

Two Levels of Epistemic Engagement

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The overall approach to epistemology is one-dimensional, so that knowledge is basically supposed to succeed just at one level. Epistemic normativity may be approached as complying to contextual variation though. And there is discrepancy between epistemology naturalized and between epistemology as normative conceptual enterprise. Epistemological spectrum project tries to accommodate this. Two levels approach of epistemic engagement distinguishes lower psychological intentionality-phenomenology involving level and ideal knowledge featuring level. Dialectics of their relation is that the upper level figures as an ideal reference point for the psychological peaks that aim at it from the lower level, illuminating the lower epistemic engagement landscape upon the request articulated there.

1. *Levels of epistemic engagement*: lower level of epistemic engagement; upper level of epistemic engagement.

Trying to achieve knowledge is an *activity*, fueled by one's navigation in the encountered surroundings. We can talk about *epistemic engagement*. This epistemic engagement succeeds at two levels, which may be called lower and upper ones. Lower everyday level of epistemic engagement succeeds in usual circumstances, where normativity is not very requiring. Upper level of epistemic engagement is where question about knowledge tends to be explicitly posed, and so this level comes to be a rather idealized and demanding area.

The dialectics that ensues between these two levels of epistemic *engagement* is important, for it allows one to see some *movements* that are involved into the pursuit of knowledge, which is the aim of epistemology. Virtue epistemologists say that achieving knowledge is a kind of virtue: it is an addition and even a substantial feature of a virtuous person's character. People subscribing to some form of epistemology naturalized stress the fitting of the pursuit of knowledge into the natural order as it is delineated by natural science. Evidentialists tackle the phenomenon of knowledge as a kind of insight, pursuing the overwhelming power of direct intuition.

The differences between lower and upper level of epistemic engagement are shortly presented according to the following parameters. First comes the opposition between the pluralistic or monistic knowledge claims. Then there is the difference between the psychological landscape of reasons and between ideal point of Knowledge reference. Contextual normativity is either low or high in its parameters. Direction of engagement is either upwards or again downwards, which may be expected from its two distinct levels. The difference between reasons and Reason is spelled out according to the distinction between deliberative and ultimate rationality. Agentive phenomenology involvement succeeds according to the first person point of view or again according to the third person point of view. Upshot is that the landscape of epistemic reasons is to be found at the lower level of epistemic engagement. Transglobal reliabilism dialectics and knowledge of phenomenological quality wrap up the situation involving two levels of epistemic engagement.

As the just mentioned parameters involved into the distinction between two levels of epistemic engagement will be spelled out the pursuit of knowledge will be presented in a new manner, superseding the overall one-dimensional definitory approach to it. The very

one-dimensionality of this approach tries to tackle knowledge in an objective, non-engaging manner, from the third person perspective. We will shortly deal with this specific point of view dimension in what follows. But let us first characterize one-dimensionality as it is practiced in epistemology by the usual *definition* of knowledge which we will use as point of departure, all in trying to spell out its one-dimensional nature and supplement it by two levels of epistemic engagement.

Let us just say to begin with that *engagement* can come in various forms and in different areas. It underlies disposition to *act* in these areas. Various engagement landscapes are intertwined in a single holistic experiential landscape. One may say that a particular kind of engagement is methodologically sorted out from that overall holistic and dynamical setting. Just that this sorting out is what one usually *experientially engages into* as one encounters certain circumstances. If I encounter an older person who needs to cross the busy and dangerous road my possible deliberation and ensuing engagement will be moral. While pursuing this goal I may also need to decide whether I *know* that the person would need my help indeed, and this is then my engagement into the epistemic dimension of the encountered landscape or complex situation. Usually all these and other kinds of engagements happen momentarily, so that there is no real long duration of deliberation here. This may be related to the very need to *act* (or deciding not to act) in the situation at hand. Obviously, my *experiential engagement space* consists of several intertwined dimensions, from which my *attention* easily switches from one to the other and combines them where needed. This is quite different to the usual manner these things are approached in analytic philosophy. Despite this I think that one should stay with analytic approach all in appropriately *disciplining* it through the dynamic continental flavor.¹ Some *relevance* should be brought into the picture, perhaps of a Nietzschean gay science sort.²

Indicating thereby that engagement of any kind needs various dimensions in the experiential space, we can now start to take a look at the practice of analytic philosophy in the area of epistemology or theory of knowledge, as it is called. The one-dimensionality of such a practice will be revealed. Here is the most known definition in epistemology:

Knowledge =def justified true belief

Notice first that reaching knowledge is the aim of epistemological enterprise. Take a proposition such as

p = The cat is on the mat.

¹ See my paper *Analytic Philosophy Disciplined*, net available.

² Nietzsche's term is *froehliche Wissenschaft*. Some years ago my mostly continental inclined colleagues urged everybody to substitute not really attractive titles of courses delivered to the students by more sexy titles. So I proposed to rename the *analytic philosophy course* into *gay analysis*, which in German would be spelled out as *froehliche Analyse*. The guys then flatly rejected my proposal as not serious enough. This is just to show that analytic philosophy should be disciplined indeed, but that so called continental philosophy has as well a long way to go if some *relevance* should be achieved. In honor of Nietzsche, myself and Terry Horgan christened our approach to vagueness *transvaluationism*, as echo of *Ueberwertung aller Werte*. The values in question as applied to the phenomenon of vagueness refer to the semantic values of Truth and Falsity such as these are forthcoming while one deals with sorites sequence.

Using this as an example, and abbreviating knowledge as K, justification as J, belief as B and truth as T, one gets the following formula

$$Kp = \text{def } Bp \ \& \ Tp \ \& \ Jp$$

The first condition for Kp to be achieved is that one should form belief in respect to p (Bp). If I do not have any psychological access to p, such as belief, namely, I certainly cannot be said to know that p. But this necessary condition for Kp is not sufficient. I can namely form a belief about p, but p just happens not to be true (cat is walking around, say). This shows that the truth of p (Tp) is another condition for Kp (my knowing that p). Things are not over yet however. I namely can have a true belief about p but it still will not be knowledge, for I may have formed that belief relying on a really unreliable source, such as my colleague reporting to me that p, but this colleague in 75% of cases delivers a false information just to have fun. This shows that additional condition, justification of belief that p is needed (Jp).

This all sounds right: knowledge is defined by the conjunction of three conditions concerning a certain proposition: belief, truth and justification related to it. But now realize that, as nice as this definitory proposal sounds, it has shown some flaws around which the *work* (*Arbeit*³) of epistemological enterprise turns. Gettier found out that the above stated definition cannot really be relied upon in all the needed seriousness. Definition namely is equivalence, which may be spelled out as conjunction of two implications:

$$(Kp \rightarrow Bp \ \& \ Tp \ \& \ Jp) \ \& \ (Bp \ \& \ Tp \ \& \ Jp \rightarrow Kp)$$

Suppose that the first implication works. But Gettier demonstrated that the second implication leaves us wanting. There are always counterexamples to be found, and in order to silence these Gettier proposed a new condition, call it G after his name. So an abbreviated form of the definition of knowledge now looks like this

$$K = \text{def } JTBG$$

The unfortunate thing is that the introduction of G did not solve the day, and in fact a whole heavy metal industrial search for an appropriate definition of knowledge get unfolded. This is called the Gettier industry.

This industrial noise in epistemology as practiced in the former century settled down and got silenced without any final and definitive outcome.

We may remind the reader that the trouble just described is a variant of the *paradox of analysis*, which says that analysis is either trivial ($A = A$) or false ($A = B$). (See my paper *Analytic Philosophy Disciplined*, internet available, for some explanation, including Fregean sense and reference epistemic roots of the problem.)

The proposal here is that the problem lies in the *one-dimensional* nature of knowledge

³ Ernst Juenger who is quoted by Heidegger was concerned about the worker (*Arbeiter*).

definition, which treats K and JTB at the *same level*. They are supposed to be of the same *quality*. But this is not the case. It is easy to see if we start to think about it, that K is at another level as JTB. Simply said, K is at the upper ideal level of epistemic engagement. Whereas JTB are at the lower pluralist level of epistemic engagement upon the experiential landscape leading towards knowledge.

Not to mention that there is no *engagement*, and no *activity*, and neither *experiential* dimension involved into the *definitory* approach to knowledge. This is what we will try to elucidate to some extent in the following exercise involving explanation of the characteristics of the two levels and of their differences.

2. *Pluralistic or monistic knowledge claim*: cases of approaching knowledge, pluralistic, struggling, aiming towards ideal; Knowledge, monistic (tendency), definitory (K=JTB). Suppose that we have established *two* levels of epistemic engagement, as opposed to the one level or one-dimensional definitory approach to knowledge. Then we have Knowledge at the upper level, and we have forces leading towards or aiming at Knowledge at the lower level of epistemic engagement. These forces are many, whereas Knowledge is one. The forces at the landscape of epistemic engagement according to the definitory approach, just that the left hand side and the right hand side are now positioned at two different levels -- which is of the utmost importance -- are belief, justification and truth (JTB). Notice simply that none of these is Knowledge, but that they are as just said *forces*, at the *landscape of epistemic engagement*, which *aim* at establishing the result of Knowledge. Writing Knowledge with the capital K here indicates that we deal with the upper level of epistemic engagement, with the ideal reference point of inquiry as it is seen from the lower dynamical and holistic level of moral engagement.

Now as just said, suppose that there are two *qualitatively* different levels of *epistemic engagement*. Then Knowledge is at the upper level, figuring as an ideal reference point for the lower level epistemic engagement forces that proceed along JTB intertwined efforts to reach it. So the $K = \text{def } JTB$ definitory equation can *not* be definition anymore, for there cannot be any equality there if its left hand side and its right hand side designate two *qualitatively different levels*. Just imagine that $2+1 = 3$ assigns a real different quality to the right hand side (3) than to the left hand side (2+1). In such a case there will not be equation there anymore, really. We encounter something similar to inductive inference grue examples, where at some point there appears a qualitatively new and different meaning as assigned to the given values.

Now, under the supposition that there is difference of levels in $K \approx JTB$, i.e. that JTB somehow *aims* at K, without being identical with it in definitory sense, we may ask what is the relation between *monism* and *pluralism* here. At the very first glance, it dawns to you that K is just one, and thus that it has *monistic* behavior traits. Whereas JTB are many, and so they are naturally seen as *pluralist* in this sense, namely as pluralist attempts to approach Knowledge, without being themselves cases of K. Neither B, nor J or T equal K but just aim towards K, in a dialectics which merits to be spelled out.

Here is an illustration from the side of *moral* philosophy. Consequentialism subscribes to just *one* value and it is thus *monistic*. But it is not hard to see that this one monistic value has to deal with everyday environment of moral forces that come in their *plurality* at the everyday moral landscape. Similarly it is with epistemic matters. There is just one monistic ideal reference point of inquiry, namely Knowledge, at the upper level of moral engagement. But it is approached by *plurality of forces* at the usual everyday landscape of epistemic engagement, so that belief, justification, truth and other matters that are to be found at this holistic and dynamical lower

landscape of epistemic engagement, *aim* at the upper ideal reference point of Knowledge. This difference between monism and pluralism naturally follows from abandoning the one-dimensional definitory approach of knowledge and the introduction of the two levels of epistemic engagement.

3. *Psychological landscape of reasons or ideal point of Knowledge reference*: epistemic phenomenology, intentionality, psychological landscape; ideal point of reference for Knowledge claims.

Two levels approach of epistemic engagement proceeds in two *qualitatively* distinct areas. The Knowledge upper level point of epistemic engagement succeeds in an *ideal* environment. One may say that Knowledge is the desired result of a kind of *phenomenological reduction*, or the positive reduction of enmeshed plurality of forces that aim at Knowledge in the direction of *relevance*, in the direction of what is *relevant* to the epistemic search. That's the K domain.

The *lower* level of epistemic engagement where belief, justification and truth are involved, on the other hand, are certainly not ideal but rather *psychological*, empirical matters. Belief, as for that matter, is certainly psychological, and as such it involves both *intentionality* and *phenomenology* in their interdependence. (Compare Horgan and Tienson 2002 PI&IP paper.) That's the JTB domain.

What can one say about the equation in the $K = JTB$ case, now that we have introduced these two levels of epistemic engagement? The answer is that there is *difference* involved here, i.e. difference persisting along the internal change, as this succeeds in the case of myself still being the same person along all the differences that are there between my age of three years and between my adult age. (See Horgan Potrc *Austere Realism* on *difference*, which we borrowed from Derrida.)

4. *Contextual normativity: low or high*: everyday contextual normativity requirements for you to know that *p*: 1st person epistemic subjectivist perspective; high contextual normativity requirements for Knowledge that *p*: 3rd person epistemic objectivist perspective.

The very idea that there is something fishy going on with definitory approach appeared in analytic philosophy as it switched to the communication-intention project. Austin emphasized that words do not just describe but that they primarily have the role of vehicles for *action* in an interactive communication setting. David Lewis built upon this heritage as he introduced two *contextually* different scores in the search of knowledge. In the usual everyday circumstances the search for Knowledge will rely upon low normative requirements. Here is where the psychological empirical JTB dimension of the search for Knowledge takes place. Quite different is the situation though as the contextual scores get *high*, and this happens in the case of the Knowledge as an ideal reference point of inquiry, in the K domain. Contextualism is an important approach to epistemology and we propose to reevaluate it from two levels epistemic engagement perspective.

Contextual higher epistemic engagement tends to be objective and therefore it embraces third person point of view in its assessment of K. Whereas the lower level epistemic engagement with its psychological intentionality and phenomenology involving matters allows for first person point of view perspective upon the aim of the epistemic inquiry.

5. *Direction of engagement*: direction: aiming at the ideal point of reference as Knowledge: upwards↑; direction: epistemic chromatic illumination of the lower epistemic engagement landscape: downwards↓.

Once as two levels of epistemic engagement are established, the question of their relation comes into focus. As we called them upper and lower levels of epistemic engagement, the following dialectics offers itself in a natural manner. The lower level *aims* at the upper level achievement. The lower empirical and psychological level of epistemic JTB engagement direction is *upwards*↑, towards the ideal upper level of K. It is as well natural to realize then that the direction of upper ideal level of *epistemic engagement* is *downwards*↓, towards the lower level empirical landscape of JTB where the search for Knowledge is taking place. One may say that the upper level K throws its *illumination*, call it chromatic illumination, upon the lower level of epistemic engagement. Just that here is an important proviso to be mentioned here: the illumination only succeeds *upon the request from the lower level*.⁴

Direction of engagement between the two levels is thus in that the lower level epistemic JTB (or JTBG) engagement aims at the upper level ideal point of reference as Knowledge, i.e. upwards↑. Whereas the upper level of epistemic engagement direction is downwards↓, so that K epistemically chromatically illuminates the lower epistemic engagement landscape JTB (or JTBG and the stuff), following the *request* coming from that lower level epistemic engagement landscape.

6. *Reasons or Reason: deliberative or ultimate rationality*: reasons (pluralistic peaks at the moral landscape), deliberative rationality (not epistemic emotions, vs. virtue epistemology say); Reason (monistic, ideal point of reference), ultimate Rationality.

As we dealt with monism and pluralism dimension proper to two levels of epistemic engagement, we said that at the upper level there is ideal reference point K, and that at the lower level there is a plurality of forces or let them be called features that are to be found at the everyday epistemic engagement landscape. Now, these JTBG (and the rest) forces may be called *reasons*, whereas the ideal upper level point of reference may be called Reason (we also called it Knowledge).

Now, what the heck do *reasons* have to do with epistemological inquiry? We claim that each of B, J and T which again come in plurality of guises, is a *reason*, aiming at the upper level of epistemic inquiry. Reasons are known in moral philosophy. So Dancy for example dedicated a book (*Practical Reality*) to reasons, and Horgan and Timmons project is entitled *Illuminating Reasons*. Dancy by the way started with epistemological inquiry and then he switched to moral philosophy, as he has told me at the occasion of Valencia Spain (Catalania) symposium dedicated to his work some years ago. The proposal here is to look at Dancy's account of moral reasons as being kin of *epistemic reasons* in their plurality and through their dialectics (psychological and objective reasons, overriding reasons and the stuff) of *epistemic reasons* at the lower level of epistemic engagement. J, T and B and the rest will then be seen as pluralistic peaks at the lower landscape of moral engagement. Whereas K will be seen as the ultimate Reason at the upper level landscape of epistemic engagement, inhabiting an *ideal* space. This Reason is monistic, whereas reasons are pluralist.

One trouble seems to be related to T as a reason. Isn't truth just the ultimate Reason (as Dancy claims against psychological interpretation of reasons)? If we help ourselves with *truth as indirect correspondence* (see Horgan Potrc *Austere Realism*), then one may see that truth at the lower level (of epistemic engagement according to the here discussed case) is bound to low

⁴ A political practice that I had to survive in my earlier age was called self-governement.

contextual scores. The most of rational engagement goes on upon the lower epistemic level. There is where *deliberation* takes place. But this deliberation is many times momentarily performed, thanks to support of morphological content, although it may follow several threads (dispositionally entrenched threads according to morphological content as it is there at the lower landscape of epistemic engagement). We can say that Reason or K is at the side of the upper level of epistemic engagement ultimate Rationality, which is ideal and just *approached* through psychological attempts from the lower level of epistemic engagement.

7. *Agentive phenomenology involvement according to 1st or 3rd person point of view:*
agentive phenomenology: 1st person perspective; no phenomenology: objective 3rd person perspective; no real agency.

The definitory one-dimensional approach to knowledge tends to be objective and so it succeeds from the third person point of view perspective. There is no engagement, no humanly respectable agency and no phenomenology there. On the other hand, agentive phenomenology is well involved at the lower level landscape of moral *engagement*. Here is where we can talk about real *agency*.

8. Upshot: the landscape of epistemic reasons is to be found at the lower level of epistemic engagement.

The upshot is that the real agentive landscape of epistemic reasons is to be found at the lower level of epistemic engagement. There is as well agency from the upper level of epistemic engagement, which however only happens through the requests directed at the ideal point of reference K from the lower landscape.

9. Transglobal reliabilism dialectics and knowledge of phenomenological quality.
Does this mean that one should take a look at the upper level of epistemic engagement as some kind of detached ideal point of reference according to the third person point of view? Not necessarily. The following consideration comes into focus. Given that attempts at determining reliabilist justification (J) turn out not to be ultimately successful, one can consider this justification's *externalist* nature and compare it to the internalist *evidential* justification. The result is *transglobal reliabilism-evidentialism* (Henderson and Horgan 2010, Henderson Horgan and Potrc *Acta Analytica* paper, Potrc What is Philosophy internet available paper). This may be called epistemological spectrum project. From this perspective, successful reliabilism is compatible with the transglobal evidentialist approach. This one recommends brain in a vat compatibility of the *relevant* epistemic inquiry. Thus *relevance* in search for knowledge is not just ideal *epistemic phenomenological reduction* supported (compare my paper Moral Phenomenological Reduction, internet available). It is a *transglobal* enterprise which honors *qualitative phenomenology*. This is exactly the lesson that comes through *qualitative subversion* of the definitory one-dimensional search for knowledge.