



# IF ALL KNOWLEDGE IS EMPIRICAL, CAN IT BE NECESSARY?

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is meant to examine whether there is an impossibility of non-empirically known truths. An attempt will be made to show that both analytic truths and *a priori* knowledge is inherently either empirical or meaningless. From that notion, a framework of *a posteriori* knowledge will be used to determine whether it is possible to know what constitutes as necessary knowledge. Epistemic luck will be shown to interfere with the justification of empirical truths and furthermore, that Gettier examples deny the equivalence of justified true beliefs as knowledge. A Kripkean notion will be applied to demonstrate the existence of necessary *a posteriori* truths, although it is impossible to know whether *a posteriori* truths are necessary or not. Finally, contextualism will be employed to argue against the high standard of knowledge that skepticism introduces.

The conclusion is that within a framework of empiricism, there is a possibility of necessary *a posteriori* truths, even when using the high standard of knowledge the skeptical account introduces. It is however, impossible to know which truths are necessary and which are contingent. From there, a pragmatic account is used to conclude that there are only contingent truths. However, there is also a low standard of knowledge, which is introduced with the aid of contextualism, which can be used effectively to say that it is possible to know things in casual relations, although skeptical contexts that employ a high standard of knowledge still exist.

## **Key Concepts**

Necessary truth, justified true belief, empiricism, skepticism, Gettier examples, epistemology, contextualism, knowledge, pragmatism, epistemic luck, analyticity.

## Preface

Epistemology has intrigued me for a long time. The interest became apparent when I started learning philosophy, ethics to be precise, in the autumn of 2009. While everyone was busy arguing, whether or not someone should be saved from a certain death, by asserting a lot of different things in a short amount of time, I wondered how it is possible to assert things at all. For a long time I endorsed a weak form of skepticism and that notion was only strengthened when I attended a contemporary philosophy class that I realized was relevant to my interests. The lecturer was Simon Barker, whom I later asked to be my thesis instructor. My request, to my delight, was met with a considerable amount of eagerness. I found the idea of meta-problems interesting and decided to write my thesis about meta-empirical problems within a world where everything relies on empirical inferences. Although that topic changed (more than once!), I always hoped to write about an epistemological topic. With the help of a selected few, which a few words will be dedicated to here, I succeeded in doing so. I want to thank Simon Reginald Barker for his guidance and criticism, but mostly for his sincere interest in my work. I want to thank my dear friends, Árný Björk Sigurðardóttir and Candice Michelle Goddard, for invaluable proof-reading. Finally, I want to thank my significant other, Kristbjörg Gunnarsdóttir, for her unconditional support and understanding.

Reykjavík, April 2012,

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## 1. Introduction

The research question this thesis attempts to answer is as follows: “If all knowledge is empirical, can it be necessary?” Analytic and *a priori* statements have often been portrayed as being necessary. It will however be shown that *a priori* statements are tautological, thus meaningless, and that statements of such nature cannot have an impact on *a posteriori* ones. Furthermore, it will be shown that there are no grounds for distinguishing between analytic statements and empirical statements because analytic statements are, as will be argued for, *a posteriori*. Furthermore, it will be argued that problems arise with the applications of either analytic or *a priori* notions to statements. When the idea of *a priori* statements as a possible vessel for knowledge has been eradicated, the framework will be used to investigate whether the remaining *a posteriori* knowledge can be necessary. A pragmatic account will be used to examine the nature of necessity and if truth is conditional when supposed necessary propositions rely upon contingent principles. It will be demonstrated that epistemic luck affects empirical knowledge, making it difficult for empirical statements to surmount as knowledge. Gettier examples will further reiterate this notion by showing how justified true beliefs (JTB), and even JTB with a supplementary condition that creates JTB+, fail to count as knowledge. To make knowledge more than contingent on the lack of Gettier conditions, something further is needed. A few accounts of justification will be looked at in regards to regress arguments. Then, a Kripkean notion will be used to show that there are necessary *a posteriori* truths, although it will then be argued that it is impossible to know whether they are necessary or not. A pragmatic account will then be used to state that all truths are thus contingent. Skepticism is prevalent throughout the discussion but a contextualist account will be used as a response to the skeptical argument and further establish a concluding solution to the research question.

A distinction will not be made between synthetic statements and *a posteriori* ones. Furthermore, an internalist framework of empiricism will be employed in which an internalist view of justification is endorsed, rather than an externalist one. It will also be argued that fallible knowledge is impossible. It should be noted that “epistemic” and “epistemological” will not be used interchangeably. “Epistemic” will be used in the sense “of or relating to knowledge” while “epistemological” will be used in the sense “of or relating to epistemology”. Finally, the words “validity”, “sentence”, “statement” and “proposition”, will be used with respect to their philosophical meaning.

## 2. The Impossibility of Non-Empirically Known Truths

The Spanish philosopher Miguel De Unamuno once wrote that the reason that “A is A is the truest of all truths is precisely because there is nothing in it” (Ruja, 1936, p. 401). Victor, a character from De Unamuno’s novel, *Mist*, reaches this conclusion when explaining what the truest of all truths is (Unamuno, 2000, p. 289). Victor’s conclusion is similar to what Ludwig Wittgenstein once wrote, “I know *e.g.* nothing about the weather, when I know that it rains or does not rain” (Wittgenstein, 1961, § 4.461). What De Unamuno and Wittgenstein both demonstrate, is the tautological nature of analytic truths.

The impossibility of non-empirically known truths is plausible. This chapter will explain the arguments leading to that conclusion. Wittgenstein’s view on knowledge without experience will be used to address some fundamental epistemological problems with *a priori* knowledge. The writings of Williard Van Ormand Quine will be employed to argue against analytic statements being true. The intended result is to show that if *a priori* and analytic statements do not contain knowledge, then all knowledge is confined within the realm of empiricism. It will be shown that analytic statements cannot grant *a priori* knowledge, only *a posteriori* knowledge, in which case there is no meaningful difference between analytic and *a posteriori* truths. The lack of difference rules out categorization between these previously incorrectly distinguished types of knowledge. It will also be shown that *a priori* statements can only convey meaning about *a priori* statements, thus limiting their influence in the actual world. Therefore, all knowledge that is not meaningless must be empirical.

### 2.1. Analytic Truths

Quine’s article *On Empirically Equivalent Systems of the World* offers us an example of how different empirical systems can be the equals of current theoretical systems (Quine, 1975, p. 318). The doctrine that natural science is empirically under-determined by all observable events seems *prima facie* to be plausible. If all events can be accounted for by a single empirical theory, then those same events can be equally justified in another system that is incompatible with the first (Quine, 1975, p. 313). To show that natural science is under-determined, Quine sets forth a thesis of under-determination. The thesis states that for any single formulation of a theory, there must be another formulation that is empirically equivalent but cannot be rendered to give results that make it logically equivalent to the first formulation by any reconstrual of predicates (Quine, 1975, p. 320). Thus, the two formulations are empirically equivalent but logically incompatible (Quine, 1975, p. 320).

What is meant by reconstrual of predicates is the possibility of making logically incompatible systems compatible by reconstrual of the predicates of our language. If two “word-to-world” objects, namely electrons and molecules, were switched in an alternative theory, the scientific foundation, that theories about molecules and electrons are based upon, would not change. The only thing that would be different is the naming of electrons and molecules. One could argue that the theories are fundamentally different, molecules do not orbit electrons, and electrons do not include protons, although it will be shown that this criticism is ill-founded. At first glance, it seems as though the two different theories are incompatible but when facing further scrutiny, it becomes evident that the theories differ only on a terminological level. The two theories are equivalent on an empirical level. The same theory is formulated by these two distinct formulations despite the fact that they are incompatible when viewed through the lens of logic (Quine, 1975, p. 319).

From this example (and others), Quine draws the conclusion that the only hope for the thesis of under-determination is in application to theories that imply infinite observation conditionals and too ill-assorted to be exactly encompassed by any finite formulation, that is, without foreign matter. Firstly, the thesis must be about the world. Secondly, it must state that the observation conditionals that are in fact true in the world are thus ill-assorted. Thirdly, it must be read as stating that we can encompass more of these true observation conditionals in a loose formulation than in a tight one. Fourthly, it must be that for any such loose formulation there will be others, empirically equivalent but logically incompatible with it and incapable of being rendered logically equivalent to it by any reconstrual of predicates (Quine, 1975, p. 324).

This is the essence of under-determination. There are infinitely many observation conditionals and they must be contained within a finite formulation. Any formulation would have to be equal to their conjunctions, which are of infinite magnitude. That is impossible and thus every formulation must include some stuffing as Quine puts it, to round out the formulation. The problem lies not with the finite formulations containing infinite conjunctions, it rests upon the fact that the stuffing is inconsistent. There is no single stuffing readily available and with the freedom of choosing what stuffing is subjectively best suited for the formulation, comes the inescapable under-determination (Quine, 1975, p. 324).

The claim that the thesis of under-determination as a theoretical thesis lessens the more it is examined although it retains significance in terms of what is practically feasible. The most favourable version of the thesis available is as follows:

“We are capable of encompassing more true observation conditionals in a loose theory formulation than in any tight system that we might discover and formulate independently of any such loose formulation” (Quine, 1975, p. 326).

However, the thesis still states that for each such formulation there will be others that are empirically equivalent but logically incompatible with it and incapable of being rendered logically equivalent to it by any reconstrual of predicates (Quine, 1975, p. 326). Even in this form, the thesis is moot, since it no longer makes sense. The question then becomes whether the power of reconstrual is underestimated. It still makes sense that any theory formulation we may hope to devise, as an adequate system of the world, will be a loose one: There are other systems empirically equivalent but logically incompatible. This is illustrated by the trivial example of electrons and molecules. Those incompatibilities were reconciled by reconstruing the empirically equivalent predicates. It is debatable whether there are also bound to be cases that are not thus reconcilable (Quine, 1975, p. 326). An easy way to recognize empirical equivalence of two theory formulations is by seeing a reconstrual of predicates that will carry the one into the other. However, reconstrual of predicates cannot be the only way to empirical equivalence. We might study two incompatible theory formulations, trying in vain to imagine an observation that could decide between them, and we might conclude that they are empirically equivalent; we might conclude this without seeing a reconciling reconstrual of predicates. There could still be a reconciling reconstrual of predicates never to be discovered (Quine, 1975, p. 327).

A final version of the thesis of under-determination asserts merely that our system of the world must have empirically equivalent alternatives, which if discovered, would have no way of reconciliation by any reconstrual of predicates. Quine accepts this vague and modest thesis. It states that there are undiscovered systematic alternatives much deeper and less transparent than electrons and molecules (Quine, 1975, p. 326).

This conclusion, which Quine comes to terms with, is useful, although drastic: What if there would be two theories that have risen above all others and prevailed as equals. *Id est*, two best theories that imply all the true observations and none of the false ones (although observations are, as Quine himself has accepted on some level, subjective) (Quine, 1975, p. 324). We argue that both theories are equally simple and logically incompatible. The theories

must be equally simple to avoid the Quinean use of “Ockham’s Razor”, which states that plurality is not to be posited without necessity, or simply that the simplest solution is usually the correct one. With the use of “Ockham’s Razor”, it is possible to criticize Quine’s statement from a deflationary perspective if the theories were not equally simple. Suppose that both formulations are irreconcilable by reconstrual of predicates. If that is the case, there are two, equally good, formulations that satisfy every condition that empirically equivalent systematic theories must fulfil. Can it be asserted that one is true while the other is false (since they are logically incompatible) but it is impossible to know which is which? Quine states that whatever is affirmed, concerning the answer to the already stated question, it is verified as a statement, within a holistic theory of nature, as it is perceived (Quine, 1975, p. 327). To label a statement true is nothing more than to reaffirm it within our framework of belief. The statement might not be true at all, but such is the nature of truth when stuck within a system where truth is not something aspired to achieve externally. A paradox emerges from this chain of thought. Suppose that someone is trying to confirm, or deny, the truth of a formulation. To do so he must either rise above it, thereby giving up the rights to proclaim it as either true or false, or do nothing, in which case he is unable to proclaim it as either true or false because of relativism and subjectivity (Quine, 1975, p. 327). This paradox is imminent when confronting necessary *a posteriori* truths in our world and especially in regards to meta-empiricism, which will be prevalent later in this discussion. For now, let us look at the two dogmas of empiricism Quine (1951) diligently discusses in his paper *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*.

Following Quine in abandoning empiricism’s two dogmas (although Quine himself identifies and defines those dogmas) leads to significant consequences. Firstly, the line between contemplative metaphysics and natural science becomes indistinct. Secondly, it supports a shift toward pragmatism. Sketching the historical development of the concept of analyticity that he is opposing, Quine tells us that it is rooted in Kant’s cleavage between synthetic and analytic truths. Hume had already made some progress that helped Kant to form the cleavage by analyzing the relationship between factual matters and ideas along with Leibniz’s differentiation of truths of reason and truths of fact (Quine, 1951, p. 20). Statements accepted to be analytic in nature by most philosophers can be placed in two categories (Quine, 1951, p. 22). First-class analytic statements are logically true (Wittgenstein would insist that these first-class statements are tautologies). The first-class analytic statements are *a priori* because, according to Kant, they do not require of the observer to have some external

experience or knowledge about the world for him to see that the statement is true (Kant, 1787, p. 43).

Prior to Quine, Russell had already argued that Kant's definition of analytic truths is too narrow, for it concludes that all *a priori* knowledge has to rest on basic intuition that individuals acquire at birth regardless of, and, perhaps necessarily without, experience. In an attempt to broaden the definition, it has been accepted that *a priori* truths and justification must be independent of experience beyond that which is needed to acquire the concepts necessary to understand the initial proposition or justification (Russell, 2007).

A typical first-class proposition is the quintessential example of "no unmarried man is married". This example is used because the statement is not only true, but it is true under all interpretations of "man" and "married" (Quine, 1951, p. 22). If we include an arsenal of logical constants we can state that a logical truth (or a first-class analytic truth) is a proposition which is, and remains, true under all reconstructions of its constituent elements (other than the logical constants) (Quine, 1951, p. 22).

Analytic propositions that can be turned into first-class statements of logical truths, by replacing words used in those propositions with their synonyms, are of the second-class. Analytic propositions of the second-class are defined as such because they can be turned into first-class statements, logical truths, by replacing words of the propositions with their synonyms. A typical second-class analytic statement is "no bachelor is married". This second-class example can be turned into a logical truth by replacing "bachelor" with "unmarried man" (Quine, 1951, p. 23). The problems that arise for those second-class statements, when facing further scrutiny, will be discussed here. It will be suggested later in this thesis that if Wittgenstein's view of *a priori* truths is incorporated, the value of first-class propositions is severely diminished.

The first dogma of empiricism appears through the second-class statements because of their dependence of synonymy. There are certain epistemological shortcomings apparent when studying synonymy. Quine asks what defines synonyms and what is the right synonym in each context and furthermore, how it can be assured (Quine, 1951, p. 24). Synonyms are only definitions of a word, and definitions are not explanations of things. It is possible to replace a word in a statement with its definition and the meaning of the statement will remain the same. Definitions are thus explanations and explanations are synonyms. An example of this is the word "bachelor", the definition of a bachelor is "unmarried man" When looking at a

statement such as “the bachelor is not married”, “bachelor” can be replaced with “unmarried man” to create the statement “the unmarried man is not married”. The meaning that the statement is meant to convey is still intact, although it can be argued that the number of letters has changed *et cetera*. Quine suggests that synonymy is where two or more words are interchangeable in all possible contexts while their value of truth remains the same, as Leibniz put it, *salva veritate*, that is, with unharmed truth (Quine, 1951, p. 27). Those synonyms can be vague as long as their degree of vagueness matches perfectly (Quine, 1951, p. 27). Without going to great lengths to demonstrate the arguments used by Quine, it seems *prima facie* that interchangeability *salva veritate* works, and in return makes second-class statements equals to those of first-class. This effectively reduces second-class statements to tautologies. Quine states therefore, that instances of interchangeability, *salva veritate*, are meaningless until they are associated with a language whose extent is stated explicitly in relevant respects (Quine, 1951, p. 30).

The problem of analyticity cannot be solved through means of synonymy or definitions (Quine, 1951, p. 32). When attempting to differentiate between analytic and synthetic statements using a common-language (a conventional language without a specific philosophical purpose), there is a glimpse of hope to be seen when the commonplace language is replaced by a near perfect artificial language created to define the semantics of language-games. Quine shows us that this glimpse is a false promise, a *feu follet par excellence*. (Quine, 1951, p. 32). When working with a common-language statement, that seems to be analytic, there is a problem of understanding the connection between the variables presented, namely of language and analyticity. Even in a case where an artificial language is employed the problem does not disappear (one might argue that the problem grows even larger, since it withstands having an artificial language applied to the statement, a language specifically created to address this problem). The semantic rules of the artificial language state that some statements are analytic, if they pass all needed requirements to do so.

These, and only these, statements comprise the entirety of analytic statements within the artificial language. The *hornets' nest* is still prevalent because the rules of the artificial language embody the word analytic, which is foreign when using this framework. It is easy enough to understand what articulations the semantic rules characterize as analyticity but when polarized, it is incontestable that it is not known what rules attribute to the articulations. It is inconceivable to understand the complicated rules dedicated to finding analytic statements when we cannot understand the most elementary foundation of the framework in

question (a statement *x* is analytic for *y* artificial language) (Quine, 1951, p. 32). Quine embarks upon making the framework understandable but to no avail, when he tries to replace “analytic” with “semantic rule” he finds himself in almost the exact same situation, the only difference is that he is using a different word, that is still not understandable in the context of the artificial language (Quine, 1951, p. 36). He comes to terms with the fact that analytic statements are true by definition but he rejects that the notion “truth by definition” is satisfactory. The difficulties are still an actuality. Semantic rules of an artificially created language that determine which statements are analytic and which are not, are only useful if there is already a complete understanding of the apprehension of analyticity. They are *en masse* disadvantageous when trying to understand analyticity (Quine, 1951, p. 36).

The statement “Kafka despised his father” is true. It could be (and would be) false *iff* the world had been in such a way for that statement to be false. This is true, although tautological. What is important is that it would also be false if the word “despised” had a different meaning, “ate”, for example. The statement “Kafka ate his father” is clearly false (Quine, 1951, p. 36). There must be a way to divide a proposition into a linguistic constituent and a factual constituent. According to the classic characteristics of analytic statements, many of them should be utterly void of a factual component. Nevertheless, the boundary between analytic and synthetic statements has yet to be completed. It is at best unempirical to think that the distinction could be an actuality and even worse to think that it is necessary. As Quine wrote, it is “a metaphysical article of faith” (Quine, 1951, p. 37).

The second dogma regards reductionism. The meaning of a statement is *id est* the method of confirming or infirming it through empirical means. A statement is analytic if it has risen above this nuisance by being automatically confirmed in every possible scenario. This is the verification theory of meaning (Quine, 1951, p. 37). The dogma surrounding reductionism is that to each statement that needs confirmation, there is a *sui generis* range of potential sensory stimulators. The presence of these stimulators could increase the chance that such a statement would be true and furthermore, decrease the chance of the statement being true, depending on the nature of the sensory stimulators. This is inherent in the verification theory of meaning (Quine, 1951, pp. 40-41).

When using the verification theory of meaning it becomes apparent that the two dogmas are inter-related. If there are implications attached to confirming or infirming statements in a broad sense, there must also be a kind of statements that are limited in nature and, although

clearly bereft of comprehension, confirmed *ipso facto*. These statements are considered analytic. Quine argues that in essence, the two dogmas are indistinguishable (Quine, 1951, p. 41). He states that the factual component of a statement must be composed of a range of confirmatory experiences. In rare cases, there is a notable absence of a factual component in a statement. Quine's proposal, to address the issue at hand, is simple: It is nonsense to speak of a supposed cleavage in statements, which divides the truth of those statements into linguistic components and factual components. When a holistic approach to science is examined, the duality of language and experience is not evident when looking at singular statements of science. The system recognized by empirical significance is all there is to science (Quine, 1951, p. 41). What this infers is that any statement can achieve a value of truth as long as we make the necessary fitting arrangements elsewhere in the system, thus we need only to make adjustments (however dire) within the language game to create truths of as much value as the ones analytic statements convey (Quine, 1951, pp. 42-43). There is only a difference of various degrees when it comes to analytic and synthetic statements or the problem of reductionism through the theory of verification of meaning, there are no different kinds, no division (Quine, 1951, p. 44).

These arguments are critical for the rejection of a distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. The expostulation Quine holds against the cleavage is founded on semantics and although it rests on epistemological grounds, the expostulation of the analytic/synthetic distinction is not sufficient to diminish *a priori* knowledge entirely. The discussion will now move toward Wittgenstein for epistemological arguments against *a priori* statements as knowledge.

## **2.2. A Priori Knowledge**

Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his collection of aphorisms called *On Certainty*, debates the tumultuous relationship between certainty and knowledge. He is, as Quine, rather fond of deflationism as is evident when he starts to question what it is to know something. He states that if you know something, then you must know that you know something and therefore you must know that you know that you know something *et cetera*. When a deflationary approach is applied to this meaningless, inestimable chain of illogic, it must result in a complete disavowal of knowing anything (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 16). If we can know something, how is the knowledge acquired? If someone is taught how to calculate, he must in turn also learn to put complete faith in the calculations (and possibly the teachings) of his teacher

(Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, 1969, § 34). If someone wanted to realize how he came to know the very nature of calculation, he does not have to look further than at himself, for he came to know the nature of calculation by learning to calculate from an external source (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 45). To expand on that view, it can be argued, with the help of deflationism, that even though  $2+2=4$  (given that  $+$  and  $=$  are regarded as logical particles) seems to have some value of intuition, it is not different from  $420 \times 0.42 = 176.4$  except on a basic semantic level. Still, when trying to figure out what the result is when 420 is multiplied with the fragment 0.42, there is no rational intuition. Through the eyes of the deflationist, there is no intuition in mathematical calculations or even true belief about whether the results are accurate or not. When taking the problems of empiricism into account, there cannot be knowledge from mathematics (Sosa, 1998).

Because of the supposed analyticity of mathematics, the tautological notions cannot assert any fact or introduce us to any new information about facts. They can still be used effectively as definitions to indicate what linguistic symbols correlate to other linguistic symbols. Mathematics consists entirely of such tautological claims *exempli gratia* a part of the proposition  $2+2=4$  defines how the logical symbols “2” and “4” are used. This example also demonstrates nicely what the problem with tautological truths is (Ritchie, 1937, p. 47). The proposition  $2+2=4$  cannot assert anything, since the proposition itself defines its parts and thus itself. If  $2+2=5$  were to be stated, the symbol “5” would partly be defined by the proposition itself, thus making it true (or as true as an *a priori* statement can be). Although “tautology” and “definitions” are used interchangeably and rather loosely, it should be noted that strict tautology is not  $2+2=4$  but rather  $2+2=2+2$ . However, to all mathematical intents, constructions, and purposes, the tautological propositions discussed here can be substituted one for another without error.

Empirical facts cannot contradict logical propositions because they state nothing about them (Blumberg & Feigl, 1931, p. 285). If that stands true, then logic, being of an *a priori* nature, cannot contradict empirical facts either. Logical propositions can only convey notions about other logical propositions and as such, renders them meaningless or at best meta-definitions. The same can be asserted of *a priori* propositions. If a proposition has the natural characteristics of an *a priori* proposition, then all consequential propositions of those propositions are necessarily *a priori*. *Id est*, whatever follows necessarily from a necessary truth is itself necessary (Lazerowitz, 1936, p. 282). This is a logically valid principle and according to itself, should be necessary. Nevertheless, it falls short in much the same way as

logical propositions; they cannot state anything about *a posteriori* propositions even when necessary. As such, they cannot convey meaning within the framework of empiricism we have already established.

The same intuition we must depend upon when making inductive assumptions, to justify our supposed analytic knowledge, can be deceiving. Ernest Sosa employs a classic *sorites* argument to point out one of the defects of intuition when confronted with vagueness. It seems obvious that if one were to remove a single grain of sand from a heap, there would still be a heap of sand there. It is also equally obvious that a single grain of sand or no grain at all does not count as a heap of sand. These two statements, which appear to be true in almost every sense, can persuade a person through logical means to believe that one of the two statements is false, since they contradict each other. Intuitively however, they are both true. This revelation confirms, on some level, that *a priori* (or analytic) justification from intuition must be fallible because of vagueness. Although, by constructing an argument it would be plausible to have the subject disbelieve one of the two presuppositions. It seems that even though the subject can be persuaded by logic, both statements would still appear to be true to the subject (Sosa, 1998, p. 202).

Wittgenstein calls the truth of statements a test of understanding (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 80). The truth of a statement is thus not dependent on whether they are logically true but rather whether the person conducting the statement subjectively understands it. If that person asserts a false statement, and the falsity of that statement is certain, then it becomes uncertain whether that person understands the statement (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 81). It is tautological that the truth of a statement is not dependent on whether it is logically true or not, within the framework of logical truths. The truth of a statement is decided by the validity of the statement itself. As such, Wittgenstein is correct to infer that the contextual value of a statement depends upon whether the person conducting the statement understands it, but he wrongly infers that the truth of a statement depends on it, since necessary truths do not depend on whether someone understands their propositions or not. However, it can be argued that even if *a priori* truths exist, they must be contingent and not possible in every scenario.

To continue with the question of understanding, it must be that the truth of a statement that is empirical belongs to our subjective frame of reference. It seems pointless to explicitly state the term “empirical” to describe a statement since, if Quine’s set of arguments is followed,

and his resolution on the matter is acknowledged, all analytic statements must be empirical to some degree.

If George were to assure Martin that he knows something to be a certain way, it will not convince Martin that George knows those things, no matter how dependable George is. The only thing Martin can count on to have knowledge of is the fact that George believes that he knows something (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 137). Continuing from that proposition, a problem emerges that should be addressed. If George only believes that he knows something (from Martin's perspective at least), how can Martin truly know that George believes that he knows something? Martin might believe that he knows that, but from an objective standpoint, there really is nothing to differentiate Martin from George.

George certainly thinks that he knows something, what he thinks he knows might even be a well-established fact of the world that he simply wants to share with Martin, in case Martin had not known about it prior to this hypothetical scenario. He might try to convince Martin by saying that not only does he know something, but everyone else knows it too! This is a flawed argument that leads to a problematic conclusion in the same manner as above. George says that he knows that everyone else knows something. This is false. In reality, he believes that everyone else believes something (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 288). Although a bit more complicated, this problem stems from a similar *ad infinitum* chain as described earlier, regarding how "you know [...] that you know something". Using the same deflationary approach as before, it is possible to effectively reduce the endless chain into a series of beliefs: "Knowing that you believe [...] that you believe something" turns into "knowing that you believe something" which turns into "you believe something". Since there is no reason to suppose that if you cannot know that you believe that you believe something, there is no reason that you would know that you believe. This is, incidentally, a similar result as when a deflationary account was used on the previous chain. There is no knowledge, only belief. That belief can, as will be discussed in depth when examining Gettier examples, be both justified and based on a true proposition, although not a belief of necessary knowledge.

Wittgenstein continues in the same vein and narrows his focus on certainty. If someone is certain that he knows something then it does not infer that the knowledge, bestowed upon that someone, is certain. The knowledge is in itself objective, his certainty of that is not; it is subjective (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 245). Thus, it can be concluded that knowledge and certainty belong in different categories (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 308).

The only thing that the fragment of a sentence “I know” conveys, is the willingness of the person uttering it to believe certain, or uncertain, things (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 330). Eventually, the knowledge we think we can acquire through empirical means is based on acknowledgement and nothing more (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 378). Acknowledgement does not need any sort of justification to be an actuality, thus the knowledge does not have a requirement of truth, and even if it did, Wittgenstein has shown that justification does not lead to truth. It must then be said that the knowledge in question is fallible.

The phrase “I assure you” is at best a personal statement, at worst, meaningless. Its only possible value is subjective (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 389). When using the phrase “I know” instead of “I assure you” the validity of the statement stays the same, although within certain language-games it increases the statement’s appeal. “I know” merely states what “I” know, and what I know is not of any logical interest (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 401). The underlying framework for any, and every, action of thoughts built upon language is created through means of empirical propositions, not propositions of the logical kind. This is partly because the statements revolve around material objects and thus, if false, they cannot be as easily replaced as hypotheses can, which also serve as foundations (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 402). In either case, *a priori* knowledge does not possess any relevance to the real world, where the framework is of empirical nature. One’s supposed *a priori* knowledge is not really knowledge and why should it be any different for anyone else, all claims to this type of knowledge are identical.

There is another criticism readily available on the expression “I assure you”. As stated, it is subjective and the validity of it depends on the musings of each individual’s thought process and what personal statement they hope to conduct. However, it is also futile and pointless for an individual to assure someone that he knows something, since assurance has little to do with the truth of whether that individual knows something or not. As previously mentioned, he can only believe that he knows something, whether he assures someone that he knows or knows not, is irrelevant. We are now, as before, back to a deflationary criticism on the act of believing that someone knows something.

There are statements that have conformity of common belief. Those statements do not need assurance of knowing because of a widespread inherent belief in them. This can be problematic: When does a statement go from being controversial into being universally accepted? There is no scale to follow, thus it falls prey to deflationism. Although these

statements do not need assurance, they are no more deep-rooted than the ones that seem *prima facie* to benefit from assurance. They are only convincing to a degree because everyone takes statements that start with the words “I know” for granted, it is a universal agreement that goes well beyond the range of some personal propaganda (Wittgenstein, 1969, §§ 439-440).

It is important to note that even if one were to have perfect certainty, it would only depend on his attitude toward his confidence in knowing and as follows, not on the truth of his supposed knowledge (Wittgenstein, 1969, §§ 404-405). Wittgenstein remarks that this kind of a discussion has no place in the real world, where saying to someone “you don’t know anything!” would be met with considerable amount of hostility (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 407). This will be further discussed from an *a posteriori* perspective in the next chapter.

The world is flawed in many ways and it should be treated as a flawed framework for dialect. It is blemished partly because of metaphysical problems that arise because of the philosophy of individuals. If an individual has a personal philosophy that takes into account that this individual knows something that is false, then his philosophy is defective. The metaphysical problem becomes apparent when one tries to reason with this individual. It becomes apparent that when he is stuck within his own frame of reference, an erroneous foundational framework, he cannot see the problem. In fact, he cannot legitimately discuss the problem at all, since it is beyond his scope (Wittgenstein, 1969, §§ 408-409). It is the same problem as Quine pointed out, when he wrote about being stuck within a system where truth is not something aspired to achieve externally (Quine, 1975, p. 327). A similar problem arises when trying to prove the mere possibility of one knowing about physical objects, namely that the asseveration of those who believe that they know something is nugatory (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 488).

If there is still some need of convincing to do in regards to the imperfections of knowledge, there is always the final frontier of relative language-games. Even if someone would know something, or at least believe something and misinterpret it as knowledge, then there is no meaning in stating it as true (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 466). Language-games are, except in rare cases, relativistic and cannot convey knowledge. When using it as a tool to forward your belief about knowing something that not everyone knows, it is fruitless to the extent of being vacuous. When the belief is widely accepted, it would be considered a superfluous remark that is again, on some level, meaningless.

Wittgenstein finds himself in an epistemological crisis where he begs for answers to questions such as: If my memory can deceive me (which it most certainly can, from an empirical point of view and even from an epistemological view), how can I rely on it? How do I make certain that the words I use have the meaning I think they have (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 506)? If what these questions imply can deceive me, how can I even know what the word “deceive” means (Wittgenstein, 1969, p. § 507)? What can I rely on (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 508)? He then states that he cannot even know what “true” or “false” is. It is evident that even language-games fall victim to the problems of empiricism and because of that, discussions are of no use when trying to discern the issues at hand. Even though we had evidence that was possible to describe to be meaningful (although I cannot see how), it would still need to be justified in a way that is impossible, since there can be evidence that cannot be trusted, why should any evidence be trusted? After all, the evidence we trust might have us deceived (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 672). Of course, these obstacles are related to empirical complications but they are still an actuality in the sense that they are a product of the only actuality that is real; that there is no analyticity. An inner experience cannot elucidate anyone that he “knows” something (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 569).

Even mathematics, one of the purest forms of logic, succumbs to these grave complications of knowledge-through-experience. All mathematical discoveries and statements have been put through the same means of assertion as everything else we believe, as such, they have the same liability of falling prey to the empirical errors already demonstrated. Because these discoveries have the same degree of truth, or a lack thereof, as any other empirical belief we might have, the likelihood of them being imperfect (or wrong), is the equally probable (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 651). A simple way to defend this view is to say that as long as the premises used are right, if mathematical formulations were to be analytic, then every other kind of propositions must be true as well (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 653). If a man were to be mistaken about something, his belief false, the man would retain his rights to assert that he is in fact, right in his assumption. However, the belief would still be just as false and the assertion thereby just as hollow (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 663).

### **3. The Impossibility of Knowing what is Necessary Knowledge**

It was established in the previous chapter that, on epistemological grounds, there are serious problems with attributions of either *a priori* or analytic status to propositions, in light of which a framework based upon no-analyticity is put forth. The framework allows for a bold

skepticism toward the notion that there are non-empirically known necessary truths in existence and furthermore that if that notion does hold, there is an impossibility of knowing whether any of the remaining empirical truths are necessary or not. One traditional account of knowledge has been divided into contingent and necessary knowledge. Analytic and *a priori* statements have often been linked with necessary knowledge, but Kripke has demonstrated the possibility of necessary *a posteriori* truths such as scientific discoveries (“water is H<sub>2</sub>O” is an example of such truth) although it will be argued that there is an impossibility of knowing whether those statements are necessary or contingent (Kripke, 1972, p. 35). As such, the discussion now gravitates toward whether necessary empirical truths are an actuality or not. In this discussion, the focus will be on establishing that empirical truths can at best be contingent, and if that is so, we cannot acquire the necessary knowledge to state truthfully that “we know that we know” those contingent truths. A contextualist notion will then be applied to counter the bold skeptical account presented.

### 3.1. A Pragmatic Approach

A classic pragmatic account of truth gives us a simple answer to the question of whether there is an impossibility of knowing what is necessary knowledge. Truth is defined in reference and interrelations to usefulness. Usefulness can only, at best, be contingent because of contextual considerations, what is useful now, in this particular position, might not be useful tomorrow under the same circumstances, for example. Thus, truth is never necessary. However, other pragmatic arguments have been made.

One answer to the question “Can anything be known to be necessary?” comes from Spaulding’s (1929) pragmatic account of knowledge. With this pragmatic account, it can be inferred that truth is not necessary, only conditional. A pragmatic account of truth can profitably be connected to a contextualist account of knowledge. According to such pragmatic account, most empirical truths are interchangeable with usefulness. This usefulness is itself tested with confirmation by facts that are directly experienced in relation to the empirical truths themselves. A non-pragmatic approach would hereby state that the empirical conclusion, regardless of usefulness, could be a necessary truth. Nevertheless, the conclusion is itself conditioned by the antecedent of the hypothetical proposition. The antecedent is not a necessary proposition regardless of how necessary the empirical conclusion may seem *prima facie*. Unfortunately, because the theory has its uses and it is a disclosed state of affairs, it works satisfactorily and so regards the antecedent as true in *fact* while not being necessarily

so. It can thereby be concluded that this theory of truth is not necessarily true itself (Spaulding, 1929, p. 314). Why the antecedent is accepted as true in *fact* cannot be answered without a necessarily true theory, which will always be subject to its own presuppositions and thus not reliable. It is impossible to know if there is such a theory since we are bound within its framework, whatever that theory might be. Therefore, it cannot be known why the antecedent is accepted as true in *fact*, from a rational view, there should be no grounds for accepting that statement. This echoes the paradox Quine described concerning empirically equivalent systems. He stated that there are two different paths to affirm or deny the truth of a formulation. It must either be done from an external viewpoint, thereby conceding the rights to proclaim the formulation as either true or false, or within the formulation in question, making the proclamation itself subject to the formulation (Quine, On Empirically Equivalent Systems of the World, 1975, p. 327).

The principle Spaulding puts forth is “that is necessary to which there is no alternative, and there is no alternative to there being alternatives” (Spaulding, 1929, p. 315). To deny this one must use the principle itself and it is thus presupposed by its own denial. The principle is, on its own grounds, impossible to deny. What is necessary must then be what becomes impossible to deny or create a negative from. From that it can be inferred that what is necessary is that which must be asserted and that which must be denied or which denies itself in its own assertion, thus creating a paradox, is impossible (since it is the negative of the necessary) (Spaulding, 1929, p. 315). With that notion, it is possible to simplify the principle into the proposition “there are possibilities or alternatives”, which is necessarily true. Its necessity is revealed by the attempt to deny it, since an attempt to do so, presupposes the principle in question, therefore it must be affirmed (Spaulding, 1929, p. 317).

Spaulding eventually comes to an erroneous conclusion, however, when he claims, “either p or not p is true” to be a necessarily true proposition (Spaulding, 1929, p. 321). This conclusion is constructed similarly to the original principle of alternatives. As argued earlier, tautologies (*a priori* statements) cannot express meaning and are *a posteriori* meaningless. Tautologies might have some attributes of a proposition in the classical *a priori* sense but according to the arguments of the preceding chapter, the classic *a priori* sense is itself fundamentally flawed. Whilst Spaulding’s conclusion might be correct on his own grounds of tautological *a priori* as a necessary truth, when placed in a context where tautological statements lack meaning, his supposed proposition is incorrect. Although it might not be false, it is simply without meaning and therefore it becomes pointless to argue about the truth of

such a proposition. The focus should rather be set upon arguing whether the statement deserves to be classified as a proposition at all. Before trying to figure out what it is *to be*, one should figure out what *is*.

Spaulding defends his view by stating that with the aid of inductive methods, it can be concluded that the means of disclosure do not need to be identical to that which is disclosed (Spaulding, 1929, p. 325). What this means is that the method that is used for testing does not have to be completely alike the subject that is being tested. He takes an example of how a telescope can observe stars without being a star itself (Spaulding, 1929, p. 325). He concludes: A necessary proposition is disclosed by a proposition that is not necessary (Spaulding, 1929, p. 325). If that proposition is not necessary then there can be no necessary propositions because there are no necessarily true criteria of necessity. Therefore, there cannot be any necessarily true criteria, because there are no necessary propositions. The “vicious circle” is evident, necessarily true propositions cannot be disclosed or fit to contain truths by usage of a criterion that is not necessarily true itself (Spaulding, 1929, p. 325).

Universal principles of this nature need themselves principles of the same kind to be accommodated by. If the criterion of what is necessarily true is not itself necessarily true, then the acceptance of propositions being necessarily true may be based upon false beliefs. When the acceptance of necessity is based upon contingent truths, then it does not qualify as necessary knowledge. Gettier examples, which will be explained in further detail in a succeeding chapter, show that even with the insurance of justification, a true belief can fail to count as knowledge and as the justification of the position described here is not secure, it is on even shakier grounds than Gettier examples. By acknowledging the “vicious circle”, it is hard to believe that the statement “ $p$  or not  $p$ ” is a necessary proposition (Spaulding, 1929, p. 321) since the proposition seems to fall prey to that same circle. As discussed earlier, *a priori* truths can only entail *a priori* truths and as a result, they are disconnected from our world of empiricism. The necessity of necessary propositions does not rest upon the proof that such a necessity is in existence or of the necessity of the criteria on which such a proof is based. It would be idiotic to assume the necessity of those propositions however, since absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. A lack of grounds for denial is not adequate evidence to affirm anything. A skeptical claim is fitting to describe what this entails. A lack of knowledge does not give means to claim knowledge (although it could be argued that one could say, “I know that I do not know something”, however as previously discussed, this statement is void of empirical meaning). The necessity of what is disclosed is thus a property of what is

disclosed, and not the means of the disclosure itself. This is however an ontological claim about the existence of necessity and not an epistemological one about whether necessarily true propositions exist (Spaulding, 1929, p. 326). Whether necessity can be obtained in any ontological sense is of little relevance to this discussion and shall thus be set aside.

The closest to a necessarily true proposition is of a tautological nature, *exempli gratia* the proposition that “there must be either necessarily true propositions or not”. This however, is not a necessarily true proposition. It is contradictory, although the contradiction does not reveal itself if the intention is to avow that because that proposition is necessarily true, its conclusion must be that there are necessarily true propositions. However, if that were the case the original proposition would not be needed. If that is not the intention, then the proposition becomes irrelevant at best, contradictory at worst. If the proposition that “there must be either necessarily true propositions or not” is in fact necessary and true, then there are two possibilities, that there are necessarily true propositions, or there are not necessarily true propositions. If the first possibility is an actuality, then the proposition is self-proven. If the second possibility is an actuality however, and there are no necessarily true propositions, we can reform the proposition into “there must not be necessarily true propositions” and to assert that statement as a necessarily true proposition is contradictory. In either case it can be concluded that what is necessarily true is at best necessarily true but only trivially and thus meaningless, at worst non-existent and in any case, irrelevant (Spaulding, 1929, p. 329).

### **3.2. Epistemic Luck**

Empiricism relies partly on the world being void of epistemic luck. However, luck in this sense exists and can greatly diminish the empiricist’s claim to know something. Examples to be used here, will demonstrate how epistemic luck can interfere with supposed empirical knowledge. Later it will be shown that Gettier examples also exploit epistemic luck to undermine JTB as a sufficient account of knowledge.

Suppose that A knows something from belief. His belief is partly based on false beliefs, because of that, he sometimes *knows* something because of epistemic luck (making his belief true, although not adequately justified) at other times, his belief is false. Suppose that sometimes he believes that he knows something, that just so happens to be true repeatedly. It can still be said that in certain situations, from a correspondence viewpoint, A *knows*. The problematic nature of this supposition is that A does not know *how* he knows. This example is

not so different from Ayer's lucky lottery-man. Ayer's case consists of a man that participates in the lottery and is consistently successful in forecasting what lottery numbers will appear each week, even though he has no rational or methodological way of knowing what numbers will show up. In fact, he does not have any way of knowing the winning lottery numbers at all; it seems that Justitia is on his side. If Ayer's lottery-man wins the lottery sufficiently often, it could possibly be said that he *knew* which numbers would win each week, even though he is seemingly guessing haphazardly (Ayer, 1956, pp. 32-33). This is incorrect, the point of this example is that A's repeated success of knowing are simply accidents (Dawson, 1981, p. 322). Sir Alfred Jules Ayer concludes from his example that not everyone would regard a successful run of predictions, however long sustained, as being a sufficient reason for a claim to knowledge (Ayer, 1956, p. 34).

The lottery-man did not have a method to acquire knowledge about the numbers he picked each week. If he had an empirical method, would his epistemic luck transform into empirical knowledge? An example of a rocking-horse winner can determine whether that is the case. The example shares similarities with both A and the lottery-man, the rocking-horse winner is a boy who is able to guess correctly, which horse will win an upcoming race by riding his rocking-horse (Hamlyn, 1970, p. 81 ff.).

It could be argued that the boy is better off than the lottery-man, since he has some sort of a method, however irrational that method might be. If someone else were to ride the boy's rocking-horse, he would hardly have an epiphany that imbues him with knowledge of who will be the next horse-race winner. However, if he were to consult a horse-race analyzer instead, the analyzer would examine empirical data and arrive at a conclusion, inferred from that data, about the soon-to-be horse race winner. The conclusion is not necessarily true, but it is empirically supported and because of that, one could examine the data presented by the analyzer and odds are that the resulting conclusion will be the same as the conclusion the analyzer portrayed (Dawson, 1981, p. 324). This method is different from that of the rocking-horse boy's because if someone else were to try the empirical method, he would gain affirmation for his conclusion in a way that he would not if he were to ride the rocking-horse. However, his conclusion cannot be fully asserted as knowledge, since empirical methods are subject to epistemic luck. All empirical data the analyzer might possibly possess, could result from epistemic luck in the form of unlikely probabilities, With a deflationary account we can effectively render the empirical method in question to be as irrational as the method of the rocking-horse winner. The difference is that even though both methods are equally prone to

fallacies, the empirical method allows others to make the same errors (if the results of the method are erroneous) through induction. The rocking-horse method does not have such consistency between incidents and anyone who tries the boy's rocking-horse can at best guess the next winner and depend on luck, thus reaching the same state as A.

The externalist debate about justification is relevant in this context regarding induction. An externalist account might state that something can be known through sense perception *iff* sense perception is a reliable process and the belief arises from that process and further criteria of that nature. perception. The problem here relates to the fact that the only way to know that sense perception is reliable is with the aid of sense perception. Similarly, it is then possible to use reliable induction to confirm induction and from there that induction is in fact reliable. The internalist account, which states that primarily internal factors are relevant to whether true beliefs constitute knowledge or not, declares that these methods involve, and practically revolve around, circularity and as such cannot be reliable (in much the same way as the beliefs produced by the "vicious circle"). The externalist could argue that it does not matter whether he *knows* that he knows something or not. He does not have to know if the perception faculties are reliable if they *are* reliable. This stance is tantamount to skepticism, since this notion can help the externalist answer the skeptical question "how do you know that you know?" by stating that he does not know that he knows something, but he might. However, when an interest is taken in the process of affirming the reliability of sense perception, it is obvious that this answer is unsatisfactory. If all the seemingly accurate beliefs that show your perception devices to be reliable could have been influenced by epistemic chance. It cannot even be denied that the instances of accuracy were produced by malfunctioning perception faculties and the instances in which the faculties failed to produce an accurate result were a result of them operating normally (Greco, 2005, p. 263).

Graham Dawson (1981), maintains that there is a difference between the rocking-horse method and the empirical method. Because the empirical method is "rational", it is possible through induction to acquire a rational affirmation of beliefs, effectively making them closer to knowledge than with the affirmation after riding the rocking-horse. that makes them closer to knowledge. However, it could also be argued that an argument can never be rational in the sense that only one opinion stated can be true. There are four possible scenarios where subject x and subject y are arguing about subject matter z:

- (i) x has knowledge about z, y has knowledge about z.

- (ii) x has knowledge about z, y has no knowledge about z.
- (iii) x has no knowledge about z, y has knowledge about z.
- (iv) x has no knowledge about z, y has no knowledge about z.

In (i), both x and y have knowledge about z and as such they have nothing to argue about. Their knowledge is symmetrical. In (ii), x has knowledge about z and is thus right, while y has no knowledge of z and is thus wrong. In this case, x is rational, but y is not, since he does not have a rational account of knowing z, the result is that the argument is not rational, the same goes for (iii), although it is now x who poisons the rationality of the argument. In (iv) neither x nor y has any knowledge about z and the whole argument is thus about false beliefs, rendering it irrational. Nevertheless, it could be possible that x employs reasoning path s to arrive at conclusion p about z from evidence e while y employs reasoning path t to arrive at conclusion q about z from evidence e. That makes their disagreement reasonable, since both s and t are both valid paths of reasoning, as long as e possesses the appropriate connection to z. It does not make both p and q true, given that they are contradictory in some way (if they were not, x and y would not be arguing). Their only option then is to suspend judgment, if x believes p, then he can infer that  $\neg q$  and thus x cannot think that q is reasonable. From an outside perspective, this makes it a plausibly reasonable argument but within the subjects framework of belief, it is not (because they would inevitably concur that either position (ii) or (iii) is in order) (Feldman, 2007, p. 205).

As a final note about reasonable arguments, x might be compelled to believe p while arguing against y who believes that  $\neg p$ . However, x realizes that y is every bit as rational and sensible as himself and so he infers that either he or y must be making some kind of mistake. However, x does not have any basis for thinking that the participant making a mistake is y rather than himself and the same is true of him. The sensible way to go from there is for both of them to suspend judgment on p (Feldman, 2007, p. 212). The conclusion is thus that both x and y can argue for the things that seem true to them but they can do so without their belief of being correct having epistemological justification (Feldman, 2007, p. 214).

### **3.3. Gettier Examples and Justified True Belief**

Justified true belief (JTB), as being equivalent to knowledge, can be disproven with the help of Gettier examples. Although Gettier examples do not show that non-Gettiered cases of JTB are not knowledge they establish that JTB is not an absolute definition of knowledge. A

supplementary condition has often been added to the “S knows p” axiom to create a JTB+, where the plus sign represents a supplementary condition that is designed to fight off Gettier examples and thus establish that JTB+ is knowledge. However, as will be shown, JTB+ as knowledge is at best contingently so.

JTB is a belief that has met the requirements of a JTB, namely, that the belief is true and that the believer is justified in his belief. Agreeing with the notion that knowledge cannot be false, the first account is well established. It is impossible to affirm that knowledge can be false. Belief does not grant someone the means to state that he knows something. Even though his belief is true, it could be so by epistemic luck and he would therefore not possess knowledge. A traditional account of JTB, pre-Gettier examples, is that when one can be justified in his belief of something that is true, it can be considered knowledge.

Edmund Gettier (1963) disproves that knowledge is JTB with his examples and although there have been some critiques in defense of JTB; they have not been strong enough to dismiss Gettier examples as a possible source of skepticism toward *a posteriori* knowledge. Gettier examples can be used to put forth another argument against JTB. If the justification for a JTB can be false, then there is also the possibility of having justification for a true belief about something that seems to be false, but as epistemic luck might have it, is true! Then there is justification of something that should be false but is true, making the justification of true beliefs subject to epistemic luck.

Gettier lists two common approaches consisting of statements that are supposed to define what the requirements are for JTB, *id est* the generally accepted way of how “S knows p”. Before doing that however, he introduces his own “S knows p” example that is supposed to capture the essence of the structure of the wide variety of “S knows p” examples. He creates a general example that is *prima facie* logically sound and then destroys its credibility. His simplified approach is as follows:

- (a) S knows that p *iff*,
  - (i) p is true,
  - (ii) S believes that p, and
  - (iii) S is justified in believing that p (Gettier, 1963, p. 121).

To show similar examples of how the requirements for JTB can vaguely differ, he demonstrates Chisholm’s view which is as follows:

- (b) S knows that P, *iff*,
  - (i) S accepts P,
  - (ii) S has adequate evidence for P, and
  - (iii) S has the right to be sure that P is true (Chisholm, 1957, p. 16).

This account is more susceptible for critiques than the account Gettier created. One could argue that it is possible to accept something without believing it, which contradicts Chisholm's second premise. Furthermore, Chisholm states that the subject has the *right* to be sure that P is true, although the subject's right to be sure must be *a priori* in some sense and thus irrelevant within the framework of this discussion.

A third version of requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to state that something is JTB comes from Ayer. He states that:

- (c) S knows that P *iff*,
  - (i) P is true,
  - (ii) S is sure that P is true, and
  - (iii) S has the right to be sure that P is true (Ayer, 1956, p. 34).

Ayer's third premise demonstrates that it is adequate that S is sure about P being true, although the state of being assured is subjective. Using "sure" and "know" leads us to the question: Even if someone is sure about something, what justification does he have to be sure that he is sure? To do so he must use the same approach he uses to know (c) and effectively creating a regress argument. Once again, we are faced with the problem of empiricism and the reason why necessary knowledge is unattainable through empirical means. Meta-empiricism makes it so even if one would state that he knows something empirically, he would know that he knows something empirically through means just as empirical and flawed as the ones he used in the first place. The endless chain does not have a solid analytic end that the justification of the links can rest upon. It is in many ways similar to the "vicious circle" mentioned earlier. This type of regress argument, where justification requires support *ad infinitum* has at least three types of counter examples.

A brief digression on the variety of accounts of justification will now be put forth to demonstrate how notions of justification can differ when confronted with regress arguments. Foundationalism, coherentism and infinitism are three accounts that will be illustrated along with a few critiques.

Foundationalism, which both Chisholm and Ayer endorse, is the belief that the endless chain begins with a justified belief that is not supported by another belief, thus making it a basic justified belief. Foundationalists claim either that there are beliefs that do not need justification or that there are beliefs that are justified in themselves. From there it follows that a belief is justified if it is a basic belief, it is justified by such a belief, or it is justified by a chain of beliefs that are not basic, but rest upon a basic belief. It is the hope of foundationalists that ultimately, all beliefs can be traced back to basic beliefs. This position cannot adequately answer the skeptical challenge. At its best, it can only capitulate to it. However basic a belief might be, there is no reason to suppose that they are indefinitely true (Fumerton, 2010). Another criticism directed toward foundationalism is that the foundationalist has two options when questioned about a supposedly basic belief. The options are that the belief is either true or it is not. If the foundationalist says that the belief is true, he is still stuck in a regress argument, if he says that it is not true, his view is arbitrary (Klein, 2010).

Coherentism, another stance against the regress argument, states that the reasoning chain may eventually form a circle, thus the original justification for a belief justifies it in the end. The holistic nature of coherentism is appealing; Quine endorses this kind of a position in his paper *Epistemology Naturalized* when he talks about rational reconstruction. (Quine, 2004, pp. 294-295). This however rests upon the ridiculous notion that circular arguments are an accepted way of reasoning, where “p justifies p”. It seems obvious that this too ends in a regress argument (p justifies p, which justifies p, which justifies...) and furthermore that the statement “p justifies p” provokes the question of p itself (Kvanvig, 2007).

A third account is infinitism, which argues that the chain can continue *ad infinitum*. However, there is no reason to suppose that there is some justification found within the endless chain although, because our minds are finite, the endless chain must be endless and as such, infinitism cannot provide a final conclusive answer to the regress argument. It could thus be argued that knowledge does not require the issue at hand to be settled completely and a finite subset of the endless chain of reasons will be adequately close to knowledge. However, within the current framework of epistemology, knowledge requires a final settlement. Infinitism cannot conclude a final settlement of that nature, when working within that framework, since it does not have a strong enough argument to defy the regress argument. It capitulates to skepticism at least as much as the fallibilist foundationalist (Klein, 2010).

The purpose of Gettier examples is to demonstrate that (a) must be false because the conditions stated there do not constitute a sufficient condition for the truth of the proposition that “S knows p”, however one attempts to explain justification (Gettier, 1963, p. 121). There are a couple of points that need to be noted. Firstly, when there is any talk of “justified in...” throughout the discussion of Gettier examples, it is acknowledged that it is entirely possible for someone to be justified in believing p, where p is in fact false. Secondly, for any proposition P that subject S is justified in believing, and if p entails q, S can deduce q from p through logical methods and accept q as a result of his deduction, then S is just as justified in believing q as he was in believing p. S thus gains epistemic closure in a certain sense. It is next to impossible to acquire full epistemic closure, as that would entail knowing all the possible consequences of all known things in such a way that the knowledge is closed with respect to consequent. S however, gains a weak epistemic closure, where he has closed knowledge under known consequence or at least that he is in a position to know q. As the first note points out though, S can be justified in believing q through p, even though both q and p are false, it is a necessary premise regardless of the truthness of the statements contained there within (Gettier, 1963, p. 121).

The first Gettier example describes two men, Smith and Jones, who are both applying for the same job. Suppose that Smith has strong evidence (although Chisholm would not classify it as adequate) for the following conjunctive proposition:

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

Suppose that Smith’s evidence is adequate to eliminate doubts about both of the propositions in this conjuncture. Proposition (d) entails this proposition:

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

It is assumed that Smith sees the entailment from (d) to (e) and then, through logical methods accepts (e) on the grounds of (d) for which he has strong evidence for believing. In this case Smith is clearly justified in believing that proposition (e) is true (Gettier, 1963, p. 122).

Furthermore suppose that completely unknown to Smith, he himself will get the job and Smith also has 10 coins in his pocket, coins that he is not aware of having in his possession. What this simple twist of fate leaves us with, is an absurd testimony of proposition (e) being true while proposition (d), from which proposition (e) was rightly inferred from by Smith

himself, is false! A simple observation concludes that (e) is true, Smith believes that (e) is true, Smith is justified in believing that (e) is true. In virtue of the number of coins in Smith's pocket, (e) is true while Smith himself is oblivious to the number of coins in his pocket, and instead bases his belief in (e) on the notion of the 10 coins in Jones's pocket, whom Smith falsely believes, and according to JTB, falsely *knows*, to be the *man who will get the job* (Gettier, 1963, p. 122).

The second case serves the same purpose although it is not quite as strong as Gettier's first example. It attacks JTB on the same grounds as the first example, that even though the propositions are true, and S is justified in his belief of p, S does not *know* p. Suppose that Smith has once again strong evidence for a proposition, that proposition being:

(f) Jones owns a Ford.

Smith's evidence might be that Jones has, from Smith's perspective at least, always owned a Ford. Furthermore he has just offered to give Smith a ride while driving said Ford. Unrelated to this, Smith has another friend whose name is Brown, whose whereabouts are unknown to Smith (Gettier, 1963, p. 122). Smith selects three places at random and constructs the following three statements from his random selections:

(g) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Boston.

(h) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona.

(i) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Brest-Litovsk (Gettier, 1963, pp. 122-123).

This example is not as strong as the first one because by connecting his belief with seemingly random statements which could be true, although they would only be so through epistemic luck, Smith is setting himself up to fail. Although Brown's whereabouts are unknown, Brown must still be *somewhere* and there is a clear possibility of Brown being in one of the aforementioned places. It is interesting to think about how this example is capable of showing anything. When propositions (g), (h) and (i) are all contradictory in such a severe way that if Brown, for instance, happens to be in any of those places Smith chose at random, then one of the propositions has effectively been made true, while at the same time falsifying the other two statements. The two false propositions are however just as truly entailed from proposition (f) and as such must have just as much intrinsic truth value as the true proposition. Indeed, when contradictory propositions are used there is no need to prove the Gettier example to the fullest extent. All that is needed is to show how the propositions that are false

are inferred in the same way as proposition (e) was inferred from (d) in the preceding example.

Smith coins these conjunctions because he finds it equally unlikely for Brown to be in any of the random places he chose and for Jones not having a Ford. Each of the propositions is entailed by (f) and Smith realizes that entailment. He then proceeds to accept (g), (h) and (i) on the basis of (f). It seems as if Smith has correctly inferred these propositions from (f), a proposition which he has strong evidence for believing to be true. Smith is therefore justified in his belief.

Suppose that there are two further conditions that hold. Firstly, Jones does *not* own a Ford, but is for the time being driving a rented car that just so happens to be a Ford. Secondly, by coincidence or some epistemic gambling of chance, Brown happens to be in Barcelona (the place Smith randomly chose for proposition (h)). Brown's whereabouts are still, as far as Smith is concerned, shrouded with mystery. If these two conditions hold, and there is no reason as to why they should not, then Smith does not *know* that (h) is true, even though; (h) is true, Smith believes (h) to be true and Smith is justified in his belief of (h) being true (Gettier, 1963, p. 123).

These two examples show that Gettier's definition of what JTB must have to suffice as knowledge, (a), does not state a sufficient condition for someone's knowing a given proposition P. The same cases, with appropriate changes, will suffice to show that neither do definitions (b) or (c) (Gettier, 1963, p. 123).

I will now introduce an example that can perhaps defend itself with more vigor toward the "set-to-fail" critique. Let us suppose that Howard is sitting on a bench in a park. In front of him is a dog that has, because of some misfortune, only three legs. The dog's name is *Lucky* and the dog has that name embedded on his collar. Howard can clearly see the collar and makes the following conjuncture:

(j) In front of me is a dog whose name is Lucky, and he has only three legs.

Suppose that Howard has adequate evidence for his beliefs. He knows that the thing in front of him is a dog, and that he can clearly see that the dog has three legs. Furthermore he is sufficiently convinced, through convention and common sense, that the name on the dog's collar is the name of the dog. He makes the following proposition from conjuncture (j):

(k) Lucky is in front of me and he has only three legs.

We can safely assume that Howard sees the entailment leading from (j) to (k) and accepts (k). Howard then clearly has a justification for his belief in (k) because of his overwhelming evidence of (j) being true. As Wittgenstein would point out, Howard, in a casual way, *knows* intuitively that the lifelike form in front of him is a three-legged dog whose name is Lucky, although he would scarcely find a logical reason to utter that statement (Wittgenstein, 1969, p. § 466). Let us now suppose that the dog in front of Howard is in fact a perfect robotic automation run by a hamster in a control booth within the robot dog. Suppose further, that the hamster is also three legged and, as chance would have it, is called *Lucky*. From this we can entail that proposition (k) is true, Howard believes that (k) is true, and Howard is justified through evidence and convention that (k) is true. However, proposition (j), from which Howard inferred his statement eligible to be JTB, is false.

Another example of equal strength can now be put forth. Howard has adequate evidence for proposition (j) and entails the proposition (k) from it. However, as has already been noted, Howard believes proposition (k) to be true for all the wrong reasons. Suppose that (j) would actually be true, that behind the robotic contraption disguised as a three legged dog is a real three legged dog called Lucky that Howard cannot see. This effectively makes proposition (j) true and proposition (k) still remains true, but Howard does not possess the correct justification for his beliefs. This example shows that even when both propositions are correct, S does not base his true belief, that is itself based on true evidence, on knowledge. This example correlates with “the sheep in the field”. Suppose that Edgar is standing on a field, he spots something that looks exactly like a sheep. His belief is thus that there is a sheep in the field. However, what Edgar is looking at is a dog that is perfectly disguised as a sheep. His basis for believing the entity in the field to be a sheep is thus rendered false. Suppose further that there is a hill in the middle of the field and behind that hill is a real sheep (Chisholm, 1966). This makes his belief true and it is thus both true and justified, while, from Edgar’s perspective, is still based upon a false belief.

These examples are more resilient against the “set-to-fail” criticism introduced earlier. Not because they are more likely to happen than the first two examples (one could argue that they are less likely, if anything), but because the conjunctive propositions the subjects make in the later examples occur more naturally to them than the forced propositions the subjects make in the first two examples (that are created to be reasonably easy to fail). The first two examples

create arbitrarily inclusive disjunctions that do not seem to be of particular relevance and thus not as severe of a problem as the last examples. Although the risk of epistemic luck is always around the corner, these examples greatly reduce the risk of epistemic luck interfering. The induction process is always a risky one but one can minimize that risk with examples such as the one stated above. It is not a question of creating a proposition that is completely void of epistemic luck, but rather to find one that does not ruin itself by disjunctions that are set to fail when there is the slightest chance of epistemic luck. However, even with the reduced risk of epistemic luck happening, they still fail. As such everything has been done for JTB to create a strong argument for it and yet it fails to count as knowledge. When JTB has been consistently shown to fail as a standard for knowledge, it can be asked what kind of knowledge remains and from an ontological stand point, what is knowledge then? While there are problems equating JTB with knowledge, the belief that such and such is a necessary knowledge because it is a JTB, is problematic. The belief is problematic because that the reflective knowledge that someone knows that he knows something on account of its necessity is nothing more than a JTB. Thus JTB is not sufficient for all instances of knowledge, regardless of whether it is about a necessary state of affairs, since even a necessary state of affairs can be Gettierized. Something more is needed to make knowledge more than contingent on the lack of Gettier conditions.

Kripke introduces a high standard for empirical knowledge. Nonetheless, Kripke contends that there are necessary descriptions, even if they are only arrived at in an *a posteriori* manner. Even if a JTB were to be necessarily true, it would remain impossible to know that. It might be the most accurate description of a state of affairs possible, but still not accurate enough to be identified as a necessary description. Let us take an example of an empirical identity statement such as “water is H<sub>2</sub>O”. When someone says “water” he means “the watery stuff in the world” and he has determined that “the watery stuff in the world” is H<sub>2</sub>O (Kripke, 1972, p. 128). Water thus becomes a rigid designator, so when someone says “water” he really means “the watery stuff in the world”. Water also has a certain set of descriptions, such as “a thing that quenches my thirst and has properties such as a, b, c, *et cetera*” although the description of water is not what water *means*. If a group of scientists in a counterfactual world made some chemical that was not H<sub>2</sub>O but behaved exactly like H<sub>2</sub>O, in the way that it would share almost the same description, *it would not be water*, it would be something else with similar properties (Kripke, 1972, p. 128). What this entails then, is that if someone were to be transported into aforementioned counterfactual world, then one could use the word “water” to

great effect and be none the wiser of the true nature of things. The true nature of things in this counterfactual world is that even when the transported agent would drink this watery stuff that fulfills the biological function of water, but is in some ways different in essence (it is not the same as the thing designated as water in the actual world), then it is not water. However, if the “water” in this counterfactual world were the same as “the watery stuff” in the actual world, it would be water because Kripke’s use of possible worlds in this example allows the idea that “water” can exist in different possible worlds. Kripke thinks that it is possible to arrive at necessary scientific statements such as this one. He would claim that it is possible to know which statements are necessary (Kripke, 1972, p. 125). However, even if Kripke’s argument is accepted so that there can be necessary *a posteriori* truths and it is possible to acquire them even if they are shown to be vacuous, it seems an impossibility that those truths can be known to be necessary. If the statement “water is H<sub>2</sub>O” is a necessary truth, it is impossible to know that this is the case. It seems then, that the safe route is to take a pragmatic view by saying that the statement fits all the criteria for water in our world, so for all intents, constructions and purposes, it is water. There might be other criteria, which are forever undiscovered, which differentiate the “counterfactual watery stuff” from the “watery stuff” pointed out in our world as “water”. Because of that, there does not seem to be a good reason to stop referring to those truths as contingent.

A similar principle can be applied to JTB+. Even in the unlikely case that a JTB+ would be necessary, it would be impossible for S to know that it is necessary or not. He could at best say that he simply does not know whether this particular JTB+ is a necessary or a contingent belief. It could be established that the probability of a belief being necessary is equal to the probability of it being contingent. For the purpose of this argument, it can be concluded that since it is possible that all beliefs are contingent, no one can know that he knows that his beliefs are necessary, in fact one cannot even truthfully state that he knows that they are necessary, since the possibility of contingency is an actuality.

A typical response to Gettier examples is that there are undefeated JTB theories in which the justification is construed as coherence amongst beliefs. It is illustrated by a supplementary condition to the typical axiom of “S knows p”. This fourth condition is supposed to explain what it is for a justification to depend on a false belief or for that justification to be defeated by a false statement. Thus it is argued that this new and improved account of knowledge would create sufficient conditions for JTB as knowledge (a JTB+). There have been many such supplementary conditions but a typical account of this kind is as follows:

- (i) S believes in a justifiable way that p.
- (ii) It is true that p.
- (iii) All of the S's beliefs which support S's belief in p, are true.
- (iv) S knows that p (Olen, 1976, p. 150).

An example to counter this JTB+'s fourth condition as a sufficient requirement for knowledge will now be put forth.

Phillip is asked to fill in the missing word in the sentence: "Marcus Porcius Cato the Elder always ended his speeches with some variation of the phrase "*ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse \_\_\_\_\_*" ("I think Carthage must be \_\_\_\_\_"). Phillip thinks about the question, pondering what Cato the Elder should possibly have wanted to do with Carthage. Knowing that the Romans did not fancy Carthage, he infers that it can't be good. He also knows that Carthage was destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC. He then infers that *delendum* (destroyed) must be the correct answer. In this example, Phillip infers correctly (Olen, 1976, p. 151).

Phillip did not know the answer to the above question even though his conclusion fulfilled the requirements for knowledge stated above. This, however, is not a case of knowledge, but an educated guess or, as Ayer's lottery-man's method, something else entirely. If Phillip had learned the answer beforehand, it could be said that in a casual sense, he knows the answer. He does not know the answer until he consults a source that can adequately convince him of what the answer is. For the supplementary requirement to work, it needs the justification to be sufficient to yield knowledge in the current circumstances. To do so requires an independent determination of the sufficiency of S's justification of his current position. Considering the vast amount of contextual considerations which bear on such a determination, the prospect for such an account is not assured (Olen, 1976, p. 152). There are various versions of supplementary conditions used to create JTB+ and therefore many different accounts of JTB+. I have tried to defend Gettier examples against one of the most prominent of those JTB+, however there is not enough flexibility to adequately address all of them. Instead I shall turn to a contextualist account of knowledge, which is needed because there is a contextual undertone in Wittgenstein's critique of *a priori* knowledge and also because of the contextual considerations of empirical *a posteriori* knowledge regarding epistemic luck.

### 3.4. A Contextualist Approach

When arguing a skeptical claim such as the one in the first chapter, one needs to take into account the contextualist argument against skepticism. In essence the skeptical argument rests upon the assumption that knowledge must be infallible by definition. It is impossible to say that “S knows that p” when skepticism grants that S cannot eliminate the slight possibility of  $\neg p$ , by that gesture it seems that S does not know p at all. Knowledge must then be fallible which contradicts the essence of knowledge. The skeptical claim is that there is no infallible knowledge, at least not in a way that we can acquire it (Lewis, 1996, p. 1). A contextualist claim will be argued for here, namely that skepticism is not evident in all contexts.

It has been argued that we can either acquire a few necessary truths or discover them *a priori* but hopefully the arguments presented in this thesis have adequately eradicated *a priori* statements as necessary truths. Contextualism challenges skepticism by proposing that some ascriptions of knowledge depend on the context in which it is contained. Perhaps the commonly used epistemological framework creates a context in which knowledge is fallible. If that is the case, then skepticism remains strong as long as the discussion is confined within the realm of epistemology. If we accept the notion that JTB has a greater claim to being knowledge than mere opinion, the contextualist approach argues that sufficient evidence for being justified is based on context and as such we *can* know things, although not in a strict epistemological sense (Lewis, 1996, p. 2).

However, JTB is *not* knowledge. David Lewis (1996) agrees to an extent and demonstrates that justification does not grant knowledge by using an example of a lottery participant. A lottery participant has a true opinion that he will lose the lottery (from an empirical point of view we concur that after the numbers have been drawn, he will lose and effectively make his presupposition true), but this cannot classify as knowledge since there is a single winning ticket, however great the number of losing tickets. When the number of losing lottery tickets increases, the participant’s justification that he will lose grows in strength, but it will never be strengthened enough to transform the opinion into knowledge. It is fallible because there is always the slight chance of winning the lottery, if that were to happen it would effectively render the opinion false. A contextualist account can be used to argue that although winning the lottery is an actuality, however improbable, it can be right to say that the lottery participant does know that he will lose, as long as the focus stays on the vast improbability of winning the lottery (Cohen, 1998).

The second reason Lewis denies that JTB is equivalent to knowledge, is that he thinks justification is not always necessary. Perception and experience, amongst other things, can grant us a low standard knowledge (at least on a lower level than what the skepticist grants as true knowledge) without justification. Lewis concludes that S can know that p *iff* the evidence S has acquired eliminates every possibility in which  $\neg p$ . However, evidence cannot eliminate every possibility of  $\neg p$  but then again, it does not need to do so for the proposition “things can be known” to work adequately, in fact it does not need to eliminate any possibilities. It is only a matter of keeping quiet about the possibilities in which  $\neg p$ , whenever they are uttered, they destroy the knowledge and what once was known, is known no longer. In fact, a large portion of Lewis’s paper consists of enumerating the rules governing what possibilities are “properly ignored” (DeRose, 1999). This means that one can know something empirically but when his knowledge is contradicted by even stronger empirical evidence, he no longer knows what he once knew. As such, it is a matter of never letting the confrontation occur, that ignorance is bliss, since  $\neg p$  implies that any evidence against p is contradictory. When S knows p, S also knows that any evidence against p is misleading and S should disregard any evidence of that sort. S knows p, as long as S ignores all possibilities of error. When S no longer ignores one or all of those possibilities, they become an actuality (Lewis, 1996, p. 16). This is known as “the closure under implication”. The evidence those possibilities are composed of, erases S’s knowledge and furthermore force S to acknowledge those possibilities once they are brought into daylight (Lewis, 1996, p. 16).

The skeptical argument contextualists attack is called “the argument from ignorance” (DeRose, 1995, p. 1) This argument sheds light on what the bold skeptical claim looks like in its most simplistic form. In the argument, h stands for a skeptical hypothesis, this hypothesis could be that there is a Cartesian demon inflicting one’s mind with intrusive, fallacious thoughts of him having hands when in fact he does not (Moore, 1939). An ordinary proposition that one would ordinarily think one knows such as “all bodies are extended” is represented with an O. The skeptical argument is as follows:

- (i) S does not know that  $\neg h$ .
- (ii) If S does not know that  $\neg h$ , then S does not know that O.
- (iii) S does not know that O (DeRose, 1995, p. 1).

Skeptics see in this argument a simple logical conclusion in accordance with their beliefs. It could be argued that this skeptical argument induces a dramatic upwards shift from a low

standard of knowledge to a high standard, making it such a persuasive argument (DeRose, 1992). However, the truth of ordinary claims to “know” is not threatened by this argument (DeRose, 1999). The skeptical argument rests upon epistemic closure and thus makes it difficult for non-skeptics to abandon even though it works in the favor of skeptics. The skeptic uses the principle of closure to attack the thesis that “we know”. The closure principle seems to support skepticism in this sense. Contextualists see two plausible, although not necessarily compelling, premises that are seemingly contradictory, and yet yield a conclusion which is plausible. The premises are seemingly mutually inconsistent to contextualists because on some relaxed level, *S knows* that  $\neg h$ , (i) thus contradicts (ii), making the argument contradictory (DeRose, 1995, p. 2). The contextualist account denies that the conclusion of the skeptical argument threatens the anti-skeptical intuition. A Moorean response could be to announce that it must be more certain that *S knows* that *O* than either of the premises in the argument being correct, and especially more certain than the conjunction of the premises (Moore, 1939). Therefore, from a Moorean perspective, one of the premises should be rejected instead of agreeing with (iii) (Moore, 1939). However, such a solution is not very satisfying. Rejecting something because other propositions (that seem plausible) imply its falsity is not satisfactory since the rejected proposition is also plausible (DeRose, 1999). DeRose calls this skeptical argument a puzzle and a trap because both premises are plausible yet intertwined with an implausible conclusion (DeRose, 1995, p. 3). He concludes that it is necessary to explain how it came to this if he is to find a way out of this skeptical trap, and indeed it is a more feasible option than randomly denying (i), (ii) or (iii) (DeRose, 1995, p. 3).

It is sensible to find a way out of the skeptical trap and indeed more sensible than endorsing either a Moorean shift or the skeptic because the skeptic is being just as hard-headed as Moore. This is evident when looking at the skeptic’s *modus tollens* (If *A* then *B*.  $\neg B$ . Therefore  $\neg A$ ) alongside Moore’s *modus ponens* (if *A* then *B*. *A*. Therefore *B*). When the two different approaches are examined in regards to one another, Dretske’s aphorism comes to mind, that “[o]ne man’s *modus ponens* is another man’s *modus tollens*” (Dretske, 1995).

The aim of contextualists is to show that whilst we can raise the standards of knowledge beyond the realm of mortals, it is still possible to know things when the standards are not raised as high as the skeptics would prefer. The skeptics, according to contextualists, form a contextual foundation to be able to truthfully say that they know nothing. The contextualists acknowledge that and say in return that within such a framework, they cannot truthfully say that they know *O*. However, as the contextualists move away from this epistemological

framework of high knowledge standards and into a more relaxed, conversational context, it becomes evident that they can say that they know things such as O and further, they are not obligated to deny that they know such things as O. As a result, it is possible to respect the skeptical position while allowing lesser knowledge to be obtained (DeRose, 1995, p. 5). It is possible by acknowledging that certain contexts are skeptical in such a way that weak skepticism is prevalent within those contexts. Those contexts require a higher standard of knowledge than the contextualists can create under normal circumstances.

The skeptical claim is thus still victorious in a sense, a prevailing view of the denial of knowledge when incorporating a high standard of knowledge, although contextualists do convey a pragmatic approach to a lesser standard of knowledge. This allows them to say that they *know* something within certain contexts and be faithful to both the skeptical claim and the contextual claim while doing so. Wittgenstein is to a certain degree a contextualist. This is evident when he states that there would be nothing puzzling about the remark “I know that that thing there is a tree, I can see it quite clearly” as long as it is within the context of a conversation in such a way that it was relevant when it was said (Wittgenstein, 1969, § 349).

The followers of contextualism, and DeRose in particular, find that the argument stated at the start of this chapter can be changed to accommodate both the beliefs of skeptics and contextualists:

- (i) S does not know that  $\neg h$ .
- (ii) If S does not know that  $\neg h$ , then S does not know that O.
- $\neg$ (iii) S does know that O (DeRose, 1995, p. 39).

Contextualists claim that (i) is true only at the high standards of knowledge introduced by skeptics. However (ii) is true regardless of what standard of knowledge is used and as such its plausibility is justified (DeRose, 1995, p. 39). Even though (i) is false when confronted with the ordinary low standards, its assertion from a higher standard of knowledge is destined to result in truth and so it appears to be credible at the very least. Inevitably, both premise (i) and the conclusion (iii) can, and do, change with context while (ii) is unchangeable no matter what context it is tested in (DeRose, 1995, pp. 41-42).

In this chapter, a pragmatic notion of necessary empirical truths was considered in regards to the research question. Although the notion portrayed tautological propositions as being necessarily true, it in turn cleared the path for problems of a metaphysical nature that arose

when contingent principles were used to demonstrate those necessary truths. Epistemic luck was shown to play an important role in defying empirical statements as necessary truths, it was shown with a variety of examples that even the most carefully constructed arguments can still fall prey to epistemic chance. The notion that rational arguments can lead us closer to knowledge was shown to be a *will-o'-the-wisp*. A brief summary on a variety of accounts of justification was put forth to illustrate the differences between notions of justification when confronted by regress arguments. JTB was effectively shown to fail as an equivalent of knowledge through classic Gettier examples along with the classic example of Chisholm's (1966) "sheep in the field". JTB+ was shown to be just as faulty with the help of educated guesses and even though JTB+ could count as knowledge, it would be impossible to know which JTB+ were necessary and which were contingent. That was done by applying a Kripkean notion of necessary *a posteriori* truths and then arguing against Kripke that it is an impossibility to know these truths to be necessary, thus it becomes a question of pragmatism, whether one should refer to those truths as necessary or contingent and there is no good reason to stop referring to those truths as contingent ones. A contextualistic approach was used to determine that even though a bold skepticism seems to be favorable *prima facie*, it is not preferable to the more relaxed standard of knowledge contextualism provides. Although it seems that epistemic contextualism is a notion that one needs to be argued into. It takes work to be able to think that there can be situations in which there are two subjects that are exactly alike in regards to p and yet, only one of the subjects can truthfully state that "he knows p", since they are being evaluated from within different contexts (Cohen, 1999, bls. 78). The contextualist approach was further used to answer a skeptical argument that employs epistemic closure to attack knowledge.

#### 4. Conclusion

The research question posed in this thesis is: "If all knowledge is empirical, is it necessary?" Through this discussion it has become clear that all meaningful knowledge must be bound within an empirical framework. *A priori* statements are inherently tautological in nature and as such, cannot convey meaning that is not itself of *a priori* nature. It has been shown that the cleavage between analytic and synthetic statements is not an actuality and therefore analytic statements must be of an *a posteriori* nature. Even mathematics must succumb to empiricism, or else be classified as a cluster of tautological truths. A framework of *a posteriori* truths could then be established. Within that framework, JTB was shown to be inferior to knowledge

partly because of epistemic luck. A Kripkean notion was used to show that even though there are necessary empirical truths, it is pragmatic to state that they are contingent, because of the impossibility of knowing that a necessary truth is not contingent due to the possibility of undiscovered criteria. Lastly, a contextualist account was utilized to defend the possibility of knowing things from the skeptical argument that states that things cannot be known at all. The skeptical arguments are strong because the skepticist changes the context of the epistemic closure.

A contextualist states that when engaged in normal discourse, he can positively know things. However, when confronted by the skeptical argument created from epistemic closure, the standard of knowledge is raised, effectively changing the context to a more philosophically oriented one. As such, it is possible to know things when within an epistemologically relaxed context, but those same things are not knowable within the philosophical context the skepticists argue for. Contextualism effectively allows us to respect the skeptical position while allowing lesser knowledge to be obtained. Thomas Reid came to an interesting, albeit sarcastic, truth about skeptics, that “It would be impossible by argument to beat him out of this stronghold; and he must even be left to enjoy his scepticism” (Reid, 1895, p. 447). This is the core of the issue in question: If anti-skepticists such as contextualists are to overthrow the skepticist as the *king of the mountain*, they must be content with whatever premises the skepticist allows them to use in arguments against them (DeRose, 1995, p. 49). The reason why a skepticist sits atop the mountain instead of a contextualist is not because he started on top but because he is the true king of the mountain... In certain contexts. When everything is taken into consideration, it is compelling to accept that contextualism, from a pragmatic account, contributes greatly to the question of whether things can be known or not. Skepticism cannot be completely disavowed because of the skeptical contexts which can arise on many occasions, such as in philosophical debates. Furthermore because it is impossible to know (even when using the low standard of knowledge) whether or not one is in such a context. It must be concluded that a contextual skepticism is evident in all contexts because of this impossibility. However, from a pragmatic account, it is feasible to accept that although there is an impossibility of knowing whether or not a certain context allows for a skeptical claim, it is reasonable to assume that all contexts accept a low standard of knowledge. This is in many ways a similar conclusion to the Kripkean notion of contingent empirical truths, the pragmatic account enhances the contextual notion of knowing things as an actuality. The answer to the research question “If all knowledge is empirical, is it

necessary?” is that all knowledge, in the sense attributed in this thesis, is indeed empirical and that it can be necessary. However, its necessity, when using a high standard of knowledge, is unknown to us and from a pragmatic account, all knowledge can be seen as contingent. Contextualism introduces a low standard of knowledge, in which it is possible to know things and further, to know whether or not necessary truths are necessary. The contextualist notion can thus adequately solve the skeptical problem and grants us the right to know things. Even if the skeptical claim can be applied to contextualism, so it cannot be proved that any context is not a skeptical one, a pragmatic notion is used to determine that it can truthfully be said that each and every context is not one of a skeptical nature.

The position forwarded in this thesis could be criticized as being self-defeating, since being within a philosophical context, it might not be of necessary nature when confronted with a high standard of knowledge. If it is not of necessary nature, this thesis, at best, conveys contingent knowledge. The thesis does not take a bold skeptical stance nor a relativist stance, therefore it is perhaps not as vulnerable as some other positions, that argue for a bold skepticism. If this thesis is self-defeating however, it is not because of any errors contained within the thesis itself, but because the epistemological framework is flawed as a whole and if it were to be repaired, this thesis would still contain knowledge, although it would not be self-defeating anymore. It could also be defeated by the notion that if it is impossible to know whether this thesis contains necessary or contingent knowledge, the thesis itself states that it hosts contingent knowledge. It would be contradictory, thus self-defeating, to state that it is possible to know that this thesis states that it is impossible to know things to be necessary when using a high standard of knowledge. At last, it must be noted that the denial of *a priori*, as meaningful knowledge, and of the analytic/synthetic cleavage was done exclusively to have knowledge bound within a framework of *a posteriori*, thus allowing for a more specific scope of reference. Furthermore, the skepticism toward the notion of knowing whether something is an necessary truth or not, is not intended to make the arguments used support a bold notion of skepticism but rather to demonstrate how contextualism can be intertwined with pragmatism to create a notion that can effectively answer the skeptical problems presented.

## **5. Final Remarks**

Contextualism not only provides a solution to the skeptical argument but also accurately describes the actual world. The interactions between humans are more closely resembled by contextualism than skepticism. People speak with great certainty about many things. Indeed,

they claim to know various things in a conversational context on a daily basis without thinking about whether or not they have hands! If a skeptical account would be as persistently prevalent in the real world as within the realm of philosophy, the world would be vastly different from ours. If a bold skeptical view would be prevalent in the real world, society would come to a grinding halt. Uncertainty would exacerbate doubt and it would be impossible to assert anything at all. For this reason, contextualism is strongly supported by a pragmatic notion, because contextualism *works* in the actual world in such a way that people can continue with their lives without their every fleeting thought resulting in an existential crisis of whether or not their reality is an actuality. What the conclusions of this thesis means in our world is that although necessary *a posteriori* truths exist, empirical science cannot be justifiably known in a context of a high standard of knowledge as regress arguments, along with problems that stem from epistemic luck, show clearly. However, it is pragmatic to assert that empirical science, however scientific, are still bound within a context where a low standard of knowledge is evident and significant results can be inferred from those empirical practices.

Meta-empiricism states that when within a strictly empirical framework of knowledge, empiricism itself is based on empirical data. The “vicious circle” is evident once again. If empirical statements must rely on empiricism, a notion that, being a subject to itself, fails to be necessary since empirical statements must be open to falsification (because of future evidence that might refute the empirical claim) and a clear criterion must be an actuality to judge whether new observations support, or falsify, its claim to knowledge. A pragmatic argument, similar to the ones used to deny knowledge of whether the Kripkean notion of *a posteriori* truths are necessary or not and whether a context is skeptical or not, can be employed to assert that empirical statements can be shown to contain truth. The pragmatic account simply states that although the meta-empirical claim could not be considered true in every context, it can still be asserted that in any observed context (which would furthermore employ a low standard of knowledge) the empirical claim would can be considered true, effectively reducing the relevance of meta-problems that might arise.

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