

Introduction

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while the general idea of the context-sensitivity of 'know' leaves enough room for interesting philosophical manoeuvring. In this short monograph, I aim to undertake such manoeuvring and to develop a novel contextualist approach to the semantics of 'knows'.

The book pursues four main objectives. The first objective is to develop a novel account of contextualism—the envisaged account suggesting a close semantic link between the content of the predicate ‘knows p ’ in a context C and what is pragmatically presupposed in C . The second objective is to offer replies to the most serious and widely discussed objections to contextualism in the literature. The third objective is to employ the emerging account in innovative solutions to longstanding philosophical problems, such as the problems of scepticism and induction, and in providing analyses of phenomena that have attracted much recent attention—such as the problem of transmission failure and the lottery puzzle. The fourth and final objective is to integrate the view defended here—*Presuppositional Epistemic Contextualism* or simply ‘PEC’—in a broader epistemological framework by combining it with an independently attractive account of evidence and epistemic justification—namely, the knowledge-first account proposed by Williamson (2000, 2007, 2012).

The literature on the semantics of ‘knowledge’-attributions has been booming for a fair number of years now, and a large variety of views competing with contextualism have entered the scene of late. The major players in this field—besides EC—go under the labels of *Epistemic Relativism*, *Moderate*

what I have elsewhere called

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attributions (even though I think that it is a strong contender).

downsides and weaknesses; downsides and weaknesses that my novel Lewisian account hopefully does not share. While I shall not engage, in this monograph, in a discussion of each of the aforementioned versions of EC, I take it that a brief glance at the recent (and forthcoming) literature will confirm my contention that, from a contextualist point of view, a fresh approach to EC is desirable.⁵

A second major influence for the views defended in this book derives from Robert Stalnaker's (1999) work on the notions of a *pragmatic presupposition* and the conversational *common ground*. The account of contextualism developed here is, I take it, very much in the spirit of Stalnaker's work, emphasizing the importance of the notions of a pragmatic presupposition and the common ground to communication, pragmatics, and semantic (p.5) theory. More specifically, the account developed here relies on these central notions of Stalnaker's and employs them in modelling the semantic context-sensitivity of 'knows'. Thus, if the approach defended here is correct, then there is—given the normative connections between 'knowledge' and assertion recently argued for by a number of authors—yet another area of crucial importance in which Stalnaker's notions do important explanatory work—namely, in the semantics of 'knowledge'-attributions.

A third major influence for the views developed here derives from Timothy Williamson's (2000) *knowledge-first* epistemology. While Williamson's ideas are still considered to be rather controversial, I take it that, as Keynes put it in an entirely different context, '[t]he difficulty lies not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones, which ramify, for those brought up as most of us have been, into every corner of our minds.'⁶ Given the intuitive plausibility of Williamson's knowledge-first epistemology and the growing support it has been receiving of late, I shall, in Chapter 5 of the book, aim to incorporate the contextualist view developed here into the framework of a contextualized Williamsonian knowledge-first epistemology.

Outline of the Book

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