

EPISTEMOLOGICAL SKEPTICISM, FOUNDATIONALISM AND DAVID ANNIS' CONTEXTUALIST THEORY OF EPISTEMIC JUSTIFICATION

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the epistemological challenges posed by epistemological skepticism and the fallibility question in epistemological foundationalism, in response to the former. David Annis adds a context-sensitive condition to the justified true Belief conditions (JTB) in order to account for indefeasible knowledge. The question, among others is how to explain this and overcome the pitfalls of the Gettier problem, rise above relativism and subjectivism. The expository and method of critical reflection were used in the paper. Annis 'contextualist theory of epistemic justification' is innovative in that it evinces, among others, that belief is not true because it is justified or justified because it is true. It is the epistemic issue-related context that justifies someone's belief and shows that he or she has met real expression of doubts as objection to the epistemic object being contrary.

Key Words: David Annis, skepticism, foundationalism, epistemological contextualism, issue-context

Introduction

The 'first philosophy' is the science of Being as being, that is, inasmuch as that existent is, or exercises the act 'to -be' regardless of their spatio-temporal state of being. In pursuance of the object of this science, philosophy strives to secure for itself the principles of knowledge. It uses that in defence against epistemological skepticism which hold that claims to knowledge and indefensible and arguments to that effect defeasible. Thus, for Jacques Maritain it is the task for philosophy "to defend its own principles and those of other sciences", that is, to judge knowledge itself by submitting the assumptions in knowledge claims to "to scientific treatment, showing in what the truth of knowledge consists, and establishing by a reflex argument that true, certain and scientific knowledge is undoubtedly attainable."¹ While some argue a priori, that knowledge is tenable and its foundation incorrigibly drawn from intuited rational principles others argue a posteriori, that the necessity of epistemological premises evidence sense percepts; so skeptical challenges of infinite regress, vicious circle or gratuitous assumption are met with. Thus, with the validity criterion, the veracity of beliefs is justified. However, the traditional justified, true, belief conditions of knowledge has, in not too recent times been judged inadequate in justifying claimed true beliefs. This is the force of Edmund L. Gettier's argument on the issue in his article questioning the sufficiency of the three conditions. Consequently, there were attempts either to strengthen the JTB by adding a fourth condition or providing alternative account. Epistemological contextualism is an option explored in this paper. It asserts that beliefs must

¹ Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, 112

have to take into account certain socio-historical, cultural and psychological and normative factors. These, not only defines subject's perspective, situates his/her horizon of and contextualizes reality, it also provides standards for knowledge ascription and validation within epistemological communities. The task before us is to expose the skeptical challenge to knowledge, examines the Gettier problem and attempts to solve it which, among others, leads us in David Annis' contextualist theory of epistemic justification.

Expository, analytic and interpretative methods used significantly the study illumines that while reality is usually focused upon as abstract generalization, it is the specific, particular aspects of reality that are really shareable as instances of our normal knowledge ascription. Thus, at each moment there is an epistemological aspect cut out of the plenitude of forays into world epistemological realities. Annis argues the circumstances around which knowledge claims are functions of socio-cultural contexts of the knowledge ascription and reception.

2. Epistemological Skepticism and Foundationalism

The concepts epistemological foundationalism interrogate skeptical arguments and endorses an infallible starting point and formulation of indubitable theory on which to validate our knowledge claims and so repudiate epistemological skepticism. Skepticism [Greek Skeptikoi, meaning to "men whose basic mood is that of doubt"] is inability to accept that we know that the world and other minds exist, or about whether we are justified in arguing in certain ways. Found by Pyrrho (361-270 BC) the skeptics, Stumpf and Fieser note, "doubted that Plato and Aristotle had succeeded in discovering the truth about the world, and they had these same doubts about the Epicureans and Stoics." It originally referred to "seekers or inquires" (after Arcesilus (ce 316-241), and positively meant pursuit borne out of desire to attain indubitable knowledge, content that by investigation, truth is determined. But the multiplicity of opinions in early Athenian philosophy in terms of the nature of reality generated an attitude of skepticism about the possibility of attaining incorrigible or objective knowledge grounded on the support of sufficient evidence.² The Greek skeptics thought that if they could determine truth from falsehood, avoiding the troubled area of real nature of things, and "going simply by appearances they could attain genuine mental tranquillity."³ Thus, attempts were made to lay down secure foundation of knowledge as response to the challenges of epistemological skepticism, namely the charges of: infinite regress, vicious circle and gratuitous assumption.⁴ In part seven [Book V] of *The Republic*, Plato has Glaucon agree with Socrates that knowledge and belief are not the same. What is knowable; a cognitive agent "knows what is as it is": "What in no way is not knowable."⁵ Knowledge and the grasp of the 'eternal immutable' reason for its infallibility are tied up together. Thus, "multiplicity (of opinions)

² Richard Popkin, H. and Avrum Stroll. *Philosophy Made Simple*, Second edition, Revised, (New York: Doubleday 1993), 182.

³ Hamlyn, W D., *The Theory of Knowledge* (New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1970), 8.

⁴ The skeptics argue for instance, that in order to validate a concept say, A, a backward move is made to proffer another, say, A¹ without which the explanation of A as knowledge cannot proceed. But A¹ will itself have to be validated perhaps, by A², etc to infinity regress A¹...Aⁿ in such search.

⁵ Plato, *The Republic*. Second Edition(Revised). Trans Desmond Lee. (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1974), 7,5, 477,a; 271

and change” are bound to fallible and corrigible and these cannot be the foundation of knowledge.⁶

If knowledge, therefore, entails justification, closure failure of the justificatory process might lead to closure failure of the S’s belief. Luper argues that the (SP) is false, because “we can know one thing, p, but fail to see that p entails q, or for some other reason fail to believe q.”⁷ Conversely, justification is fallible iff it is possible to be justified while holding a false belief, and defeasible iff it could be “overridden by further evidence” against the truth of the proposition or it is “undercut by considerations about whether reasons or evidence were adduced for its justification.”⁸ Such foundationalist’s move is to construe that (a) certain beliefs are independently grounded, necessarily true and stand in no need of proof. They are based on self-evident and absolutely certain principles of human reason, and (b) others, dependently formed beliefs whose justification rest, mediate on the self-evident ones. This framework construes into model of pyramid, the former at the base and the second at the apex, that is, the non-basic beliefs which validation reasons back to the self-evident, basic beliefs. In tracing the inferential chain we arrive at one or more immediately justified belief that stop the regress.⁹ This is in keeping with the rationalist’s intuition that perception of basic truth is non-inferential. Aristotle informs us that “to be sure whether one’s knowledge is based on the basic truths appropriate to each attribute”, we can by intuitive grasp the objective first principles with epistemic certainty. This constitutes the epistemological foundation on which to validate subsequent beliefs.¹⁰ In his ‘principles of Philosophy’, Rene Descartes’ Meditations the truth of the *Cogito, ergo Sum* is laid on the basis of the certainty in ‘clear and distinct’ perception which is validated on the veracity of a ‘supremely perfect, powerful and all-knowing being, God.’¹¹ The following reiterate this tradition¹², according to which ‘S Knows that P, *iff* (i.e., if and only if):

S/no	Plato	Roderick M. Chisholm	J . A. Ayer	W.D. Hamlyn
1.	P is true.	S accepts P	P is true	S believes that P
2.	S believes that P	S has adequate evidence that P	S is sure that P is true	S has sufficient ground for belief that P

⁶ Plato, *The Republic*, 7,5, 484, b.

⁷ Elke Brendel and Christoph Jäger, *Contextualist Approaches to Epistemology: Problems and Prospects*, <http://www.uibk.ac.at/philtheol/jaeger/publ/contextualist-approaches-to-epistemology-brendel-jaeger-erkenntnis-61-2004.pdf>

⁸ David Lewis, “Elusive Knowledge”, in *Epistemology, An Anthology*, edited by Sosa Ernest and Joegwon Kim, London: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, 504-506

⁹Sven Bernecker, *Reading Epistemology, Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*,(Malden, USA:Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 122

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics, The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. (New York: Modern Library Classics, 2009), 1.9, 76a26-28

¹¹ Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*.Translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch. Vol.1. (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1985), 198, 199

¹² Susan J. Fleck, “How Can We Know?”.
http://www.susanfleck.com/philosophy/phl315true_belief06w2w.htm,1995

3.	S is justified in belief that P	P is true	S has the right to be sure that P is true	P must be true (if a thing exists, a proposition, significant).
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Examples of the JTB model of epistemic justificatory conditions

Related to this is the principle of knowledge ‘closure’ under entailment or disjunction (the or-relation). Lacy argues on this that “we cannot know the infinitely many things entailed by what we know.” But even allowing knowledge closure under known entailment can lead to scepticism, “by suggesting that quite modest claims to knowledge can commit us to false claims, and so must themselves be rejected.”¹³

3. The Epistemological Challenge of the Skeptical Argument

The skeptic appeals to a scenario of being a brain in a vat (BIV). Without a normal body, the epistemic agent’s mental states such as the introspective and perceptual experiences, memories, thoughts, fears, and desires are simulated to mirror the normal world thereby creating cognitive illusion. The following is a rephrasing of the skeptical argument formulated by Keith DeRose:

- (i) S knows doesn’t know that he/she has Hands [$\sim H$]
- (ii) But if S does not know he/she has hands, then he/she doesn’t know of being BIV
- (iii) Therefore, S does not know that he/she is not a BIV.¹⁴

The argument presents an epistemic paradox because¹⁵ (ii) underscores that if S does not know the denial of a skeptical hypothesis (such as that $S \sim BIV$) then S does not know an everyday proposition which entails the denial of that hypothesis (such as that S has hands) granted ‘closure principle for knowledge.

If we grant the intuition in the ‘closure principle of knowledge, if S lacks knowledge of the consequent proposition [$\sim BIV$], but knows that the antecedent proposition [$\sim SH$] entails the consequent proposition [$\sim BIV$], then S must also be lacking in knowledge of the antecedent proposition in (ii). Given the truth of (i) and (ii), it follows that S will lack knowledge of

¹³ Matthias Steup, “Supplement to The Analysis of Knowledge”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL: <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/>>. First published 2006; substantive revision / edition 2010

¹⁴ DeRose, Keith “Solving The Skeptical Problem”, in *Epistemology, An Anthology*. Edited by Ernest Sosa and Kim, Jaegwon, (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 482.

¹⁵ Roy Sorensen, “Epistemic Paradoxes”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/epistemic-paradoxes/>>.

having hand (i), but, ultimately, would not know the class of everyday propositions which could instantiate that one should know about not being a BIV.¹⁶

4. The Gettier Problem as Challenge to JTB

The conception “Gettier problem”, and “Gettier case” are used to describe any epistemological problem which repudiates or shows inconsistency in the JTB account of knowledge. Edmund Gettier in 1963 published a three page paper; “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” addresses perceived justificatory insufficiency in JTB account of knowledge. He presented two cases in which a supposedly ‘true belief’ was unjustified. Gettier argues that the traditionally held JTB as a necessary and sufficient conditions for S’s knowing a given proposition that, ‘S knows that P’, *iff* :

(i) P is true,

(ii) S believes that P, and

(iii) S is justified in believing that P,

is false because the conditions fail to sufficiently justify S’s belief that P is true. He flaws other conditions when S “has adequate evidence for” or “has the right to be sure that” it is substituted for “justified in believing that” P.¹⁷ He provides to counter- evidences to show that the unsavoury commitment to JTB is defeasible, fallible and entailed an element of luck. The two cases supposed true belief, was not based on knowledge and traded on elements of coincidence and luck.

Case1: Smith and Jones both applied for a job. Smith had a strong evidence on the following conjunctive proposition that: (d) Jones will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his pocket. Smith’s evidence for believing (d) is that:

[i] Smith had been informed earlier by company manager that Jones would indeed be selected;

[ii] that the man who will get the job has ten pieces of coins in pocket; and

[iii] Smith had counted the coins in Jones’s pocket ten minutes ago and reckoned that they were ten in number. It is supposed that Smith infers the entailment (d): [i]-[iii] and concludes and accepts (e) that Jones was going to be successful at the interview and would get the job.

Smith’s strong evidence (d) [ii] justified his belief (e) as true.

¹⁶ Duncan Pritchard, “Contextualism, Scepticism, And The Problem Of Epistemic Descent”, *Dialectica*, 55 (2001), 3

¹⁷ Edmund L. Gettier. “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” *Analysis*. vol. 23 (1966), 2.
<http://philosophyfaculty.ucsd.edu/faculty/rarneson/Courses/gettierphilreading.pdf>

¹⁸ Edmund L. Gettier. “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” , 2

However, Gettier imagined, that unknown Smith, he himself (Smith), not Jones, will get the job. Secondly, unknown Smith, he himself (Smith) has ten coins in his pocket.

Gettier therefore, inferred that proposition (e) is true, though proposition(d), from which Smith inferred (e), is false. From the example, all of the following are true: □

*1.(e) is true, (2) Smith believes that (e) is true, and (3) Smith is justified, believing that (e) is true. But it is equally clear that Smith does not know that (e) is true; for (e) is true in virtue of the number of coins in Smith's pocket, while Smith does not know how many coins are in his pocket, but based his belief (e) on the fact that he counted the 10 coins in Jones's pocket, whom he falsely believed would get the job.*¹⁸

Gettier takes up the second case exemplify this that the JTB fails to justify belief.

CASE II

It is supposed that Smith has strong evidence, a justified belief that:“(f) Jones owns a Ford (on the premise that Jones has at all times in the past within Smiths memory owned a car, and always a Ford,(ii) and Jones has just offered him (Smith) a ride in a Ford.” Then it is imagined that Smith has another friend, Brown, of whose whereabouts he is totally ignorant. But by rule of disjunction Smith selects three place names quite at random and constructs these three propositions:

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

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

(i) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Brest-Litovsk.

Each of these propositions is entailed by (f). Smith realizes the entailment of each of these propositions he has constructed and accepted (g), (h), and (i) on the basis of (f). Smith has correctly inferred (g), (h), and (i) from his strong evidence that (f), and counts it adequate justification in believing each of the three propositions. Incidentally, Smith has no idea where Brown is. Gettier now imagined two further conditions:

First, Jones does not own a Ford, but is at present driving a rented car. And secondly, by the sheerest coincidence, and entirely unknown to Smith, the place mentioned in proposition (h) happens really to be the place where Brown is. If these two conditions hold, then Smith does not KNOW that (h) is true, even though (i) (h) is true, (ii) Smith does believe that (h) is true, and (iii) Smith is justified in believing that (h) is true.

Recall that in all Gettier's three examples of definitions of knowledge where JTB applied, S knows that P, iff:

(i) P is true;

(ii) S believes that P, accepts that P, or is sure that P is true; and

(iii) S is *justified* in believing that P; has *adequate evidence* for P, or *has the right to be sure* that P is true

Inferring from the two cases he used, Gettier illustrated that in none of the definitions is the JTB sufficient conditions for knowledge. There were assumptions about evidence that would have counted as bases for justification. Smith never had them. It was a 'false belief' because of being wrongly inferred as JTB.

John Turri represents the spurious JTB argument thus:

i. If JTB is true, then the Gettier subject knows.

ii. The Gettier subject does not know,

iii. So, JTB is not true. (From i and ii).¹⁹

(i) We are often mistaken about what we think we know with Certainty; (ii) our most reliable sources of information (on which our claims to knowledge is grounded) can be deceptive, variable; (iii) our belief in a reality might be true but our judgment on it may be incorrect, inadequate (iv) There are occasions in which our knowledge or grounds for it are merely coincidental, or entail cases of mistaken identity, etc. (v) Our claim to knowledge may not be clear and certain. The Gettier problem, then is how to modify the analysis of knowledge to 'accommodate Gettier cases.'²⁰

Some theorists supportive of the JTB approach chose "to strengthen the justification condition to rule out Gettier cases or to de-Gettier it. Others chose to amend the analysis of the JTB thesis by adding a fourth condition, as JTB+XY.

Robert Nozick (1938-2002) tracking account of knowledge asserts that resting on the principle of epistemic closure entails that we can know that we have hands without knowing we are not BIV.²¹ Nozick revises it to take explicit account of ways and methods (M) of belief formation such that S knows, P (through a method or way of believing) M, iff:

P is true,

S believes P, via M and S's belief that p is sensitive (M)

if p were false, S via M would not believe that p;

¹⁹ John Turri, Is Knowledge Justified True Belief? [<http://john.turri.org/research/KITB>]

²⁰ Ichikawa, Jonathan Jenkins and Matthias Steup, "The Analysis of Knowledge", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/knowledge-analysis/>>

²¹ Elke Brendel and Christoph Jäger, Contextualist Approaches to Epistemology: Problems and Prospects, <http://www.uibk.ac.at/philtheol/jaeger/publ/contextualist-approaches-to-epistemology-brendel-jaeger-erkenntnis-61-2004.pdf>

But if p is true, S via M will believe that p.²²

However, for Ram Neta the context-sensitivity of knowledge attribution of evidence entails that: (i) S's evidence for p is one that favours p over some alternatives, q, etc that are relevant in the context of epistemic evaluation. (ii) S's evidence that favours p over some relevant alternative q is possible only if there is marked difference between the way that things would be for S if p and q were, conversely true.²³ According to the advocates of relevant alternative theory (RAT): if S knows that p, and knows that q is an alternative to p, then S knows (or at least is in a position to know) that q is false. The elimination of alternative principles seem to guarantee the success of the BIV Argument: if you, S have hands, then S is not a BIV. If S is a BIV, then S doesn't have hands. The reason is simple. Since one cannot discriminate between the normal world and the vat world, he/she cannot know that he/she is not a BIV. But your having hands is incompatible with your being a BIV. Thus, if the elimination of the alternative Principle is true, S cannot know that he/she has hands.²⁴

5. Epistemological Contextualism

The conception, 'epistemological contextualism' is a view that meanings and truths of knowledge ascription are context-sensitive or context-dependent. That "S knows/ does not know that P is xyz", "Y means/ does not mean that P is xyz, or that S's reasoning to xyz about P, etc are context-sensitive. The allusion to context-dependence allows flexibility of standards so that one speaker can truthfully say "S knows that P is xyz", while another in a different context (requiring higher standards), can truthfully say "S doesn't know that P" or "S does not know that P is xyz" ['xyz' being predicative of P] both speakers being on the same subject and at the same time.²⁵ It is context-sensitivity because "context affects what knowledge-attributing sentences literally express".²⁶

Certain features of contexts include "the intentions and presuppositions of the members of a conversational context"²⁷; interests, purposes, expectations, preferences, of a subject or knowledge attributor and knowledge ascription. For DeRose context refers to the "extra-evidential features of the subject's situation"; and for Rysiew "features of the knowledge attributor(s)' psychology and/or conversational-practical situation."²⁸ These coalesce as

²² Sven Bernecker, *Reading Epistemology*, (Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 21

²³ Ram Neta, "S Knows That P", *NOUS* 36:4-2002! 663-681, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 2002), 12

²⁴ Elke Brendel and Christoph Jäger, Contextualist Approaches to Epistemology: Problems and Prospects, <http://www.uibk.ac.at/philtheol/jaeger/publ/contextualist-approaches-to-epistemology-brendel-jaeger-erkenntnis-61-2004.pdf>

²⁵ Keith DeRose, *A Brief History of Contextualism*, URL
<<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/skepticism>, Summer 2011 Edition.

²⁶ Rysiew, Patrick, *The Context-Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions*.
<http://web.uvic.ca/~rysiew/Publications/CSKANous.pdf>

²⁷ Tim Black, "Contextualism in Epistemology", *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/contextu/> originally published on December/4/2003, Last updated on July 15, 2006

²⁸ And not "certain features of the putative subject of knowledge" (his/her evidence, history, other beliefs, etc.) or his/her objective situation (what is true/false, which alternatives to what is believed are likely to etc.

“large and diverse selective behaviour”, reflects consensus and provides cues for categorical structuring of reality.²⁹ Epistemological contextualism gained currency due to: (i) semantic pluralism in latter half of the 20 century which attests to the possibility of varying standards (low, weak or ordinary sense of know as opposed to a high, strong, or philosophical sense); (ii) the emergence of ‘Relevant alternatives accounts of knowledge (RA); (iii) emphasis on epistemic subjects, activities, etc as forms of “epistemological behaviorism, and (iv) the growing importance of social factors to epistemological questions.³⁰

There are different forms of epistemological contextualism. *Conversational Contextualism* is version of attributor contextualism. It claims that the truth of the proposition “S knows that p (at t)” can be true in one conversational context and false in another - for the same subject and proposition in a given time (t). Conversational features of knowledge ascription determine the semantic standards of knowledge claim. Error-possibility (e) in discourse makes speakers to raise or lower, that is, shift standard context.³¹ Thus, knowledge claims are expressed in semantics of indexical expressions as in personal pronouns: ‘I’, ‘you,’; ‘here,’ and ‘now’, etc in gradable adjectives like ‘tall’ [for how *tall* something must be to count as ‘tall’ depends on the conversational context] and quantifiers like ‘everyone’ [what counts as part of everyone’ depends on the conversational context].³²

Subject Vs Attributor-Contextualism, a distinction made by Keith De Rose indicates whether the “varying standards a subject must live up to count as knowing are relative to the context of that subject,” that is, are facts about the subject (matter) or “or rather to the context of the attributor -the person describing the subject as a knower or a non-kower.” Features of a supposed subject of knowledge’s cognitive environment may not constitute part of attributor’s evidence for belief, and s/he may be oblivious of its influence whether s/he knows.³³

In *Issue Contextualism*, the standards S must meet in order to know that p are set by S’s context. S’s background information and her practical interests in a specific issue-context [is the context] does fix the epistemic standards for knowledge [not conversational-and error-

²⁹ Henri Tajfel *Introducing Social Psychology*, edited by Henri Tajfel and Colin Fraser (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978), 302,306

³⁰ Keith DeRose, A Brief History of Contextualism, URL
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/skepticism>, Summer 2011 Edition

³¹ Elke Brendel and Christoph Jäger, Contextualist Approaches to Epistemology Problems and Prospects.
<http://www.uibk.ac.at/philtheol/jaeger/publ/contextualist-approaches-epistemology-brendel-jaeger-erkenntnis-61-2004.pdf>

³² Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa and Matthias Steup. “The Analysis of Knowledge”. *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL -
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/knowledge-analysis/> First published Tue Feb 6. 2001; substantive revision Thu Nov 15, 2012

³³ Keith DeRose, “Contextualism: An Explanation and Defence” in J. Greco and E. Sosa, ed., *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. Blackwell Publishers, 1999),XX xxx

possibility]. There is no single context-independent scale that fixes the degree of epistemic standards in all contexts.³⁴

6. Annis' Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification

David B. Annis is an American philosopher 1978's work *A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification* argues from findings anthropology, psychology, sociology that knowledge is a biological function and normative of behavioural practices. Annis rejects the claims of foundationalism and Coherentism for holding onto a "stop point" in the chain of reasoning and being circular, respectively.³⁵ These, he argues do not specify the conditions under which a belief is justified. This condition in the structure of justification draws from cultural and social practices since they are epistemic.³⁶

Annis argues knowledge dependence on cultural practices and epistemic goals that man is social and knowledge is social in nature. Socio-culture factors such as conceptual and perceptual categories, existential imperatives and meaning attitudes to things, social reflexes, psychology and psychic features of human persons all shape their sense of value, and epistemic norms³⁷; how they affect their epistemic practices, and how "reliable inference habits and practices, patterns of reasoning, or acquiring reliable beliefs", etc are formed.³⁸ Within such milieu of epistemic practices epidemic goals are formed but dependent on needs. One of such goal is having true beliefs and avoidance of error.

Annis, conceives truth as *Issue-Context-Dependent*. An issue-context both defines S's level of understanding, knowledge, the standard S must meet in order to know that h and "appropriate objector-group (that) are set by S's context." 'S knows that h' when specific 'issue-context' involving h is being raised.³⁹ Belief is relative to issue-contexts. In one context S is justified in belief h but not in another context. He notes, for instance, that answer to the question 'what causes polio?' will be "good enough and adequate" depending on the issue-context. The 'issue-context' at a material moment is whether the answer is required for professional examination or road side enquiry. Annis opines that *value* is a component of the

³⁴ Elke Brendel and Christoph Jäger. *Contextualist Approaches to Epistemology: Problems*

³⁵ David B. Annis, "A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.15, No. 3, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, July, 1978, URL=<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20009716>, Accessed:22/06/2009 03:25, 213

³⁶ David Annis, 'Epistemology Naturalized' in *Metaphilosophy*, vol.13, nos3 & 4, Jul/October, 1982, First published online : 13th August, 2007,

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9973.1982.tb00676.x/pdf>, 1

³⁷ David B. Annis, "A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification", 213, 215

³⁸ David B. Annis, "Epistemology Naturalized", in *Metaphilosophy*, 1-4

³⁹ David B. Annis, "A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification", 214- 215

issue -context. The validity of the epistemic value of S's evidence and responses, and objectors' acceptance or rejection of these depends upon the normative culture of an epistemic community.⁴⁰ Thus, a person may be justified in believing *A* in a context C^x but may not be justified relative to other contexts, say: $C^{xa} \cdot C^{b-z}$. The issue-context also determines an appropriate objector-group to S's epistemic position. An objector-group refers those "qualified critical truth seekers" whose current objections *S* must meet with if its epistemic proposition is to be true. But then, the objector -group's objections will be based on the current available evidence which the group lays claim to. This includes "beliefs, information, and theories of others." Such objections that *S* has to face will not include "logical inference (which *S* has no evidence of and is in no epistemic position to respond to).

But as it were *S* has two basic epistemic goals: (A) having true beliefs, and (B) avoid having false beliefs. (A) will possibly meet with the objections: (i) *S* is in no position to know that *h*, or (ii) *S* does not know *h* (i.e. *h* is false). *S* proffers reasons: $e^1, e^2 \dots e^n$, that *h* is true. It may still be objected to that one of *S*'s reason: $e^1 \dots e^n$ is false (inadequate support for *h*). Therefore, *S*'s specific reasoning from $e^1 \dots e^n$ to *h* is fallacious or "that there is evidence *i* such that the conjunction of $e^1 \dots e^n$ and *i* does not provide adequate support for *h*."⁴¹ At t_i , *S* accepts h_i , as valid in critical practices; at t_2 *S* accepted h_2 as true. The truth, validity and justificatory conditions of knowledge are issues-contextual.

7. Evaluation and Conclusion

The specific focus in this context in this paper is David Annis' view. David Annis's contextualist account is *issue-context* sensitive. However, Keith DeRose had observed that Annis' theory ignores the distinction between justified belief and truth of belief and fails to show in what manner one is justified in such belief. Annis explains that a subject, *S* is not required "to be able to state all the standards of justification and demonstrate that he satisfies them" but only to meet real objections relative an issue-context. *S*'s reasons that *h* places it (*S*) in a "logical space of reason, of justifying and being able to justify what one says." Being justified requires the satisfaction of the principles of justification, but showing that one is, demonstrates the satisfaction of the principles. Moreover, Annis' theory is being criticized for ignoring the distinction between truth and justification. Annis denies that he does ignore this distinction. To meet an objection that *h* does not entail showing that it is false, for *S* may be justified in believing *h* (meets an objection) when it is false; it only requires "general agreement on the response." *S* is justified in belief *h* when he/she is in a position to know *h*. According to him, *S* is not required "to be able to state the standards of justification and demonstrate that he satisfies them....(but) that he be able to meet real objections...(which) sometimes him to discuss standards."⁴² In issue-context related, *S* is expected to have his reasons (as necessary evidence, *e*) for belief that *h* (though Annis thinks that one may not be able to articulate all our evidences). An evidence for *h* must be acceptable and taken as such as it "places us 'in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what

⁴⁰ David B. Annis, "A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification", 215

⁴¹ D. Annis, *A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification*, 214

⁴² D. Annis, *A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification*, 217

one says’.”⁴³ Annis says that his contextualist account of knowledge does not ignore the distinction between truth and justification, that “meeting an objection does not entail showing the objection is false.” As a matter of fact objection that *h* may be false or true. *S* may still be justified in believing *h* by being able to meet the objection when *h* is in fact false. Again, “verifically motivated objectors” may be unaware that *h* is false, yet *S* will be justified believing it. In the latter case, Annis opines, the objection will not be raised. The only objection that requires response is that expressing “real doubt.”⁴⁴ He draws a distinction between ‘epistemic justification’ and ‘being epistemically justified’ in believing *h*. The first makes a claim to knowledge while the second is “to be in a position to know *h*.”⁴⁵

Annis explains that being justified requires the satisfaction of the principles of justification, but showing that one is, demonstrates the satisfaction of the principles. To say that knowledge sentences are indexical means that what constitutes our perception of what is true, proper and applied correctly to things in our judgment and discourses is recognition of the circumstances of the context-sensitivity. A belief is *contextually basic* if “given an issue-context the appropriate objector-group does not require the person to have reasons for the belief in order to be in a position to have knowledge.”⁴⁶ The members of an objector-group are “critical truth seekers. The appropriate objector-group consists of “normal perceivers who have general knowledge about the standard conditions of perception and perceptual error.” If the objector group does not raise real doubts that *h* in specific issue-context then *S*’s belief that *h* is justified.⁴⁷ Does knowledge need a justification theory? Must we justify the fact that we have knowledge something? The answers are yes. Given the link between epistemological skepticism and knowledge, we must certify that the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge are met. But is the Gettier problem in knowledge solvable? It is pertinent that reasons be adduced as justificatory evidence for our beliefs. But should we put a stop to knowledge, and go hunting for a tracking record that we have this aspect of knowledge against others? How much of the conditions are sufficient and necessary? The generation of answers to these is germane for descriptive purposes.

David Annis’ ‘contextualist theory of epistemic justification’ targets epistemological foundationalism and on its denial of the coherence theory of justification and the denial that “infinite sequence of reasons is sufficient to justify a belief.” [216] Annis’ account, we have seen “stops the regress” argument and does not couch his arguments in basic statements in the foundationalist’s sense. The issue-context sensitivity logically localizes the epistemic content, the experience-knowledge capacity of the epistemic agent as well as the possible ‘objector-group’s scope of knowledge and normative standard. This sphere of context-dependency suffices to justify what is objectionable and how the subject meets up with them. It is within this issue-context relatedness that a subject’s claims to knowledge are justified or

⁴³ Annis, Cites, Wilfrid Sellers, *Science, Perception and Reality*, (London, 1963) p.169) in *A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification*, 217

⁴⁴ D. Annis, *A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification*, 217

⁴⁵ D. Annis, *A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification*, 217

⁴⁶ D. Annis, *A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification*, 216

⁴⁷ D. Annis, *A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification*, 216

unjustified. In this way Annis underscores the fact that truth and warrant for belief is not dependent upon coherent system of statements or a foundationalist's starting point for showing that we know. It is the epistemological issue on the table that radically sharpens and marks the epistemic space within which socio-cultural environment the subject's epistemic norm is nurtured and functioned. There is no universal way of knowing things and forming beliefs. We speak about things, even conceptual realities in such attributive manner that refer them as specific cognitive objects. Naming, references, stating of facts and cognitive sense of expressions, are expressed by the use of deictic and cultural cues that enter epistemic space. In these and others, David Annis' contextualist theory of knowledge is quite innovative.

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