Epistemic Reasons, Evidence, and Defeaters*†

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1 Introduction

For at least 20 years after the publication of Gettier (1963), epistemology was dominated by attempts to solve the Gettier problem—i.e., with attempts to explain what it takes to turn justified true belief into knowledge.¹ It is not much of an exaggeration to say that epistemology became Gettiero logic. Much of the the debate in the Gettierological literature concerned the nature of defeaters. This is because a common Gettierological account of knowledge holds that knowledge is undefeated justified true belief. With this discussion of defeaters came intense debate about epistemic reasons.² This is because epistemic reasons are the things that do the defeating. Thus, in order to understand defeaters we need to understand epistemic reasons.

Epistemology is no longer Gettierology. Indeed, the pendulum has swung hard in the other direction. It is now extremely popular to think that knowledge is unanalyzable. According to this view, there is no informative solution to the Gettier problem.³ Although we might be able to characterize some features of knowledge—belief is necessary, truth is necessary,

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² Draft of August 28, 2015. This is not the final draft. Citing is encouraged, but if you want to quote, please ask permission first (errol.lord@fandm.edu).

³ Any cutoff date for the Gettierology movement is somewhat artificial. I chose 20 years because 1983 was the year when Shope (1983) appeared, which is often considered (e.g., in Williamson (2000), Kvanvig (2003) and Schroeder (2015a)) to be an authoritative statement on the history of Gettierology.

⁴ It should be noted that the entities under discussion didn’t always go by that name. Usually the ‘epistemic’ was omitted and sometimes ‘reason’ and ‘evidence’ were used interchangeably. As we’ll see, I think this is a mistake. Nevertheless, I think that most participants in the Gettierological literature were talking about what I call epistemic reasons below. Some clearly were not. Some theories—the most striking being reliabilism—explicitly eschewed any kind of contributory notion—i.e., any notion that is weighted. As it turns out, those accounts have a very hard time accounting for defeaters of justification.

⁵ The locus classicus for this view is Williamson (2000).
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justification is necessary etc. — we cannot give informative necessary and sufficient conditions for when a belief constitutes knowledge. Or so says this view.

Some philosophers are stubborn. So despite the death of Gettierology, there remain active and thriving research projects dedicated to analyzing knowledge. Two projects have been particularly persistent. The first analyzes knowledge in terms of virtue, while the second is anchored in the thought that knowledge is incompatible with a certain kind of luck.4 Reasons and defeaters have not played a prominent role in post-Gettierology debates about the analysis of knowledge. Indeed, while the death of Gettierology did not kill off theorizing about reasons and defeaters in epistemology entirely, it certainly dampened the enthusiasm of many. The problems that plague accounts of defeat in the Gettierological literature have seemed to many to seriously threaten the viability of theorizing about these notions at all, even if they are regularly employed in other debates.5

But reasons are on the ascendency. They have been a central theoretical tool in ethics and metaethics for a considerable amount of time. Epistemology is just now starting to properly catch up. Epistemologists are now starting to theorize much more with reasons, as other papers in this volume attest.6

I am interested in stoking the fires of some of the old Gettierological debates. In particular, I am interested in whether we can understand knowledge in terms of reasons and defeaters. I don't think the problems that plagued Gettierological accounts of these notions plague all accounts. Moreover, I think that we can learn valuable lessons from more recent attempts to analyze knowledge — I am particularly interested in the anti-luck analysis here. In this paper I will explore one part of this project.

My anchor in this paper is a certain type of Gettier case. The most famous case of this type is Fake Barn Country (originally found in Goldman (1976) and credited to Carl Ginet):7

Fake Barn Country: George is driving cross country. He stops to stretch his legs on the side of state highway in a state in the midwestern U.S. As he's stretching he surveys the scene. He looks at a structure that appears to be a red barn. He comes to form the belief that the structure is a red barn. In fact, the structure he

4For classic defenses of virtue epistemology, see Sosa (2009); Greco (2010); Zagzebski (1996). For classic defenses of anti-luck epistemology, see Unger (1975); Pritchard (2005); Sosa (1999).
5The debate where they figure most prominently is the debate about epistemic justification. It is a dogma of contemporary epistemology that justification can be defeated. Despite this, there is relatively little theorizing done in epistemology about the nature of defeat and defeaters.
6See also Reisner & Steglich-Petersen (2011).
7One might wonder why I choose this as my anchor. After all, this case wasn't introduced into the literature until part way through the Gettierological movement. Why not start with the original Gettier cases? The short answer is that the original Gettier cases are easily handled by the type of reasons based view I start to develop below. Cases like Fake Barn Country are harder to handle. Another reason I anchor the discussion in these cases is the fact that these types of cases have caused serious troubles for virtue-theoretic accounts of knowledge (see especially Pritchard (2011)). Thus, if the reasons based view can nicely explain these cases, then this will be a significant advantage over the virtue-theoretic accounts.
happens to be looking at is a red barn. However, unbeknownst to George, he is currently in fake barn country. Most of the structures that appear to be barns in fake barn country are papier mache barn facades.

The orthodox, though sometimes disputed, opinion amongst philosophers is that Fake Barn Country is a Gettier case. That is, it is a case of justified true belief that doesn't constitute knowledge. My focus here is on accounts that attempt to explain why this is in terms of reasons and defeat.

As it happens, there is an extremely natural way to extend some very plausible thoughts about the nature of defeat in order to have an elegant explanation of why George doesn't know—an explanation offered up by Schroeder (2015a)'s interesting revival of reasons based epistemology. Schroeder defends a version of the view that knowledge is undefeated justified true belief. His explanation of why George doesn't know is that George fails to believe for reasons that stand up to all the facts. While this is interesting, the devil is in the details. Unfortunately, I think there are very serious worries about the details of this account. I will argue that these worries are decisive and thus this account is untenable. It overgeneralizes badly.

However, I don't think this is the end of a reasons based explanation of these cases. I think that a better reasons based theory can be given. One lesson that should be learned from the failures of Schroeder's account is that we should look to other analytical projects for clues as to what went wrong. In particular, I think we should look to anti-luck accounts that offer a modal condition on knowledge. At first blush, these theories can make distinctions between cases that Schroeder's theory cannot.

I will develop a new, reasons based, modal condition on knowledge—the Security condition. The rough idea behind the Security condition is that if you know \( p \), then were you to take a stand about \( p \), your stand would not be defeated. I will argue that this account can explain the data that Schroeder's view cannot.

The plan is this. In the next section I will explicate an account of reasons, their weight, and how these notions relate to notions like permission and justification. I will show that this account provides the basis for promising explanations of how justification is defeated. I will also argue that this account avoids the two major pitfalls that plague Gettierological accounts of defeat. Interestingly, this theory can be extended in an elegant way to offer an explanation of how George's belief is defeated. In §3 I will argue that the extension of the basic theory should be rejected. I will first do this by offering counterexamples to the extension of the basic theory of defeat. I will then show that the extension forces us to deny plausible claims at the heart of Harman (1973)'s solution to the so-called Kripke-Harman dogmatism paradox. These problems are sufficient to reject the extension. In §4 I will flesh out the Security condition, argue that it can explain the trouble cases and argue that it nicely captures some platitudes about knowledge.
2 Reasons, Their Weight, Justification, and Defeat

In this section I am going to introduce the reasons first framework that I am interested in exploring. I won’t offer direct arguments for the various pieces. I will offer two indirect arguments for them, though. The first will be to show that the framework bears theoretical fruit. It offers an elegant explanation of how epistemic justification works. It will also provide the basis for an interesting way to think about how cases like Fake Barn Country work. The anchor of the second indirect argument is the fact that my framework avoids the major problems facing views of defeat in the Gettierological literature. I’ll start by laying out the framework and the fruit it bears when it comes to justification. I will then show how it avoids the common pitfalls of Gettierological accounts of defeat. We’ll close by thinking about how to extend the theory to explain cases like Fake Barn Country.

2.1 Reasons

Epistemic reasons come in three varieties: Reasons to believe, reasons to disbelieve, and reasons to withhold belief. Each type of reason is distinguished from the other types by the doxastic response that it recommends. Reasons to believe p recommend believing p; reasons to disbelieve p recommend believing ¬p; and reasons to withhold belief regarding p recommend refraining from forming an opinion about p.9

It is very plausible that all reasons to believe and reasons to disbelieve are pieces of evidence. Evidence is what recommends believing and disbelieving, at least when it comes to epistemic recommendations. Practical considerations like the fact that a rogue millionaire will pay me a large sum if I believe he is Elvis might recommend believing he is Elvis in some sense, but it isn’t an epistemic recommendation (see n. 8 for a way to cash out what it takes for a reason to make an epistemic recommendation). I will assume, though not a tremendous amount hangs on this, that only pieces of evidence can be reasons to believe and reasons to disbelieve.

Reasons to withhold about p are not pieces of evidence for p or ¬p.10 If they were, then they’d be reasons to believe p or reasons to disbelieve p!11 This is not surprising. Withholding...
belief shouldn't be justified by the evidence, for to withhold is to take a stand about the truth of \( p \). Evidence for \( p \) or for \( \neg p \), though, recommends taking a stance about the truth of \( p \). It does this by counting in favor of thinking the proposition in question is true or false. Given this, it is not surprising that the facts that count in favor of not taking a stand about the truth aren't evidence for the proposition in question.

This is not to say that evidence for \( p \) or evidence that \( \neg p \) is irrelevant to the reasons to withhold. For example, it might be that you go from being justified in believing \( p \) to only being justified in withholding about \( p \) because you gain evidence that \( \neg p \). This does not by itself show that the evidence for \( \neg p \) is a reason to withhold. Another explanation is that the new evidence for \( \neg p \) is making the weight of the evidence for \( p \) and the weight of the evidence for \( \neg p \) roughly the same and that the fact that this is the case is itself a reason to withhold. In other words, what might be going on is that a new reason to withhold obtains in virtue of the weight of the evidence being roughly on a par.

It's important to get clearer on which types of facts can be reasons to withhold. Sometimes reasons to withhold will be facts about one's evidence. For example, when I have no evidence for \( p \) or for \( \neg p \), I should withhold belief about \( p \). The fact that I have no evidence one way or the other is the decisive reason to withhold belief. Similarly, when I have evidence of equal weight in favor of \( p \) and \( \neg p \), the fact that I have evidence of equal weight is a reason to withhold belief about \( p \).

Paradigmatic undercutting defeaters are also nice examples of reasons to withhold. Take two well worn examples. First, suppose that I just took a pill that makes all red walls look blue (but not vice versa). The fact that I took the pill is a reason to withhold belief that the wall that I just looked at that appears to me blue is actually blue. Second, suppose I read a study that concludes that \( p \). But in fact there are good reasons to doubt the methodology of the study. Those facts—the facts that question the methodology—are reasons to withhold belief about \( p \).12

For the sake of being as ecumenical as possible, I won't offer an account of reasons to withhold.13 We can rely on a general understanding of the phenomenon gleaned from the

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12 An interesting question that hasn't been seriously considered in the literature is the connection between reasons to withhold and higher-order evidence. Higher-order evidence has been the subject of great debate, mostly in connection with the debate about the epistemic significance of disagreement (see, e.g., Feldman (2009); Sliwa & Horowitz (FC); Lasonen-Aarnio (2014); Christensen (2010). An interesting conjecture is that higher-order evidence provides reasons to withhold. I don't know of any explicit discussion of this conjecture.

13 For such an account, see (Schroeder, 2012, §3). According to that account, a necessary condition for reasons to withhold is that the costs of believing \( p \) when \( p \) is false are greater than the costs of failing to believe \( p \) when \( p \) is true. (As I point out in n. 16 below, the account given in that paper takes a controversial stand on how to understand some of the cases.) Schroeder goes on to use this view to offer a novel view on which
types of cases given above.

### 2.2 The Weight of Reasons and Justification

It is plausible that we can explain notions like permission and requirement in terms of reasons. This is because reasons are contributory and the notions like permission and requirement are all things considered. Reasons contribute towards a case for reacting in the way they recommend. The all things considered notions take into account all the contributory facts and issue an all thing considered recommendation.\(^{14}\)

A very popular way of fleshing out the contributory nature of reasons is in terms of the weight of reasons.\(^{15}\) Reasons have weight and some reasons are weightier than others. This allows us to construct an ordering of strengths of sets of reasons. Other things equal, when the reasons in favor of some option \(\phi\) outweigh some option \(\psi\), \(\psi\)-ing is impermissible. Finally, when some option \(\phi\) is at the top of the ordering—when the reasons in favor of \(\phi\)-ing outweigh all the other options—\(\phi\)-ing is both permitted and (other things equal) required.

We can extract from these thoughts Decisive Weight:

**Decisive Weight**: What it is for the weight of the set of reasons \(S\) for \(A\) to take doxastic stance \(D\) towards \(p\) to be decisive is for the weight of \(S\) to be greater than the weight of the sets of reasons for all other options.

It’s plausible that being decisively weighty is intimately connected with requirements. Required takes a stab at what the connection is:

**Required**: \(A\) is required to take \(D\) towards \(p\) just in case the set of reasons for \(A\) to take \(D\) is decisive.

Decisiveness is one all things considered notion—it’s the one that is connected with requirement. In order to explain all that interests epistemologists, we need an all things considered notion that is related to permissions. This is because there are plenty of claims that I’m justified to believe but not required to believe. For example, I am justified but not required to believe trivial disjunctions that are entailed by other things I already justifiably believe.\(^{16}\) Nevertheless, everything I’m justified to believe I’m permitted to believe (and vice versa).

We can account for permission with the all things considered notion of sufficiency. This is spelled out in Sufficient Weight:

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\(^{14}\) For a more worked out version of this argument in favor of understanding the all things considered in terms of reasons, see Lord & Maguire (FC).

\(^{15}\) What follows is deeply indebted to Schroeder (2015b) and Schroeder (2015a).

\(^{16}\) This is not entirely uncontroversial—see Christensen (2004).

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**Sufficient Weight:** What it is for the weight of a set of reasons $S$ for $A$ to take $D$ towards $p$ to be sufficient is for $S$ to be at least as weighty as the set of reasons for any other option.

When the weight of $S$ is merely sufficient, there is at least one other set of reasons that is just as weighty as $S$, although there is no set that is weightier. It's plausible that there is a tight connection between sufficiency and permission. This is expressed by Permission:

**Permission:** $A$ is permitted to take $D$ towards $p$ just in case the set of reasons for $A$ to take $D$ is sufficient.

If we make the plausible assumption that all the justified options are permitted and all the permitted options are justified, then we can use Permission to theorize about justification. This gives us Justification:

**Justification:** $A$ is justified to take $D$ towards $p$ just in case the set of reasons for $A$ to take $D$ is sufficient.

By holding Sufficient Weight, Permission, and Justification, we can easily account for the trivial disjunction case. In that case, it's plausible that the set of reasons to believe the disjunction is just as weighty as the set of reasons to withhold belief in the disjunction. Thus, it follows from Sufficient Weight that the reasons to do either thing are sufficiently weighty. It then follows from Justification that I am justified in either believing the disjunction or withholding about the disjunction. This is why it is permitted but not required to believe the disjunction.\(^\text{17}\)

At first blush, this is a very attractive picture. We can understand the central deontic notions in terms of reasons and how they weigh up. By making a very plausible assumption about the connection between permission and justification we can then use this machinery to theorize about one of the most central notions in epistemology—viz. epistemic justification.

### 2.3 Weight and Defeat, Part 1: Defeating Justification

We nearly have the resources to start theorizing about defeat. Defeaters are facts that prevent a set of reasons from being weighty enough to confer some all things considered epistemic standing. We'll start by thinking about how justification can be defeated.

\(^{17}\)Of course, it’s plausible that things change if I consider the disjunction. Once I consider the disjunction, it’s plausible that I am required to believe it. We can accommodate within a reasons based framework by introducing the notion of an attenuator. An attenuator is some fact that weakens the weight of a set of reasons. In this case, I think it’s plausible that the fact that I consider the disjunction is an attenuator of the set of reasons to withhold. Once the weight of that set is weakened, the set of reasons to believe is weightiest—thus, I’m required to believe. I will return to attenuation (and the reverse phenomenon—intensification—in the next subsection). For other key work on attenuation, see Dancy (2004) and especially Schroeder (2011a).
Before we can fully explain how reasons can defeat justification, we need to get one more piece of machinery on the table. This is the distinction between reasons that exist and reasons that are possessed. The reasons that you possess are the reasons that are within your ken in some way. So for example, the fact that Anne is smiling is a reason that exists for me to believe she is amused. When I see that she is smiling, however, the fact that she is smiling is a reason that I possess. Possession is important for us because it’s plausible that only the reasons you possess bear on what you are justified in believing. When Anne is smiling in Nebraska and I’m in California (and have no contact with Anne), the fact that she is smiling doesn’t bear on the question of whether I’m justified to believe she is amused. If I am justified, it won’t be because of the fact that she is smiling.

Participants in the literature on possession agree that possession has some kind of epistemic condition. In other words, in order to possess a reason, that reason needs to be in one’s epistemic ken. As one might expect, there is tremendous disagreement about what it takes for a reason to be within one’s epistemic ken. Popular contenders include knowledge, being in a position to know, justified belief, rational belief, and belief. I will not take an official stand on this issue, here. The precise condition is orthogonal to the main issues here.

Most think that the epistemic condition is both necessary and sufficient for possessing a reason. I think that this is demonstrably false. Meeting the epistemic condition is not sufficient. To see this, imagine that Holmes just told Watson that the boot print was made by a size 9 Red Wing Iron Ranger. After Watson stares back blankly, Holmes rolls his eyes and tells him that the cabby wears size 9 Red Wing Iron Rangers. Watson immediately makes the inference. The fact that the print was made by a size 9 Iron Ranger is a reason to believe the cabby did it. And on any account of the epistemic condition on possession, Watson meets the epistemic condition. Yet, before he finds out about the cabby’s choice of boot, it’s intuitive that he doesn’t possess that fact as a reason to believe that the cabby did it. If he did, then it would have been rational for Watson to believe the cabby did it. It wasn’t rational for Watson to believe that before he knew about the cabby’s choice of boot. Thus, he didn’t possess that fact as a reason to believe the cabby did it.

Because of cases like this, I think there is also a practical condition on possession. This condition is so called because it seems to me that what is going wrong with Watson before he finds out about the cabby’s boot choice is that he cannot use the fact that the print was caused by an Iron Ranger as a reason to believe that the cabby did it. This is why, I conjecture, he fails to possess. There has been very little discussion about this condition in the literature. As with the epistemic condition, I won’t take a stand on what the practical condition is. In

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18 Those views are defended by Williamson (2000); Gibbons (2013); Lord (MSa); Neta (2008); Whiting (2014) and Schroeder (2008, 2011b) respectively.

19 Of course, if one wants to analyze justification and/or knowledge in terms of possessed reasons, several contenders for the epistemic condition will be eliminated—knowledge, justification, position to know. See Schroeder (2008, 2011b) and Sylvan & Sosa (FC); Sylvan (MS) for two views of possession that could be taken as prior to justification and knowledge without circularity.

20 See (Lord, MSa, ch. 4), Lord (MSb), Whiting (2014); Sylvan (2015).
other work I've defended the view that to meet the practical condition is to be in a position to manifest knowledge about how to use the fact that provides the reason as a reason.\textsuperscript{21}

With this in hand, we have the resources to explain how justification can be defeated. Take again one of the paradigm cases of undercutting defeat. Suppose I look at a wall that appears to me blue. This provides me with a reason—i.e., it makes it the case I possess a reason—to believe that the wall is blue. We can suppose that this reason is sufficiently weighty and thus I'm justified to believe the wall is blue. But now suppose I come to learn that a side effect of the pill I just took is that all red walls will appear blue but not vice versa. This fact defeats the reason provided by my experience. How does it do this? It does this by making the set of reasons to withhold weightier than the set of reasons to believe. Once this is the case, it follows from Sufficient Weight that the set of reasons in favor of believing that the wall is blue is insufficient. It follows from Permission that believing \( p \) is not permitted. And, finally, it follows from Justification that believing \( p \) is unjustified. Voila.\textsuperscript{22}

Reasons to disbelieve \( p \) can also defeat my reasons to believe \( p \). Suppose that I know that the lights are on in your office. This provides me with strong evidence that you are in your office since I know that you only leave your lights on in your office when you're not there under extreme circumstances. At this point the reasons I have to believe you are in your office are sufficient and thus I'm justified in believing you are in your office. However, suppose I come to learn that an hour ago there was a fire in the building and that because of this you left the building in great haste and forgot to turn out the lights. This provides me with strong evidence that you are not in your office. In fact, this evidence plausibly defeats the reasons I have to believe you are in your office. How? It does this by making the weight of reasons to disbelieve you are in your office stronger than the weight of the reasons to believe you aren't. Given Sufficient Weight and Justification, it follows that I am no longer justified in believing that you are in your office.

Our framework thus provides a nice way of explaining how justification can be defeated. We can do this by appealing to the relationship between reasons, their weight, and all things considered notions. Indeed, an account of defeat falls directly out of the account of justifica-

\textsuperscript{21}See \textit{(Lord, MSa, ch. 4)}, \textit{Lord (MSb)}, and \textit{Lord (FC)}.

\textsuperscript{22}Note that this explanation is neutral about a key issue that needs to be resolved in order to fully explain what's going on. Namely, this is neutral about \textit{the way in which} the fact that the pill has the side effects it does (I'm going to call this the Side Effect fact in this note) defeats my reasons to believe the wall is blue. There are at least two options. The first option is to hold that the Side Effect fact is itself a reason to withhold. If you think this, then you'll think that the Side Effect fact defeats my reasons to believe the wall is blue by adding weight to the set of reasons to withhold. The second option is to hold that the Side Effect fact is not a reason for any of the options, but is instead an \textit{attenuator} of the reasons I possess for believing the wall is blue. Attenuators lessen the weight of some reasons even though they are not themselves reasons (again, see Dancy (2004) and Schroeder (2011a)). If you think this, then you'll think the Side Effect fact defeats my reasons for believing the wall is blue by lowering their weight such that they are less weighty than the reasons I had all along for withholding. I'm not aware of anyone who explicitly discusses the merits of these two options. Mark Schroeder holds that undercutting defeaters like the Side Effect fact are attenuators and not themselves reasons to withhold (or at least that's how I understand the view given what he says in Schroeder (2011a) and Schroeder (2012)). I won't take a stand here on this issue (although I'm inclined to disagree with Schroeder).
2.2 Now the task is to see how the framework handles defeat when it comes to knowledge. Things are not so simple when it comes to knowledge. Before we take up this task, we'll pause to see why the framework sketched so far avoids the problems that plagued Gettierological accounts of defeat.

2.4 An Interlude: Why This Is Better Than Gettierological Accounts of Defeat

Before moving on to thinking about the ways knowledge can be defeated, let me provide the second indirect argument for my framework. I'm doing this as an interlude because we already have enough on the table to see that this account avoids the main pitfalls that plagued Gettierological accounts of defeat.

We can start by thinking of a representative Gettierological account of defeat. Following Schroeder (2015a), I'll choose Klein (1971)'s account. According to Klein, in order for A to know that p at t, p has to be true, A has to believe p, p has to be evident to A, and, 'there is no true proposition such that if it became evident to [A] at [t], p would no longer be evident to [A]' (475). This account has its charms, for sure. Take George. It seems like this account makes the right prediction in George's case. It doesn't seem outlandish to think that George doesn't know because if he were to find out he was in fake barn country, then he wouldn't be justified (or it wouldn't be 'evident' to him) to believe that the structure he looked at was a barn.

Unfortunately, accounts like Klein's suffer from at least two damning problems. First, they have a hard time accounting for the fact that not only can there be defeaters of knowledge, there can also be defeaters of defeaters of knowledge, and there can be defeaters of defeaters of defeaters of knowledge, and so on, ad infinitum.

To see this, just think about the pill case from the last section. Suppose I learn about the side effects of the pill from the label on the pill bottle. Again, it's intuitive that this information defeats my justification for believing the wall that appears blue is blue. But then suppose I peel the label off to reveal more information about the side effects. One piece of information on the inside of the label is that the pill does not affect the visual systems of those with a rare condition that I happen to have. This information seems to defeat the defeater, and thus it seems like my justification is restored. To add one more layer, suppose I just then happen to see a report on the news saying that there was a malfunction at the plant that prints the labels for this very type of pill that caused misreporting about which conditions lead to one being immune from the side effects of the pill. This seems to defeat the defeater of the defeater, and thus it seems plausible that I once again cease to be justified.

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23 For similar arguments, see Schroeder (2015a).
24 These are the two problems pushed by Shope (1983) against many different Gettierological accounts of defeat.
25 Harman (1973) considers something very close to Klein's defeat condition and argues against it by appealing to defeaters of defeaters.
Many Gettierological accounts of defeat lacked the explanatory resources to account for this phenomenon. Klein’s account nicely illustrates this. It gets the right result in the first iteration. That is, it correctly predicts that my reasons are defeated by the fact that the pill has the side effect. However, it overgenerates on this prediction. This is because it is still true in the second iteration that if I were to come to know about the fact about the side effect, I would cease to be justified. Thus, it predicts that even in the second iteration my reasons for belief are defeated. But this is wrong. In the second iteration it’s plausible that the defeater has been defeated and thus my reasons for belief are once again sufficient.

The rub is that the account I’m offering does not have a problem explaining this phenomenon. This is because the notion that has been central—the notion of sufficiency—is determined by a balance of all of the relevant facts. Thus, when new facts that are relevant are introduced in further iterations, the status of the side effect fact can ebb and flow in the right kind of ways. This is because the further defeaters will affect the weights of some of the sets of reasons in favor of the various options. The original defeater did its work by making the set of reasons to withhold weightier than the set of reasons to believe. The defeater of the defeater will do its work by reversing this process. The defeater of the defeater of the defeater will do its work by reversing this process, and so on. Thus, the account I’ve sketched doesn’t have a problem handling the potentially infinite iterations of defeaters.

The second problem plaguing Gettierological accounts of defeat is the conditional fallacy. A view is (most likely) open to the conditional fallacy when it tries to analyze some categorical property in some conditional way. Again, Klein’s account provides a helpful illustration. Klein’s account holds that in order to for one’s actual belief to be immune from defeat, it can’t be that it would be unjustified in close worlds where one finds out about some other fact.

The problem with this is that there is no way to guarantee, as it were, that nearby possible worlds will always be as one might expect. That is, there is no way to rule out that other things might be true in nearby worlds, things that affect whether or not my reasons are sufficient in those worlds. So, for example, in the nearest world where I find out about the label fact it might be that there is a defeater of that defeater. That would mean that, in that world, my reasons aren’t defeated, even though it’s still intuitively true that, in this world, my reasons are defeated. It can go the other way too. It’s possible for my reasons to be intuitively sufficient in this world, even though in a nearby possible world some other fact obtains that defeats those reasons. It is very tempting that the conditional fallacy will plague any counterfactual analysis of a categorical property like defeat. If this is right, then counterfactual analyses are doomed to make bad predictions. In any case, these types of worries pose a formidable challenge to conditional analyses. Furthermore, the Gettierological literature provides strong evidence that it is extremely difficult to produce a conditional analysis that is immune to these kinds of counterexamples.

Fortunately for me, my account is not a conditional account. Counterfactual facts are not relevant to whether or not a set of reasons is sufficient. Only facts about the actual weights of the sets of reasons for the other options matter. Thus, my account doesn’t face problems with the conditional fallacy.
It turns out, then, that the account of defeat sketched here doesn’t have the main problems that plagued Gettierological accounts of defeat. Thus, skepticism about those accounts should not immediately carry over to skepticism about my account. Moreover, given how natural the starting idea is that drive the project I share with Gettierologists, the fact that my account elegantly solves the main problems with Gettierological accounts is reason to be further attracted to my account. With this in hand, let’s get into the details where the devil truly lies—explaining how knowledge can be defeated.

2.5 Weight and Defeat, Part Two: Defeating Knowledge

One way that knowledge that \( p \) can be defeated is by justification for \( p \) being defeated. So we can explain one way knowledge is defeated by appealing to the type of story told above. Importantly, though, this is not the only way in which knowledge can be defeated. This is one of the lessons we can glean from Gettier cases. In those cases, one is justified in believing the proposition in question even though one’s belief doesn’t constitute knowledge. George is justified in believing there is a barn in front of him even though he doesn’t know that there is. Thus, we can’t explain why George’s knowledge is defeated by explaining why his justification is defeated.

Another way to put the point is that George doesn’t possess any defeaters. This is why he still has a justified belief. And so it seems like the fact that defeats George’s knowledge must be unpossessed. So Gettier Cases, and especially cases like Fake Barn Country, support Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat:

**Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat**: Sometimes fact outside of \( A \)’s ken can defeat the reasons that support \( A \)’s belief in a way that prevents that belief from being knowledge.

We don't have the resources so far to explain Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat. So far we just have an explanation of how possessed facts can defeat.

As Schroeder (2015a) has shown, we needn’t look far for a natural explanation of Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat. To see this clearly, we need to add some details to our theory of weight. First consider the ordering of the weights of the sets of all of the reasons that exist. Let’s call this the *objective weighing* of reasons. When it comes to the epistemic, it’s very plausible that all and only the truths will be sufficiently supported by the objective weighing. The sets of reasons supporting falsehoods will be defeated by the sets of reasons supporting the truths, on the objective weighing.

Now consider the ordering of the weights of the sets of the reasons a particular agent possesses. Let’s call this the *subjective weighing* of reasons. Sometimes falsehoods can be sufficiently supported when it comes to the subjective weighing. This happens when you possess some strong but misleading reasons to believe the falsehood and don’t possess enough of the reasons not to believe the falsehood.
With this distinction in hand, we can be more precise about what it takes to be justified. This is because with this distinction in hand, we can see that there are at least two different ways of cashing out Sufficient Weight. There is Objectively Sufficient Weight and Subjectively Sufficient Weight:

**Objectively Sufficient Weight:** What it is for the weight of the set of all of the reasons $S$ for $A$ to take $D$ towards $p$ to be objectively sufficient is for $S$ to be at least as weighty as the sets of all of the reasons for the other options.

**Subjectively Sufficient Weight:** What it is for the weight of a set of possessed reasons $S$ for $A$ to take $D$ towards $p$ to be subjectively sufficient is for $S$ to be at least as weighty as the sets of possessed reasons for the other options.

Since it's plausible that the only reasons that are relevant when it comes to justification are the possessed reasons, it follows that it's plausible that one is justified in taking $D$ towards $p$ just in case the reasons in favor of taking $D$ are subjectively sufficient.

Given this, knowledge is incompatible with you lacking subjectively sufficient reasons—i.e., knowledge is incompatible with being unjustified. At least at first blush, what seems special and perhaps peculiar about cases like Fake Barn Country is that there is some interaction between the subjective and objective weighings. This is because it seems like some unpossessed facts are preventing one from knowing. Since these facts are unpossessed, they are irrelevant when it comes to the subjective weighing.

Schroeder's view makes a prediction about what the interaction is between the reasons that are possessed and the reasons that aren't. Schroeder's view about knowledge is that knowledge is belief for reasons that are, in my terms, both subjectively sufficient and objectively sufficient. The reasons for which one believes, Schroeder assumes, are a subset of the reasons one possesses. Given this, Schroeder's view predicts that, in order to know, the reasons one possesses must be objectively sufficient. That is, the set of the reasons one possesses must be just as weighty as the set of all the reasons to disbelieve and the set of all the reasons to withhold.

This gives us a nice story about what's going on with George and thus an explanation of Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat. The set of reasons George possesses to believe that it's a barn is not objectively sufficient because the set of all of the reasons to withhold is weightier than the set of reasons George possesses to believe it's a barn. This is because the fact that George is in fake barn country makes the set of all the reasons to withhold weightier than the set of reasons George possesses to believe it is a barn. This provides an explanation of how an unpossessed fact—the fact that George is in fake barn country—can defeat George's knowledge.

This explanation of George's case supports $P(\text{possessed})R(\text{reasons})$ Objectively Sufficient:

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26 Of course, this means that there are at least two different ways of cashing out Decisive Weight. Since Sufficient Weight is more important for justification, I'll omit these details.

27 I also hold this view and defend it in (Lord, MSA, ch. 4).

28 Whiting (2015) disputes whether Schroeder's view vindicates this claim. For a response, see Schroeder (FC).
PR Objectively Sufficient: In order for $A$ to know $p$, the set of reasons $A$ possesses to believe $p$ must be as weighty as the set of all the reasons to believe $\neg p$ and all the reasons to withhold belief about $p$.

PR Objectively Sufficient provides an elegant explanation for why George and his ilk don't know. It is elegant, *inter alia*, because it fits so nicely with the general account of how justification is defeated. Unfortunately, I think it makes bad predictions about a lot of other cases. In the next section I will argue against PR Objectively Sufficient, despite its elegance.

3 Defeat and the Durability of Knowledge

PR Objectively Sufficient provides a plausible story about what is going on with George. It is plausible that if one knows, then one’s belief has a certain *durability*. To use Schroeder (2015a)’s phrase, knowledge stands up to the facts. PR Objectively Sufficient provides a nice filling out of this intuitive idea. Knowledge stands up to the facts because, when you know, the reasons for which you hold the belief are at least as weighty as the reasons to take any other stand. In other words, when you know, there is no fact out there that could defeat the reasons for which you believe. This is, claims Schroeder, the sense in which knowledge stands up to the facts. And it provides knowledge with a kind of durability. No fact out there can defeat the reasons for believe $p$ when you know $p$.

To paraphrase Kripke, this really is a nice theory; the only problem with it is that it is false. The hitch is that not only does PR Objectively Sufficient fail to capture the sense in which knowledge is durable, it actually makes knowledge much too *fragile*. This is because it holds knowledge hostage to misleading reasons *no matter where they are*. I’m going to give a two part argument for this claim. The first part will directly pump intuitions that count against PR Objectively Sufficient. The second part will show that we can generalize the problem to see that PR Objectively Sufficient forces us to deny some very plausible claims originating in Harman (1973)’s discussion of the Kripke-Harman dogmatism paradox.

Part One: The Cases

PR Objectively Sufficient makes knowledge too fragile. We can see this by considering some cases. Let’s start with Natalya’s Proof:

**Natalya’s Proof:** Natalya is a renowned topologist who works at Princeton University. She has just proven, rather easily, a mathematical claim $p$. She excitedly tells the first person she sees—call him James—that she’s proven $p$. James is an undergraduate in Natalya’s advanced topology course. As it happens, they had

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29 As we’ll see, Harman (1973) noticed this very fact about a view very much like Klein’s. I owe a deep debt to his discussion.
just been talking about \( p \) in class the week before. A few moments after Natalya
tells James, a mathematician named Vlad in St. Petersburg, Russia asserts that
\( \neg p \).

In Natalya's Proof, the fact that Vlad asserted \( \neg p \) is a reason for James to believe \( \neg p \). Thus,
the set of all the reasons to disbelieve \( p \) includes that reason. Moreover, the inclusion of that
reason in the set of all the reasons to disbelieve \( p \) makes that set about as weighty as the set of
reasons James possesses to believe \( p \). After all, James doesn't know enough about the topic to
be able to adjudicate between Vlad and Natalya. The fact that set of reasons James possesses
to believe \( p \) is about as weighty as the set of reasons there are to disbelieve \( p \) is itself a weighty
reason for him to withhold belief. So weighty that it seems like the set of all of the reasons
there are to withhold is weightier than the set of reasons for which James believes \( p \). To see
this, consider how James ought to respond upon learning that the two sets are equally weighty.
He ought to respond by withholding judgment. This supports thinking that the set of all the
reasons to withhold is weightier than the set of reasons James possesses to believe \( p \). So if PR
Objectively Sufficient is true, then James doesn't know \( p \).

This seems wrong. James has had contact with someone who knows about as well as one
can know that \( p \). Moreover, he has taken the information on board in the right kind of ways.
Intuitively, whether James knows is not held hostage to what someone is saying on the other
side of the world. His knowledge is not that fragile. It would be if PR Objectively Sufficient
were true. This gives us good reason to reject PR Objectively Sufficient.

This conclusion is further confirmed by considering some other cases. Take the following
example inspired by Ginet (1980):

**Newspaper:** Jane lives in Seattle. She reads in the paper that Barcelona won last
night. Suppose that the paper is very reliable about such things (and Jane knows
this) and they are right on this occasion. It seems like Jane comes to know that
Barcelona won last night. Suppose further, though, that 5 minutes before Jane
read that Barcelona won, a highly reliable English newspaper (such things exist,
I am told) prints off a copy of the next day's paper that misreports that Barcelona
won last night.

It is very plausible that Jane knows Barcelona won last night. After all, she has had contact with
a true report of such a thing from a reliable source. She has taken this information on board in the
right kind of ways and there are no misleading reasons in her vicinity.

If PR Objectively Sufficient is true, then Jane does not know that Barcelona won last night.
This is because the set of reasons she possesses to believe this is about as weighty as the set of
all the reasons to disbelieve this. This is true because the set of all the reasons to disbelieve
Barcelona won includes the reason provided by the second paper. This fact about the weight-
iness of the two sets is itself a strong reason to withhold. Indeed, it seems like this reason
to withhold makes the set of all the reasons to withhold weightier than the set of reasons for
which Jane believes Barcelona won. So if PR Objectively Sufficient is true, Jane never knows that Barcelona won.

The upshot of these cases, I think, is that PR Objectively Sufficient makes knowledge too fragile. This is because it holds it hostage to every happening in the whole world. Intuitively, the existence of misleading reasons—even objectively weighty ones—on the other side of the world is irrelevant to whether one knows.

Importantly, though, at some point misleading reasons are 'close' enough to us to defeat our knowledge, even if we don’t know about these reasons. This was nicely shown by Harman (1973) by appeal to Trickery and Loss of Nerve:

**Trickery:** Suppose in May Donald tells you that he is spending the next three months in Italy. Donald then goes off to Italy. It is plausible that you know that Donald is in Italy. However, for whatever reason, Donald has decided that he needs to trick you into thinking he cut his trip short to go to California. So he writes several letters under the pretense that he is in San Francisco. He gives these letters to a friend who is going to San Francisco. This friend mails you the letters over the course of the summer. You happen to be away when these letters arrive. When you get home, you go over to the pile of mail you received when you were away. Before you get to the letters, your wife asks you if you know where Donald is. You say, 'Yes, he's in Italy.'

**Loss of Nerve:** All of the details are the same as Trickery, except that after writing the letters Donald loses his nerve. He doesn’t hand the letters off to his friend going to San Francisco. They thus never get to your house. They remain in the trash can next to Donald's desk in Italy.

It is plausible that Trickery is just like Fake Barn Country. That is, your knowledge is defeated in Trickery in the same way George’s knowledge is defeated in Fake Barn Country. However, Loss of Nerve doesn’t seem like Fake Barn Country. In Loss of Nerve it seems like you retain your knowledge. Loss of Nerve is like Natalya’s Proof and Newspaper, not Fake Barn Country. If this is right, then we have a challenge: Explain when an unpossessed misleading reason is close enough to prevent one from knowing.  

**Part Two: The Theoretical Cost**

The last section argued that PR Objectively Sufficient makes bad predictions about particular cases. In this section I’ll make the problem more acute by pointing out that it also forces us to give up well motivated general principles.

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30 Harman himself notes that this is the right conclusion to draw, but doesn't have a way of meeting the challenge.

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To see this, recall the so-called Kripke-Harman Dogmatism paradox.\(^{31}\) The paradox is driven by the thought that when you know \(p\), any evidence against \(p\) is misleading (given the factivity of knowledge). Moreover, most of us know the following conditional: If I know \(p\), then any evidence against \(p\) is misleading. Now suppose I know \(p\). It seems like I can derive, via some closure principle, that a particular reason not to believe \(p\) is misleading from my knowledge of the conditional plus my knowledge that some reason \(r\) is reason not to believe \(p\). And it seems like if this works in any case, it will work in all cases. Thus, it seems like once I know \(p\), I can reject any incoming reasons against believing \(p\), no matter how strong. This is very counterintuitive.

There are interesting questions to be raised about each step of this argument. We can ignore most of these questions. What we need to know is simply why we can't get from knowledge that \(p\) at \(t\) to dogmatism about \(p\) at all times after \(t\)—i.e., all we need to know is why this argument doesn't work. Luckily, Harman himself provided what is now taken to be the standard solution, which is itself grist for my mill. According to Harman, the problem with the argument is that it isn't sensitive to what happens to one's knowledge over time. It might be that, at \(t\), one knows \(p\) and one knows that if one knows \(p\), all reasons against \(p\) are misleading. However, to use my terminology, this doesn't mean that when one encounters reasons against believing \(p\) at some future time (at \(t_1\), say), those reasons won't defeat one's knowledge that \(p\). If they do defeat one's knowledge at \(t_1\), then one cannot come to know that the reasons are misleading via the inference above. This is because one of the premises will be false—viz., that one knows \(p\).\(^{32}\)

Given the terrain we've covered, this is very plausible. To see this, consider the following variation on Newspaper:

**Traveling Jane:** Imagine that Jane reads that Barcelona won in the Seattle airport. Shortly after she gets on a plane and flies to London. As she gets off the plane in London, she encounters the second paper.

In Seattle Jane knows that Barcelona won. However, once she encounters the second report, her knowledge is defeated. This is because her justification is defeated. Thus, once she encounters the second report, she ceases to be in a position to know that all reasons against the claim that Barcelona won are misleading. She ceases to be in this position because she ceases to know that Barcelona won last night.

All of this supports thinking No Dogmatism is true:

**No Dogmatism:** It is possible for one's knowledge (at \(t\)) that \(p\) to be defeated by acquiring (at \(t_1\)) misleading reasons to not believe \(p\) (misleading reasons that existed at \(t\)).

\(^{31}\)See Harman (1973) and Kripke (2011).

\(^{32}\)Interestingly, Harman's discussion of Trickery and Loss of Nerve immediately precedes his discussion of the dogmatism paradox.
No Dogmatism is strongly supported by cases like Traveling Jane. Moreover, it provides a nice solution to the Kripke-Harman dogmatism paradox. To deny it, then, would be very costly.\(^{33}\)

If you accept PR Objectively Sufficient, you have to deny No Dogmatism. PR Objectively Sufficient holds that in order for Jane to know that Barcelona won at the earlier time, the set of reasons she possesses to believe they won must be weightier than the set of all of the reasons to believe they didn’t win and all the reasons to withhold about whether they won. But, as we’ve seen, given the existence of the second newspaper, it’s plausible that the set of all of the reasons to withhold belief about whether Barcelona won is weightier than the set of reasons Jane possesses to believe they won. This is why Jane’s reasons to believe they won are defeated when she learns about the second report. So if PR Objectively Sufficient is true, then Jane doesn’t know Barcelona won when she initially reads the first newspaper. Thus, if PR Objectively Sufficient is true, No Dogmatism is false because it’s not possible for there to be a case where one knows \(p\) at \(t\) even though there are unpossessed reasons at \(t\) that are weighty enough to defeat the reasons one possesses to believe \(p\).

Since No Dogmatism is the anchor to the traditional solution to the Kripke-Harman dogmatism paradox, if you accept PR Objectively Sufficient, then you have to find another solution to the Kripke-Harman dogmatism paradox. But the problems revealed here are deeper. For the most natural position to take, if you accept PR Objectively Sufficient, is to hold that we were really misled from the beginning about the types of cases that even raise the problem. This is the most natural reply because if you accept PR Objectively Sufficient, then you should think that the paradigm cases used to motivate the paradox are non-sequiturs. This is because the characters in those cases never know. They don’t know because the reasons for which they believe are never objectively sufficient. This is implausible. As far as I know, no one has ever reacted this way to the cases in print.\(^{34}\)

We shouldn’t get too carried away here. If you accept PR Objectively Sufficient, there are still cases you can use to motivate the paradox. The result of this is that you can still hold something like No Dogmatism. However, the cases you use have to have the following feature: The misleading reason that defeats one’s justification at the later time mustn’t exist at the earlier time. Similarly, you have to accept a much weaker principle than No Dogmatism, something like Future Reasons:

**Future Reasons:** It is possible for one’s knowledge that \(p\) to be defeated by acquiring (at \(t_1\)) misleading reasons to not believe \(p\), so long as those reasons did not exist until \(t_1\).

The problem with this is that it doesn’t seem like it matters whether the reasons exist at \(t\) or not. In the context of the Kripke-Harman dogmatism paradox, it doesn’t seem to matter one

\(^{33}\)Recently some have been willing to live with the claim that knowledge is not defeasible. See, e.g., Lasonen-Aarnio (2010); Benton & Baker-Hytch (FC).

\(^{34}\)This is so despite the fact that defeasibility analyses a la Klein’s analysis also seem committed to the implausible result.
way or the other. But if you accept PR Objectively Sufficient, you have to think it matters a great deal. This is yet further evidence that PR Objectively Sufficient is not on the right track. At this point in the dialectic, the defender of PR Objectively Sufficient has a powerful reply to my argument. The reply is that even if PR Objectively Sufficient makes implausible predictions about some cases, there is simply no other principled way of explaining Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat. Assuming that Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat is true, we should bite the bullet on the troubling cases. After all, not all true philosophical theories make completely comfortable predictions.\(^35\)

This is a dangerous move to make given the history of reasons in epistemology. For a plausible reaction to the claim that there is no other principled reasons based explanation of Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat is skepticism about the importance of reasons when it comes to analyzing knowledge. If PR Objectively Sufficient is as good as it gets, then so much the worse for reasons based epistemology.

I think we can avoid this reaction. This is because I think there is a reasons based theory that can give a principled explanation of the difference between cases like Trickery—where one doesn’t know because of unpossessed facts—and cases like Loss of Nerve—where one continues to know despite the existence of misleading reasons that are too far away. This story will not vindicate Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat, although it will explain how unpossessed facts play a role in preventing justified true beliefs from being knowledge. In the rest of the paper I will explicate and defend this new theory.

### 4 Luck, Defeat, and the Durability of Knowledge

The last section started off with the plausible thought that knowledge is durable in a certain way. As we saw, Schroeder spells this idea out through the idea that knowledge stands up to the facts. PR Objectively Sufficient in turn provided a nice story about the sense in which knowledge stands up to the facts. Unfortunately, this story didn’t hold up to scrutiny. It turns out to be that plausible to think that knowledge stands up to any old fact. If a misleading reason is far enough away from me, then it doesn’t seem to matter to whether I know. This leads me to conclude that knowledge isn’t durable because it stands up to the facts. So how is it durable?

In order to begin to answer this question, it’s helpful to remind ourselves about the intuitive role played by luck in Gettier cases. A guiding thought behind the most popular explanation of Gettier cases is that characters in Gettier cases don’t know because they have true beliefs in a lucky way.\(^36\) This seems right in Fake Barn Country. George could have easily had a false belief if he would have happened to stop near a fake barn. Given that he’s in fake barn

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\(^{35}\)This is roughly the response Schroeder has expressed in personal communication. One difference between this response (as I’ve laid it out) and his reaction is that he doesn’t have as strong of intuitions as I do about cases like Natalya’s Proof, Newspaper, and Loss of Nerve.

\(^{36}\)For a very nice elucidation of this idea, see Pritchard (2005).
country, he's just lucky that the object he is looking at is a real barn.

Intuitively, we can't say the same thing about James in Natalya's Proof, Jane in Newspaper, or you in Loss of Nerve. The characters in these stories aren't lucky in the same way George is. Given James' epistemic situation, it's not true that he could easily have been wrong about \( p \). And this is so despite Vlad's testimony in St. Petersburg. Given Jane's epistemic situation, she could not have easily been wrong about Barcelona winning. This is so despite the misleading reason provided by the London paper. Finally, you know Donald is in Italy. And this is so despite the letters in Donald's trash can. So it seems that if the anti-luck idea can be captured by some honest to goodness philosophical theory, then anti-luck epistemologies have the resources to explain the difference between George and James, Jane, and you.

The question I am interested in is whether we can flesh out an anti-luck epistemology in terms of reasons and defeat. I think that we can. In the rest of the paper I will argue that in order for one's belief that \( p \) to constitute knowledge, it must be secure. Roughly (and thus not entirely accurately), A's belief that \( p \) is secure just in case were A to take a stand towards \( p \), that stand would not be objectively defeated. I will argue that this view provides plausible explanations of the cases and provides a plausible explanation for why knowledge is durable.

### Fleshing Out the Security Condition

The intuitive idea behind the security condition is that in order to know, one's epistemic situation cannot be too similar to an epistemic situation where one takes a stand about \( p \) that is not supported by objectively sufficient reasons. The security of one's knowledge is what sets it apart from mere justified true belief. It is also plausibly what makes knowledge durable in a way that mere justified true belief isn't. In this section, I am going to cash out the security condition in more detail, for the intuitive gloss above is not quite right. I will follow standard practice and do this in terms of counterfactuals. This is not because I am firmly committed to counterfactuals being the right tool to use. In fact, I think that it is quite plausible that we should model similarity relations between epistemic situations in non-counterfactual terms. But this is not the place to develop this alternative model. Counterfactuals will do here.

I will proceed by thinking through the cases. Let's start with Harman's pair of cases—viz., Trickery and Loss of Nerve. Recall that in Trickery, it is plausible that you don't know that Donald is in Italy. This is because of the misleading reasons provided by the letters that sit in front of you on your desk. However, in Loss of Nerve, it seems like you do know that Donald is in Italy, despite the fact that the letters exist. It's just that they are still with Donald in Italy.

It is very plausible that your belief in secure in Loss of Nerve but insecure in Trickery. The latter claim is true because the epistemic situation where you come to possess the misleading reasons and respond to these reasons by coming to disbelieve that Donald is in Italy is sufficiently similar to your epistemic situation in Trickery. This is not so in Loss of Nerve. None of the sufficiently similar epistemic situations to your own are ones where you take a stand about Donald being in Italy that is not supported by objectively sufficient reasons. The way to put this on the counterfactual model is that none of the nearby worlds where you take a stand
about Donald being in Italy are worlds where you take a stand that is not supported by objectively sufficient reasons. In Trickery, however, in some of the nearby possible worlds where you take a stand about Donald being in Italy you take a stand that is not supported by objectively sufficient reasons—viz., the worlds where you come to disbelieve Donald is in Italy because you come across the letters.

So the security condition can help us draw a principled line between Trickery and Loss of Nerve. And it does this using the machinery outlined in §2. This is a serious virtue, for it was a hard to see how to do this in a principled way. This makes it tempting to accept Security–First Pass:

**Security–First Pass:** If A knows p, then A's epistemic position is such that were A to take a stand about p, A's stand would be supported by objectively sufficient reasons.

As the name suggests, Security–First Pass is not quite right. This is because it runs into problems with Fake Barn Country. The problem is that it is not clear that there are any nearby worlds where George takes a stand _about the proposition he believes in the actual world_ that are not supported by objectively sufficient reasons. After all, his belief is something like _<that object is a red barn>_. The object that his belief refers to is a barn, and in nearby possible worlds it is a barn. Moreover—and this is really the important point—the nearby worlds where he takes a stand that is not supported by objectively sufficient reasons are worlds where he takes a stand on a proposition other than the proposition he believes in the actual world. This is because, in those worlds, he decides to stop somewhere else and ends up looking at a fake barn. His belief in those worlds is that _that object is a barn_. This is the belief that is not supported by objectively sufficient reasons.

What this shows is that in order to know, it has to be that if one were to take a stand about a proposition suitably similar to the proposition believed in the actual world, then that stand would be supported by objectively sufficient reasons. In other words, Security is true:

**Security:** If A knows p, then A's epistemic position is such that were A to take a stand about a p-like proposition, A's stand would be supported by objectively sufficient reasons.

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37 This isn't to say that it's not clear that other anti-luck conditions can do this too. But given where we are in the dialectic, it is a serious virtue that security does this in terms of reasons and defeaters. And, as I'll argue below, security has advantages over other anti-luck conditions.

38 These problems are also problems with other anti-luck modal conditions (e.g., safety and sensitivity). This problem has been pointed out several times before in the literature, although hardly ever discussed in much detail. In fact, most discussions completely ignore it and as a result say some things that are false (for a recent example, see Pritchard (2011)). See Gendler & Hawthorne (2005), Baumann (FC) and Kripke (2011). The way I solve the problem is similar to the way Gendler & Hawthorne (2005) suggest solving the problem (in the main text, not in n. 4).
Given Security, George's belief is insecure. This is because there are epistemic situations sufficiently similar to his own where he takes a stand on a \( p \)-like proposition—the proposition that the object in front of him is a barn—that is not supported by objectively sufficient reasons because it is false. Now, of course, \( p \) is always a \( p \)-like proposition, so Security will deliver the same results about the other cases that Security—First Pass delivered.

I should make clear the exact role that I see Security playing. I do not think that Security provides an analysis of any type of defeat. Thus, I do not think that unpossessed facts in the actual world can defeat by playing a certain modal role. I don't think that that view would even get the right results. Sometimes the unpossessed facts that exist in the actual world do not play a defeating role in the relevant counterfactual worlds.\(^{39}\) One consequence of this is that I deny Unpossessed Facts Can Defeat. I don't think that any set of reasons that exists in the actual world gets defeated when one's belief is insecure. Thus, I don't think that the characters in these cases lack knowledge because some relevant set of reasons gets defeated.

This is important because it provides reason to think that Security can avoid the conditional fallacy.\(^{40}\) As I said above, the conditional fallacy plagues analyses of categorical properties in conditional terms. The recipe for manufacturing counterexamples to such analyses is to construct models where the nearest worlds to the actual world contain additional facts that deviantly prevent the relevant condition from obtaining. So, for example, masking counterexamples to counterfactual accounts of dispositions are cases where there are some additional facts or processes in some of the counterfactual worlds that prevent the manifestation state from obtaining. Since these facts don't obtain in the actual world, it's plausible that the disposition obtains in the actual world even though the relevant counterfactual condition is not met.

It's hard to use this recipe to manufacture counterexamples to accounts of knowledge that include the Security condition—let's call them Security views. There are several reasons for this. First, the Security condition is just a necessary condition. This means that Security views will not be views that analyze a categorical property counterfactually. Indeed, I think that Security doesn't provide an analysis of anything. Given this, it's not clear how to construct conditional fallacy counterexamples.

The most important reason why Security is not open to these counterexamples, though, is that the point of Security is to track whether there are any deviant nearby worlds. The motivation for Security is that knowledge is incompatible with deviant nearby worlds. This means

\(^{39}\) We can see this by thinking about a variation on Fake Barn Country. In the actual world, the relevant reasons to not believe what George believes is the fact that he is in Fake Barn Country. It might not be that this is the reason that is relevant in the counterfactual situation, though. For it might be very hard for George to find out that he's in fake barn country. And so there might not be any close worlds where he finds out about that reason. Still, his belief might be insecure because there might be a close world where he takes a stand about a \( p \)-like proposition that is not supported by objectively sufficient reasons. If, say, he looks at a fake barn and forms the belief that the object is looking at is a barn.

\(^{40}\) These reasons apply equally well to other modal (necessary) conditions on knowledge. It's interesting to note that, to my knowledge, no one has ever complained that modal conditions fail prey to the conditional fallacy.
that producing cases where nearby worlds contain additional facts are likely to just be cases where we’re comfortable saying that one fails to know in the actual world.

This does not mean, of course, that there are no potential counterexamples to Security. Of course there are going to be cases that cause problems for Security. But it does mean, I think, that we have good reason to think that the conditional fallacy isn’t going to provide a recipe for these cases.

Although I don’t think that George and his ilk’s reasons are defeated, I still think we can understand the case in terms of defeat. Security is spelled out in terms of sufficiency, which is what gets defeated. One way of putting the intuitive idea behind Security is that knowledge requires that your stands about \( p \) be modally robust in a certain sense: All nearby stands must be supported by objectively sufficient reasons — i.e., reasons that are objectively undefeated.

Security can thus explain the range of cases that cause trouble for Schroeder’s account.\(^{41}\) Moreover, it does this by using the tools developed in §2.

This virtue notwithstanding, other modal conditions on knowledge — especially the so-called safety condition — can explain these cases as well. So without some advantages over these other conditions, it’s not clear why we should prefer Security over these other conditions.

This is not the place for a detailed comparison between Security and the other modal conditions. Instead of doing that, I will instead point out that Security predicts that there will be Gettier cases like Fake Barn Country that the Safety condition does not predict to be Gettier cases. At the very least these cases are interesting to consider. At most, they provide reason to think Security is better than Safety.

For our purposes, we can use an oversimplified version of Safety:

\[ \text{Safety: If } A \text{ knows } p, \text{ then } A \text{ is such that were } A \text{ to believe } p, \text{ } p \text{ would be true.} \]

Safety is meant to capture the intuitive thought that knowledge is incompatible with having true beliefs in a lucky way. It seeks to capture this by demanding that true beliefs that constitute knowledge have a certain modal robustness.

There are two important differences between Security and Safety. First, the standards of evaluation are different. The consequent of Safety deploys truth whereas the consequent of Security deploys sufficiency. Second, the set of worlds evaluated is different. Safety evaluates all the nearby worlds where \( A \) believes \( p \) whereas Security evaluates all the worlds where one takes any stand about \( p \), including withholding about whether \( p \).

This second difference is what gives rise to Security’s prediction that there is a new kind of Gettier case. Fake Barn Tour Guide is one such case:

\(^{41}\)Of course, I’ve only shown it can account for the cases discussed so far in this paper. There are many, many other cases discussed in the literature (for an excellent compilation of such cases, see Gendler & Hawthorne (2005)), and for at least some of them it is not clear how Security will get the right results (just as it is not clear how other anti-luck conditions will). I defend Security against these challenges in other work.
**Fake Barn Tour Guide:** George isn't alone on his trip. He is with his newly acquired friend Jessica. Moreover, George is not in the dark about the existence of fake barn country (although he doesn't know he's now in fake barn country). This is because Jessica used to be a fake barn country tour guide and she's told him all about it. George is thus strongly disposed to withhold judgment about whether he's looking at a barn upon learning that he's in fake barn country. Jessica was a very good tour guide. She has memorized all of the locations of the fake barns and all of the locations of the real barns. And she has decided to play a little game with George as they enter fake barn country. If a fake barn is about to come into view, Jessica will tell George they are in fake barn country (though she won't tell him that he's looking at a fake barn). If only real barns come into view, she will remain silent. Out of sheer coincidence, they never encounter any fake barns and so Jessica doesn't ever speak up about where they are. George forms many justified true beliefs about there being barns in front of him.

Given Jessica's game, I submit that George's belief is safe. In all the nearby worlds where he forms a belief about a barn like object in front of him, his belief is true. This is because if they were going to soon see a fake barn, Jessica would tell him about being in fake barn country and George would withhold judgment (not form a false belief).

George's belief is not secure in this case, though. This is because there are some nearby worlds where he takes a stand about \( p \) that is not supported by objectively sufficient reasons. This is because there are nearby worlds where they enter fake barn country and he thus come to withhold judgment.

Whether this divergence in predictions supports Security over Safety depends on whether George doesn't know in Fake Barn Tour Guide. I don't think he does. This is because he is still too close to defeaters. These defeaters wouldn't compel him to have a false belief. They would compel him to withhold belief. Still, withholding is a way of getting it objectively wrong. For this reason I think we should think that George doesn't know in Fake Barn Country Tour Guide.

More needs to be said in order to fully adjudicate the dispute between Safety and Security. This discussion is only intended to be an introduction to the debate that will hopefully be carried out in future work.

The upshot of this subsection is that not only does Security explain the cases that Schroeder's view has a hard time explaining, it also has some claim to being superior to Safety. At the very least, more work should be done investigating the relative merits of Security and Safety.

**Security, Luck, and Durability of Knowledge (Or: Conclusion)**

The last subsection was concerned with the trees. Let's step back to look at the forest. One of the lessons of Gettier cases like Fake Barn Country is that one must allow unpossessed facts to play some role in preventing one from knowing. One of the most popular ways of attempting
to do this in the Gettierological literature was by appeal to defeaters. The thought was that unpossessed facts can prevent one from knowing by defeating the reasons one possesses in some way.

Gettierological accounts of defeaters were plagued with some very general and very damning problems. However, this does not by itself spell doom for the basic idea driving those accounts. There is at least one account of reasons, their weight, and the interaction between these notions and all things considered notions like permission and requirement that avoids the pitfalls of Gettierological accounts of defeat.

Unfortunately, the most natural way to extend the new account of defeat to explain what is going on in Gettier cases like Fake Barn Country overgenerates. It makes bad predictions about a certain kind of case and it thus makes knowledge much too fragile. This is somewhat surprising given the fact that the main motivation for the extension is to explain why our knowledge is durable.

The argument up to this point should raise our confidence that reasons based epistemology can't illuminate the nature of knowledge. Even though recent developments allow a reasons first theorist to improve on Gettierological accounts, it still doesn't look like a reasons based account can explain the data. So, despite the fact that I started out promising progress by appeal to reasons, it looks like I've really just shown that newfangled reasons based epistemology is a dead end too.

Fortunately, the paper didn't end with §3. Instead, I went on to argue that the lesson to be learned is not that reasons based epistemology is a dead end, but that instead we should look to other analytic projects in epistemology for clues on how to deal with the problems plaguing Schroeder's account. In particular, we should look to anti-luck epistemology, for it looks like the type of anti-luck modal conditions that anti-luck theorists appeal to are tailor made to offer up a principled explanation of the difference between cases like Trickery and cases like Loss of Nerve. Moreover, I argued, there is a reasons based modal condition—Security—that offers up precisely the kind of explanation needed. I argued further that Security has non-trivial advantages over the best version of the safety condition.

All of this notwithstanding, there are still many questions to ask about Security. One question that will certainly arise is whether Security offers the best account of why knowledge can't be lucky. While I think this question has some interest, I don't think it should rule the day. It is fine to start our theorizing off by thinking about relatively imprecise thoughts about luck. But once we have proposals as precise as Security, it seems to me a mistake to seriously test it by testing its predictions against a less precise notion of luck. If the literature has taught us anything, it is that there are many kinds of epistemic luck. Perhaps Security offers the best account of the sense that is most relevant. But I think it's much better to cut out the middle man and go straight to the predictions made by Security about knowledge itself. On this score I think this paper has shown that Security makes good predictions about a wide range of cases.

Moreover, I think that Security provides an interesting and plausible account of how knowledge is durable. The failure of Schroeder's account showed that durability wasn't a matter of one's reasons being able to stand up to all comers. However, it is plausible that it must be able
to stand up to nearby comers, as it were. Security offers an attractive account of why that is true. If a defeater gets too close, your belief will cease to be secure. Thus, when you know, your belief is durable in the sense that the reasons for which you hold that belief can stand up to all of the facts that are sufficiently close to you. This, I conjecture, can explain all of the phenomena that Schroeder wishes to explain via his stronger view of durability.\(^{42}\)

Another pressing question is about the role Security should play in a complete epistemic theory. Here it is useful to draw on Pritchard’s distinction between robust and modest anti-luck epistemologies (see Pritchard (2011) and Pritchard (2012)). Robust theories hold that knowledge just is justified true belief plus the modal condition. Modest theories just hold that the modal condition is a necessary condition. They leave open whether there are other conditions beside justification, truth, and belief. They even leave open whether knowledge is analyzable at all.\(^{43}\) Most anti-luck theorists are now of the modest variety.

Although I have set the paper up in a way that suggests that I am a robust modal theorist, the main results of the paper are neutral between the robust and modest accounts. Moreover, much more would need to be said in order to make a robust theory plausible. In particular, one would need to give a theory of justified belief that meets certain constraints. This paper has not offered such a theory. I am hopeful that such a theory can be given and thus I am hopeful about the prospects of a robust theory that incorporates Security. I must rest content here, though, with showing that Security is a serious contender for explaining important data about the role unpossessed facts can play in preventing knowledge.

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\(^{42}\)I haven’t fully argued for this here. See §1.2 and especially §1.3 of Schroeder (2015a) for the data Schroeder seeks to explain. I don’t claim that Security can explain the facts appealed to in §1.1 of that paper. That will be explained by what it is to believe for sufficient reason. See Lord & Sylvan (MS) and Sylvan & Sosa (FC) (in this volume) for more on this.

\(^{43}\)This is how Williamson (2000) can claim that safety is a necessary condition even though knowledge is unanalyzable.


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