variantist explanation, the variability of the truth value of "S knows that p" in stakes-shifting cases is derived from the variability of S's epistemic position with respect to pin such cases. More precisely, S's epistemic position with respect to p is weaker in HIGH than it is in LOW such that, while the standards for knowledge in play remain constant across LOW and HIGH, S's epistemic position with respect to p satisfies the standards for knowledge in LOW

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[34] An additional motivation of position variantism comes from the fact that this view (or something along similar lines) can offer the most plausible "contextualist" solution to skepticism. See Kok Yong Lee, "On the Standards-Variantist Solution to Skepticism," *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism* 7, 3 (2017): 173–98.

but fails to do so in HIGH. Let us, again, focus on *Airport*. A typical position-variantist explanation is as follows:

> Smith's utterance "I know that the flight stops in Chicago" is true in LOW since Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* is strong enough to satisfy the standards for knowledge in play. By contrast, Mary and John's utterance "Smith does not know that the flight stops in Chicago" is also true in HIGH since Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* is not strong enough to satisfy the (same) standards for knowledge in play.

To test whether this is a plausible account, we may consider *Airport'*. As noted, we intuitively think that *Airport(a)*, rather than *Airport(b)*, is the natural follow-up of *Airport'*.

To its credit, position variantism can deliver this verdict. According to position variantism, Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* varies with LOW and HIGH, but this, by itself, does not imply that Smith's epistemic position with respect to *The Lakers won yesterday* (or any other epistemic counterparts of *The flight stops in Chicago* for Smith) vary with LOW and HIGH.

8. Position Variantism vs. Intellectualism

Position variantism has its criticisms. One main worry is that position variantism is incompatible with a very plausible epistemic principle:

> *Intellectualism*. The factors that turn one's true belief into knowledge are exclusively truth-relevant.[35]

In the present terminology, intellectualism is tantamount to the view that S's epistemic position with respect to p depends exclusively on S's truth-relevant factors with respect to p.

Notice that many are willing to assume that:

(17) S's truth-relevant factors with respect to p do not vary with LOW and HIGH.

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[35] See DeRose, *The Case for Contextualism*, 24. For recent criticisms to intellectualism, see Hawthorne, *Knowledge and Lotteries*; Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests*; Fantl and McGrath, *Knowledge in an Uncertain World*; Matthew McGrath, "Contextualism and Intellectualism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 24 (2010): 383–405. For a recent defense of intellectualism, see Kok Yong Lee, "On Two Recent Arguments against Intellectualism," *NCCU Philosophical Journal*, forthcoming.

(17), together with intellectualism, imply that S's epistemic position with respect to p does not vary with LOW and HIGH (i.e., the denial of position variantism). In other words, intellectualism and position variantism are incompatible.

I want to draw a different conclusion, however. I think intellectualism and position variantism are compatible; we should give up (17). Arguing against (17), however, goes beyond the scope of this paper. Here, I will settle for a weaker conclusion. I will argue, instead, that the denial of (17) is not totally implausible, and that philosophers are in no position to simply take (17) for granted.

To make my point, it suffices to show that there are theories on the market which (a) are position-variantist in character, and (b) can be employed to falsify (17). That is, theories that imply:

> (18) S's truth-relevant factors with respect to p may vary with LOW and HIGH in an epistemically interesting way.

So long as such theories are plausible enough to deserve serious attention, philosophers cannot simply assume (17).

For simplicity's sake, I will focus on one such theory. Ram Neta has developed a theory of evidence whose core idea is that what counts as one's evidence for p may vary with contexts in an epistemically interesting way.[36] It should be noted that although Neta calls himself a "contextualist," his account does not belong to standard-variantism as defined here.[37]

Suppose that the set of propositions $\{p_1,...,p_n\}$ is S's evidence for p_{n+1}.[38] Details aside, Neta argues that S's evidence for p_{n+1} is affected by the following rule:

> (R) If at time t, S_1 raises a hypothesis H that is an uneliminated counterpossibility with respect to S_2's knowing that p, then S_2's body of evidence at t is to just those p_i of $\{p_1,...,p_n\}$ that is introspectively available to S, at t whether or not H is true,

where a hypothesis H is an uneliminated counterpossibility with respect to S_2's knowing that p just in case (i) H implies that S does not know that p at t, and (ii) H

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[36] Ram Neta, "Contextualism and the Problem of the External World," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 66, 1 (2003): 1–31. Elsewhere, I discuss Neta's account in more detail. See Lee, "On the Standards-Variantist Solution to Skepticism," 13ff. Stanley also mentions but does not develop a similar view, but he finds this line of thought "overwhelmingly plausible," see Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests*, 124.

[37] This just means that while Neta is happy to label himself as a 'contextualist,' his view (or at least an interpretation of it) is in fact radically different from the orthodox contextualism.

[38] Neta takes one's evidence to be one's mental states. In this paper, I will simply take one's evidence to be a set of propositions. I do not take a particular stance on the nature of evidence here.

and "S knows that p at t" are introspectively indistinguishable for S.[39] Crucial to (R) is the idea that what counts as one's evidence for p varies with contexts, depending on the alternative H to p that is in question in the present context.

Evidence is a kind of truth-relevant factors. If Neta is right, S's truth-relevant factors (i.e., evidence) with respect to p may vary with contexts in an epistemically interesting way, depending (in part) on whether an uneliminated counterpossibility is raised or not. This result supports (18), for Neta's theory can be naturally extended to account for cases like *Airport*.

For instance, in HIGH, Mary has raised an uneliminated counterpossibility that the itinerary contains a misprint. According to (R), Smith's evidence for *The flight stops in Chicago* would be restricted to those propositions that are introspectively available to Smith, whether or not the itinerary contains a misprint or not. Presumably, Smith's evidence, so restricted, no longer contains propositions such as *The itinerary does not contain a misprint*. "Smith knows that the flight stops in Chicago" is true in LOW but not in HIGH since Smith's truth-relevant factors (i.e., evidence) with respect to *The flight stops in Chicago* have varied across LOW and HIGH, i.e., not-(17).

I do not intend to argue for Neta's theory. Nor do I think Neta's account is the only plausible, or tenable, approach to position variantism. My point, rather, is to highlight the fact that it is not impossible, nor implausible, to argue for (a kind of) position variantism that leads to (18).

In other words, the fact that Neta's theory can accommodate (18) should not be taken as a direct justification for (18) and/or position variantism. Rather, this fact suggests that one is in no position to simply assume that position variantism and intellectualism are incompatible. A lot more still needs to be said about whether position variantism is in fact a correct view; likewise for whether (18) is a correct characterization of stakes-shifting cases like *Airport*.

9. Conclusion

I have shown that (a) our initial intuitions regarding knowledge attributions in stakes-shifting cases, (b) position variantism, and (c) standards variantism are jointly inconsistent. I suggest that we should give up standards variantism. Focusing on *Airport*, I argue that all prominent accounts of the standards for knowledge have failed to deliver the correct verdicts on our intuitions regarding stakes-shifting cases.

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[39] Neta, "Contextualism and the Problem of the External World," 23–24.

The moral is this: the only way we can preserve our initial intuitions regarding knowledge attributions in stakes-shifting cases is to appeal to position variantism. This is an important lesson, since the position-variantist explanation has been largely overlooked in the contemporary literature. One reason that position variantism has slipped under the radar, perhaps, is that many have regarded it as incompatible with intellectualism.

I have shown that position variantism and intellectualism are compatible. The price for marrying position variantism with intellectualism is to endorse the view that S's truth-relevant factors with respect to p may vary with contexts in an epistemically interesting way. Is this the right price to pay? I do not give an answer here. If what has been argued above is correct, perhaps this is the price we have to pay if we are going to respect our intuitions regarding stakes-shifting cases.[40]