THE GETTIER NON-PROBLEM[*]

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ABSTRACT: This paper highlights an aspect of Gettier situations, one standardly not accorded interpretive significance. A remark of Gettier's suggests its potential importance. And once that aspect's contribution is made explicit, an argument unfolds for the conclusion that it is fairly simple to have knowledge within Gettier situations. Indeed, that argument dissolves the traditional Gettier problem.

KEYWORDS: Gettier, the Gettier problem, Gettier cases, luck, knowledge

Epistemologists are becoming ever more habitual in describing Edmund Gettier[1] (1963) as having uncovered something significant about what knowledge is not. But this paper argues that if we try to show that Gettier was right we will find that he was not. What of those supposed 'intuitions' upon which epistemologists standardly rely when interpreting Gettier so favourably? If this paper is correct, those standard intuitions are mistaken. He did not establish what epistemologists credit him with showing. This implies that epistemology need never have included Gettierology – its Gettier-inspired complexity, catering *to* those standard intuitions. The fundamental lesson which epistemologists take themselves to have learnt from Gettier should now be *un*learnt.

1. The standard interpretation of Gettier's challenge

Gettier – we are routinely assured – showed that a belief's being true and well-although-fallibly[2] justified by evidence is insufficient for making it knowledge. The

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[1] E.L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?," *Analysis* 23 (1963): 121-3.

[2] I use 'fallibly' in deference to Gettier's first constraint – "Is Justified," 121 – upon his counterexamples.

belief might also be attended by a circumstance precluding its being knowledge. (For example, the belief is made true by a state of affairs other than that which the believer's evidence indicates as making the belief true.)[3]

How widespread is that problem? Did Gettier describe the *only* instances of a well-but-fallibly justified true belief not being knowledge? No: he pointed to just two possible instances. But subsequent epistemologists extended his contribution, noticing and imagining a multitude of actual and non-actual instances. Their reactions to those cases have been constant – continually inferring that, whenever a belief is true and well-although-fallibly justified within a situation *relevantly like* one described by Gettier, it is not knowledge. For short: if a belief is *Gettiered*, it is not knowledge. Equally: if a belief is the centre-piece of a Gettier situation, it is not knowledge.

Moreover, that thesis is treated by epistemologists as conceptual, as necessarily true. Its message aspires not merely to being the contingent truth that, as the world turns, no Gettiered beliefs are knowledge. It claims, more strikingly, that in *principle* no Gettiered beliefs are knowledge: *necessarily*, a belief's being Gettiered precludes its being knowledge.

Let us call that thesis the *Standard Gettier Interpretation*. It implies that, as a matter of conceptual principle, being true and well-although-fallibly justified is insufficient for a belief's being knowledge – because the belief might be Gettiered.[4]

2. Knowing that one is in a Gettier situation

2.1 Not knowing a pertinent circumstance

Can section 1's Standard Gettier Interpretation be rendered more informative? Epistemologists have sought precisifications of it to explain *why* no Gettiered belief is knowledge. So far, though, no proposal has won the day. What should we do next?

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[3] For further explanation of this idea, see Adrian Heathcote, "Truthmaking and the Gettier Problem," in *Aspects of Knowing: Epistemological Essays*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), 151-67, and Stephen Hetherington, *How To Know: A Practicalist Conception of Knowledge* (Wiley-Blackwell. forthcoming, 2011), ch. 3. On other possible knowledge-precluding circumstances, see sections 5 and 6.

[4] For more on Gettier's challenge and epistemological reactions to it, see Robert K. Shope, *The Analysis of Knowing: A Decade of Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), and Stephen Hetherington, "Gettier Problems," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2005), http://www.iep.utm.edu/g/gettier.htm, and "The Gettier Problem," in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, eds. Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard (Routledge, forthcoming, 2010).

I will attempt to reorient that search, by showing why it need never have even *begun* with the standard motivation – the Standard Gettier Interpretation – which has always defined it. Gettier himself provided a clue as to how we may understand the situations he described. He said *almost* nothing diagnostic about what epistemic faults were present within those situations; but he did say *something*. Regarding his first situation,[5] Gettier told us that his epistemic agent Smith "does not know"[6] *how* his final belief is being made true:

> ... it is equally clear that Smith does not know that (e) ['The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket'] 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 Smith's pocket, and bases his belief in (e) on a count of the coins in Jones's pocket, whom he falsely believes to be the man who will get the job.

Why did epistemologists not seize upon this clue? The reason was probably methodological. They took their larger goal in 'solving the Gettier problem' to be an analytically reductive definition – an analysis at once of all instances of "knows that *p*", in terms not themselves mentioning knowledge. (Knowledge would be understood as a combination of elements, none of these being knowledge.) Yet is a reductive analysis obligatory for understanding knowledge's nature? Timothy Williamson[7] has denied so. Let us join him in not focusing fixedly upon that goal.

For example, imagine a simple variation on Gettier's first story – a variation prompted by his own clue. Imagine Smith's having known that *he* (not Jones) will get the job, and that *he* also (not only Jones) has ten coins in his pocket. This would be a normal instance of Smith's acquiring inferential knowledge that (e). It would not be a Gettier situation. It would illustrate an epistemic principle possibly of longer epistemological lineage even than the justified-true-belief definition of knowledge – the principle, namely, that a belief is inferential knowledge only if the evidence upon which it is based is knowledge.[8] We would regard the story as simply a not-especially-distinctive reminder of this principle's truth, a structural constraint upon inferential knowledge's presence.

And maybe *that* is a clue. Perhaps Gettier situations are most accurately diagnosed (even if not reductively analyzed) by something like this:

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[5] If you are unfamiliar with its details, see in the start of section 4 for Gettier's entire presentation of it.

[6] Gettier, "Is Justified," 122.

[7] Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), ch. 1.

[8] We might reach for the version of this principle concerning justification, not knowledge. The point remains the same, *mutatis mutandis*.

> If a person's belief is true and well-although-fallibly justified, but there is some pertinent circumstance of which she does not know, then her belief is not knowledge.

Obviously this schema is incomplete. For a start, what makes a circumstance pertinent? But the immediate point is that – *however* we understand such pertinence – part of a belief's being Gettiered-and-therefore-not-knowledge is a pertinent circumstance of which the believer does not know.

2.2 Not knowing that one is in a Gettier situation

Here is an extension of that observation: In principle, one way not to lack knowledge by being in a Gettier situation would be to know that one is in that Gettier situation. "Clearly," you might reply, "no one within a Gettier situation can know that she is. Being in a Gettier situation involves being unwittingly undermined in that way." Exactly; and so my argument starts with what should be a triviality. Can we derive something substantive from it?

Consider this reasoning:

> Knowing that one is in a Gettier situation. Any Gettier situation is centred upon some proposition. By definition, part of being in a Gettier situation centred upon p is one's having a true belief that p. So, knowing that one is in such a situation would include knowing that one's belief that p is true. But this is to know that p. Hence, it is impossible to be in a Gettier situation centred upon p, and to know this, while failing to know that p. Consequently, to know that one's belief that p is Gettiered would, in part, be to know that p.

In which case, it is possible in theory for a Gettiered belief to be knowledge. Yet this conclusion is manifestly incompatible with the Standard Gettier Interpretation, on which no Gettiered belief can be knowledge. The Standard Gettier Interpretation must therefore be taking for granted this further condition – that *no epistemic agent can know that she is in a Gettier situation centred upon* p.

I say "must therefore be taking for granted", partly because epistemologists never actually remark upon whether or not a person within a Gettier situation knows that she is there. But we have seen just now that part of being in a Gettier situation *is* – if knowledge is to be absent – one's not knowing that one is there. Accordingly, that further condition needs to be mentioned by any *complete* explication of the Standard Gettier Interpretation, even if in practice epistemologists (when speaking more casually, less thoroughly) may take this condition's presence for granted, and

even if we regard as trivially attainable its being satisfied.[9] It *does* seem like a trivial requirement, one which epistemic agents should satisfy correlatively easily. Thus, we are not imposing anything substantive and alien upon the Standard Gettier Interpretation.[10]

2.3 The Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation

Nonetheless, we are adding *something* – at least in the sense of making explicit something which must have been taken for granted by advocates of the Standard Gettier Interpretation. Once we do make explicit that further something, we gain this *Expanded* Standard Gettier Interpretation:

> Necessarily, a person's being in a Gettier situation centred upon p, without her knowing that she is, prevents her belief that p from being knowledge that p.

We then have an interpretive choice. We could regard the need for such an expansion as already falsifying the Standard Gettier Interpretation. That interpretation would be apt if the need for the expansion reveals the Standard Gettier Interpretation's antecedent to have been an *in*sufficient description of what suffices for being Gettiered-and-thereby-not-knowledge. Alternatively, we could interpret the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation as merely making explicit what was implicit in the Standard Gettier Interpretation. The latter will be my charitable approach. I will treat the question of whether the Standard Gettier

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[9] "Why is there a *need* for this condition to be mentioned? Also necessary to being in a Gettier situation is one's being alive, being conscious, and so on. Yet these need not be mentioned as necessary conditions in an account of knowledge. Why *must* we mention one's not knowing that one is in a Gettier situation?" The reason is the *epistemic* significance of this necessary condition. As was explained two paragraphs earlier (in *Knowing that one is in a Gettier situation*), to fail it would be to *have* knowledge that *p* within a Gettier situation centred upon *p* – thereby falsifying the Standard Gettier Interpretation. It is not similarly sufficient, for knowing that *p*, that one not be alive, not be conscious, etc.

[10] A terminological point arises. We may say that if a person was to know that she is in a Gettier situation, she would not be in a Gettier *case* – a Gettier situation centred upon *p*, where one *lacks* the knowledge that *p*. I am talking more generically of Gettier situations because I wish to *discover* whether – without *presuming* that – such situations exclude knowledge. For example, it would be question-begging to object in this way to my suggestion:

 If in principle no one could know herself to be in a Gettier situation, the idea of knowing that one is there is incoherent. It is similarly incoherent to include, within accounts of knowing, the condition that one not know that one is in a Gettier situation.

 This merely *presumes* that no Gettiered belief is knowledge.

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Interpretation is true as *being* the question of whether the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation is true. Hence, the former is true only if the latter is.

3. Dissolving Gettier's challenge

3.1 The argument

And *is* the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation true? Imagine a proponent of the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation who attempts to argue (rather than merely assume)[11] that someone lacks knowledge by being within some Gettier situation. Let the term "Gettier-circumstance" designate what section 1 called the pertinent circumstance within a given Gettier situation (the circumstance which, as standardly interpreted, prevents the situation's justified true belief from being knowledge). Our imagined reasoner accepts 1:

> 1 Given x's having fallibly good evidence for her true belief that p, and given that situation's Gettier-circumstance: {x lacks knowledge that p → not-(x knows that x is in a Gettier situation)}.[12]

> 2 Within a Gettier situation: {x lacks knowledge that p → not-(x knows that x is in a Gettier situation)}.

1 is equivalent to the more succinct 2:

Our imagined proponent of the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation needs to show that 2's contained consequent is satisfied, if he is to establish *x*'s failing to know that *p* within this Gettier situation. Yet once we articulate in detail what it is for *x* not to know that she is in a Gettier situation, we turn 2 into 3:

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[11] It is tempting simply to insist without arguing, when confronted by a description of a Gettier situation, that the described belief is not knowledge. Epistemologists, however, should examine whether the standard reaction *can* be justified through argument.

[12] 1 is formulated in this way because my discussion takes as *given* *x*'s being in a Gettier situation. In effect, 1 is 1*:

1* [*x* believes that *p*, & it is true that *p*, & *x* has fallibly good evidence for *p*, & there is a Gettier-circumstance within *x*'s situation] → [*x* lacks knowledge that *p* → not-(*x* knows that *x* is in a Gettier situation)].

This alternative formulation makes apparent that – by exportation – we may conjoin 1*'s antecedent with the antecedent of its consequent (leaving, as the new consequent, what is presently the consequent of its consequent). Doing so, though, would obscure the dialectically immediate question of whether (as per the Standard Gettier Interpretation) *x*'s satisfying 1*'s antecedent *suffices* for *x*'s lacking knowledge that *p*.

3 Within a Gettier situation: {x lacks knowledge that p → x does not know the following: [x believes that p, & it is true that p, & x has fallibly good evidence for p, & there is a Gettier-circumstance within the situation]}.[13]

4 x does not know the following: [x believes that p, & it is true that p, & x has fallibly good evidence for p, & there is a Gettier-circumstance within the situation].

(a) It would be badly question-begging to argue that x does not know that p is true – with this being how x lacks knowledge of 4's conjunction. For the inquirer's argument would be this: x fails to know that p is true; therefore, x fails to know that p.

(b) Nor is it clear that, in general, x will not know that she believes that p – with this being how x lacks knowledge of 4's conjunction. It could well be comparatively simple for x to know that she believes that p.

(c) Indeed, x will not even obviously fail to know what her evidence is for her belief that p – with this being how x lacks knowledge of 4's conjunction. For x could well know, internalistically, that her evidence is good in some standard-yet-fallible way.

And so our hypothesised defender of the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation must establish 3's contained consequent – namely, 4:

But *how* will the imagined inquirer argue for 4? Which of 4's contained conjuncts can *x* be argued not to know?

What way remains for *x* to lack knowledge of 4's contained conjunction? Our imagined inquirer is reduced to arguing from *x*'s not knowing that there is a *Gettier-circumstance* within the situation. Our proponent of the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation – in order to show that *x* (when within a Gettier situation) lacks knowledge that *p* – must show that *x* does not know that there is a Gettier-circumstance within the situation:

5 Within a Gettier situation: {x lacks knowledge that p → x does not know that there is a Gettier-circumstance within the situation}.

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[13] By "there is a Gettier-circumstance" I do not mean "there is a circumstance which, by being a Gettier-circumstance, is part of a Gettier situation – along with the other elements of such a situation (truth, belief, justification)." I mean something like this: "there is a circumstance which – *if* the other elements of a Gettier situation (truth, belief, justification) are present – functions as a Gettier-circumstance." (As sections 5 and 6 will explain, even luck is not inherently a Gettier-circumstance. It must interact aptly with the situation's other elements.)

Yet a surprising implication ensues. Via contraposition of 5 (and after simplifying the syntax), the advocate of the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation is thereby committed to 6:

6 Within a Gettier situation: {x knows that a Gettier-circumstance is present → x knows that p}.

And this conflicts with the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation – indeed, with any version of the Standard Gettier Interpretation. According to the latter, a Gettier-circumstance's presence within a Gettier situation is incompatible with *x*'s knowing that *p* within that situation. But 6 says that, within a Gettier situation, to know of some such circumstance's presence is to know that *p*. So, unless one's knowing of a Gettier-circumstance entails one's no longer being *in* that Gettier situation, 6 reveals a way of knowing that *p* within a Gettier situation. In which case, the Standard Gettier Interpretation is false.

So, *is* it possible to know that some Gettier-circumstance is present, while staying within a Gettier situation? That depends on what it is to be a Gettier-circumstance. Seeking generality, I have not commented on this. Now I will do so.

Within each Gettier situation, quite possibly the person involved believes that *no* Gettier-circumstance is present. This belief could take a few forms. She need not be using the technical term "Gettier-circumstance" (although I will continue using it when describing her belief). She may simply believe the situation to be epistemically normal. Or perhaps she believes herself to have sufficient evidence to render likely the truth of her belief, with nothing else about the situation requiring her to have further evidence. And (as I am about to explain) whenever such a belief is present within such a situation, *the belief itself* functions as a Gettier-circumstance.

Thus, suppose (for argument's sake) that *x*, within a Gettier situation, believes there to be no Gettier-circumstance present. All else being equal, that belief is a 'silent partner' of what will standardly be deemed the situation's Gettier-circumstance. This is because *x*'s having that belief helps to keep her *satisfied* with her belief that *p* and with her evidence. Having that belief prevents her from *revising* her belief that *p* or her evidence – in ways which would imply her no longer being in that particular Gettier situation, strictly speaking. Her having the belief that no Gettier-circumstance is present combines with the Gettier situation's other elements, so as to *keep her within it*. In effect, having that belief functions *as* a Gettier-circumstance, even if silently.[14]

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[14] Why "silently"? The belief's normality allows it to fit into the *background* within the situation. This belief's presence may well be taken for granted whenever other Gettier-circumstances are

This suggests that any Gettier situation could well include *two* Gettier-circumstances:

> (1) a standardly described one ("Actually, there is a sheep over there, hidden from the epistemic agent's gaze, even as this animal – the one she can see – is really a dog"); plus (2) the epistemic agent's belief that no Gettier-circumstance is present.[15]

Imagine (2)'s absence: imagine *x*'s *not* believing (even implicitly) that no Gettier-circumstance is present. That lack of belief *could* accompany *x*'s being aware of the concept of a Gettier-circumstance; in which event, she might even *have* the belief that some Gettier-circumstance is present. So, she may well stop believing that *p*; or, equally, she could well cease relying on the same evidence for *p*. In either event, that Gettier situation would be no more: once either the belief or the specific evidence for it disappears, so does that Gettier situation. In contrast (as indicated a moment ago), *x*'s believing that she is not in a Gettier situation is part of what *keeps* her in one.

Given also that this belief of *x*'s is false (because she *is* in a Gettier situation), it is part of how she is deceived within the situation. Fundamentally, it might be *what x* is deceived about within the situation.[16] (Remember: her belief that *p* is true there. *It* is not deceived, in the sense of being false.)[17] Accordingly, we have this result:

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present. When epistemologists describe Gettier-circumstances they do not mention *every* aspect of the situation. They select aspects they believe to be epistemically relevant, but they might overlook something of epistemic relevance. I am highlighting one such "something". (Section 4 will discuss how this applies to one of Gettier's own famous cases.)

[15] "Must *all* Gettier situations include this belief that no Gettier-circumstances are present?" I am not assuming so. The argument I am developing would bypass situations including just one Gettier-circumstance, instantiating only (1). Still, it remains possible that all Gettier situations include a "silent" Gettier-circumstance, instantiating (2), even if sometimes implicitly. (Section 7 especially will expand upon the apparent *normality* of believing that no Gettier-circumstances are present.)

[16] In some Gettier situations, it is often argued, the epistemic agent's reasoning uses no false premises. For the classic example, see Richard Feldman, "An Alleged Defect in Gettier Counterexamples," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 52 (1974): 68-9. Yet many think that even then, somehow implicitly, the epistemic agent is deceived. My analysis accommodates that reaction – without requiring the explicit reasoning to use a false premise.

[17] It is mistaken to object that my proposal here (namely, that the belief that no Gettier-circumstance is present is itself a Gettier-circumstance, even if 'silently') is false because this belief does not *bear* upon the truth that *p*. It does indeed bear upon that truth, even if not by *making* true the belief that *p*. Often, standardly described Gettier-circumstances do the latter. But they can do this partly *because* of the further Gettier-circumstance I am describing – the

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> Given x's being in a Gettier situation (as this is standardly understood), her believing that no Gettier-circumstance is present is itself a Gettier-circumstance.

> And that result allows us to render 6 more specifically, as 7:

> 7 Within a Gettier situation: {x knows that she believes there to be no Gettier-circumstance present → x knows that p}.

With which conclusion, we see that the attempt to defend the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation has failed. 7 specifies a simple addition to x's evidence that disposes of Gettier's challenge, revealing how knowledge can be *present* within Gettier situations.[18]

3.2 Explication

Section 3.1 shows why the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation is false. By analysing how an advocate of that interpretation would argue for a Gettier situation's not including knowledge, we derive what might be termed a dialectical reconstruction of how a person *can*, as it happens, know within a Gettier situation. We have reconstructed how the knowing could arise; yet this emerged from analysing an opponent's attempt to argue for the knowledge's destruction. From the supposed epistemic ashes comes the glowing knowledge. If one is in a Gettier situation centred upon *p*, but one knows that one believes there to be no Gettier-circumstance in the situation, then one *has* knowledge that *p*.

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belief that no such circumstances are present. So the truth-relevance of this further Gettier-circumstance is indirect. (Here is an example, based on Chisholm's sheep-in-the-field case [Roderick Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966), 23 n. 22]. When *x* looks at a dog-disguised-as-a-sheep, she infers correctly that there is a sheep in the field. The dog's being disguised as a sheep, and the existence of the hidden real sheep, jointly constitute a standardly described Gettier-circumstance bearing directly upon the truth of *x*'s inferred belief that there is a sheep in the field. But *x*'s also believing that no Gettier-circumstance is present – that nothing odd in the situation undermines her evidence – is part of her 'staying in place' within the standardly described Gettier situation.)

[18] It might be objected to this argument that its pivotal Gettier-circumstance – *x*'s believing that no Gettier-circumstance is present – is not one of epistemology's traditional suggestions as to what makes something a Gettier-circumstance. But none of those other characterisations has – to general epistemological satisfaction – been proved to be needed, let alone needed and sufficient, for describing what it is to be a Gettier-circumstance. And some such proof is required if my account is to be rejected. Each of the traditional characterisations is an interpretation, not a datum. (In any case, section 5 will discuss two of those traditional suggestions and how we may expect to use them in *arguing* for knowledge's absence from Gettier situations.)

Moreover, it is *easy* to have the knowledge of believing oneself not to be in the presence of a Gettier-circumstance's presence. That knowledge is of a belief which one *normally* has – and which one could have within any Gettier situation, where (by hypothesis) one remains blissfully unaware of the Gettier-circumstance. In effect, the belief in question is that one is in a normal situation, regarding how one is forming one's belief that *p* and how the latter belief is true and justified. It is essential to being in a Gettier situation that one not be alerted to the situation's not being normal in these respects. Consequently, even within a Gettier situation there is a simple way to have knowledge: Reacting *normally* within a Gettier situation can give one the knowledge. (Consider, too, that if someone is not in a Gettier situation, she is *less* likely to know: there is no guarantee within other situations of having even a justified true belief. By definition, each Gettier situation contains a justified true belief – more epistemic bounty than is often present within life's situations.)

What, though, of this objection to section 3.1's argument?

> The Gettier-circumstance highlighted in that argument – the belief that no Gettier-circumstance is present – can equally well be present in non-Gettier situations. In any Gettier situation and in any non-Gettier situation, an epistemic agent will probably believe there to be no Gettier-circumstance present. Most likely, in each situation she believes it to be normal in that respect. Accordingly, section 3.1's argument has not described a distinctive Gettier-circumstance.

But it is question-begging to assume that Gettier situations, in themselves, *are* so distinctive.[19] We have been modelling an imagined dialectic, with a proponent of the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation arguing for knowledge's being absent from Gettier situations. In this dialectical setting, he may not assume the Standard Gettier Interpretation; and so his methodology for analyzing such situations should not assume their relevant distinctiveness. This point was reinforced by our dialectical reconstruction of 7. Gettier situations may easily be *assimilated* to non-Gettier situations, due to our surprising result that knowledge is readily present even in Gettier situations.

4. Silent Gettier-circumstances: an example

Section 3.1's pivotal idea was that of a *silent* Gettier-circumstance. The accompanying account was somewhat abstract. So, I will illustrate how that idea applies to Gettier's job-and-coins situation. Here is his complete description of that situation:[20]

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[19] My use of "in themselves" allows that Gettier situations are *ex*trinsically distinctive – in that epistemologists treat them as (intrinsically) distinctive. Such treatment does not make the situations distinctive within themselves, though.

[20] Gettier, "Is Justified," 122.

Suppose that Smith and Jones have applied for a certain job. And suppose that Smith has strong evidence for the following conjunctive proposition:

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

Smith's evidence for (d) might be that the president of the company assured him that Jones would in the end be selected, and that he, Smith, had counted the coins in Jones's pocket ten minutes ago. Proposition (d) entails:

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

Let us suppose that Smith sees the entailment from (d) to (e), and accepts (e) on the grounds of (d), for which he has strong evidence. In this case, Smith is clearly justified in believing that (e) is true.

But imagine, farther, that unknown to Smith, he himself, not Jones, will get the job. And, also, unknown to Smith, he himself has ten coins in his pocket. Proposition (e) is then true, though proposition (d), from which Smith inferred (e), is false. In our example, then, all of the following are true: (i) (e) is true, (ii) Smith believes that (e) is true, and (iii) Smith is justified in 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 Smith's pocket, and bases his belief in (e) on a count of the coins in Jones's pocket, whom he falsely believes to be the man who will get the job.

Did Gettier make explicit every detail of epistemically explanatory significance to his question of whether being justified and true suffices for a belief's being knowledge? Almost so; as we may appreciate by comparing two possible retellings of his story. I will outline two competing ways in which, at a particular moment in his narrative, Gettier could have said more as to how he was about to continue it. Each of these ways shares this initial segment of his tale:

Suppose that Smith and Jones have applied for a certain job. And suppose that Smith has strong evidence for the following conjunctive proposition:

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

Smith's evidence for (d) might be that the president of the company assured him that Jones would in the end be selected, and that he, Smith, had counted the coins in Jones's pocket ten minutes ago. Proposition (d) entails:

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

Let us suppose that Smith sees the entailment from (d) to (e), and ...

And... and what? Here, we pause. Here, we face a choice. We can imagine the story being continued either by (1) *or* by (2):

> (1) ... what is Smith now to believe? Is he to form the belief that (e)? Suddenly he hesitates, unaccountably suspicious: "I realise that (d) entails (e). Is (d) therefore describing how (e) is true? Possibly so; but possibly not. I'm not sure either way." Smith fails to believe that nothing odd is present in the situation – nothing, that is, which would render the belief that (e) true in some way other than how his evidence indicates its being made true.

> (2) ... what is Smith now to believe? Is he to form the belief that (e)? That would be natural. Especially so, since he also believes that nothing odd is present in the situation, regarding how (e) is true. Smith believes that nothing about the situation would render the belief that (e) true in some way other than how his evidence indicates its being made true.

Gettier does not tell us explicitly that one of those alternatives is the key to his story. Even so, one of them *is* that important, as the following remarks show.

If we were to allow alternative (1), and if Smith was nevertheless to form the belief that (e), we might well deem his belief *unjustified*: alternative (1) substantially weakens the strength of evidence (d) as a reason for believing (e) to be true.[21] Smith himself could well realize that this belief would be unjustified. Accordingly, he might well not proceed to *have* the belief that (e). In either event, the resulting situation would no longer *be* an (e)-Gettier situation (a Gettier situation centred upon (e)). For either Smith would have the belief that (e), but it would not be justified; or he would lack the belief that (e). In one way or the other, that Gettier situation would fade away: without a justified true belief that (e), there is no (e)-Gettier situation.

In contrast, incorporating alternative (2) within the story would generate no such outcome. The story could continue *wholly as before in Gettier's own telling, because it was always* taking (2) for granted:[22]

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[21] "But (1) contemplates (e)'s being true in some *other* way. Hence, (1) still envisages (e)'s being true. How, then, does (1) significantly weaken the justificatory support for (e)?" The reason is that (d)'s support – for (e)'s being true in the way described by (d) – is weakened in (1) by a suspicion which does not compensate for this intrusion by providing *evidence* for (e)'s being true in an alternative way. *Merely* a suspicion of the latter state of affairs is present.

[22] This is not to say that Smith was assumed to be thinking *consciously* that his situation was normal in this way. Rather, the *story* was taking for granted what need only have been *Smith's* taking for granted the situation's being normal in that way.

> [and therefore Smith] accepts (e) on the grounds of (d), for which he has strong evidence. In this case, Smith is clearly justified in believing that (e) is true.
>
> But imagine, farther, that [... and on continues the story, exactly as in Gettier's own version].

Alternative (2) allows Gettier's story to unfold as already occurs. In fact, the story-with-(2)-inserted *is* Gettier's famous situation – only with what was, in his story-telling hands, a merely implicit aspect of the situation now being made explicit by our recognizing (2)'s role.

That role is real. To exclude (2) is to include (1); which, as we saw, is to destroy the Gettier situation as such. The situation's very *existence* depends partly upon Smith's believing the situation not to include any pertinent Gettier-circumstances bearing upon (e). In other words, the (e)-Gettier situation *must* include (2) – Smith's having that belief. His doing so could have been made explicit in the story's original version. Still, Gettier all-but-made it so, by telling us of Smith's not having any beliefs registering the presence of Gettier-circumstances. We may interpret his account charitably in this respect. We may attribute to Smith the belief in question – that the situation is normal. And we may do this on the basis of Gettier's explicitly describing Smith as unaware, seemingly in a normal way, of the Gettier- circumstance. In any event, Smith's having this belief is as essential to the situation's being an (e)-Gettier situation as are any other circumstances.

His having that belief is essential in the same *way*, too. (It is not like the presumption of his continuing to breathe, say.) The belief's *contribution* is similar to how the situation's usually noticed aspects contribute. For Smith to believe that the situation is normal, in the proposed way, is for him to believe that his evidence in (d) is not misleading as to how (e) is being made true. This turns his *evidence* for (e) into the conjunction of (d) and the "normality belief" – instead of (d) alone. The "normality belief" is not mentioned among the evidence which Gettier *calls* Smith's evidence. It contributes, nonetheless – even if silently so.

And, with this, we may return to section 3.1's argument, confident anew of its rightness. Let us repeat that argument's conclusion. The Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation is mistaken (and so, therefore, is the Standard Gettier Interpretation) – because there is a simple way of *having* knowledge within a Gettier situation.

5. Disposing of alternative explanations of Gettier situations

Standard doubts might linger. This section will dispose of two of the more powerful ones.

No-false-lemmas. William Lycan,[23] (for instance, offers a sustained defence of a no-false-essential-assumption analysis of knowledge – his modification of the traditional no-false-lemmas analysis. Lycan would say that whenever an epistemic agent within a Gettier situation centred upon *p* believes her situation not to be a Gettier one, she relies upon an essential *yet false* belief – thereby lacking knowledge that *p*. Section 3.1, however, shows why that is not so. This important false belief does not drive away the knowledge that *p*. Far from it; surprisingly, the epistemic agent's having that specific false belief (hence her knowing that she has the belief) helps to *give* her the knowledge that *p*. So, we should not analyse Gettier situations as ones where, because a false belief (even a substantial one) is relied upon, there is no knowledge that *p*.

Luck. Probably the most widespread initial ("intuitive") analysis of Gettier situations describes the *flukiness* inseparable from them:

> The epistemic agent lacks knowledge because she only luckily gains a belief which is true and well-albeit-fallibly justified.

But this cannot be correct, even broadly speaking. Insofar as the luck is constitutively crucial to Gettier situations, the following obtains:

> If someone knows that she is in a Gettier situation centred upon p, then (from section 2.2) she knows that p and she knows that she luckily has a true belief that p which is well-albeit-fallibly justified.

Hence, she would know that *p even* while knowing of the flukiness in her belief's being both true and justified. This entails that the luck does not entail her lacking knowledge that *p*. It is possible to be in a Gettier situation, along with that luck, even while knowing.

To this, we might object that, whenever someone is in a Gettier situation, this involves her *not* knowing of the luck. But this lack of knowledge would in turn be part of her not knowing that she is in a Gettier situation. (It would probably accompany her believing that she is not in a Gettier situation.) And we have seen (in section 3.1) why that – the epistemic agent's not knowing that she is not in a Gettier situation – will not generate a compelling argument for her lacking knowledge that *p*. On the contrary: she can *have* knowledge that *p* even while not knowing of the Gettier situation's distinctive luck. In order for knowledge that *p* to

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[23] William G. Lycan, "On the Gettier Problem problem," in *Epistemology Futures*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 148-68.

be present (all else being equal), she need only know that she believes her situation not to be a Gettier one.

A generalisation. The preceding two arguments may be generalised. Consider *any* putative *analysans A* of the lack of knowledge that *p* within a Gettier situation centred upon *p*. The proposed analysis would take this form:

> Within the Gettier situation, A is present yet knowledge is not. This is no coincidence: the knowledge is absent because A is present. (The knowledge thus requires A's absence – such as the absence of any essential false assumptions or any notable flukiness in a belief's being justified and true.)

To which, my reply is as follows:

> From section 2.2: To the extent that A's presence is vital to a situation's being a Gettier one, the epistemic agent knows that she is in such a situation only if she knows that A is present.24 By knowing that she is in a Gettier situation centred upon p, however, she would also know that p. Consequently, A's presence is not enough to preclude knowledge that p.

> From section 3.1: And even if the epistemic agent does not know that she is in a Gettier situation centred upon p, it transpires that – while within that situation – she may still know, quite easily, that p.

Again, therefore, *A*'s presence within a Gettier situation is not enough to preclude knowledge that *p* – no matter *what A* is.

6. Reacting to Gettier situations as wholes

We might suspect that section 5's generalized argument does not do justice to how epistemologists *use* putative analyses of Gettier situations. Suppose that a given epistemologist attributes the lack of knowledge within a Gettier case to the presence of some *A* – luck, an essential false assumption, or something similar. Will her accompanying explanation then proceed more *atomistically* and *sequentially* than section 5 envisaged? (And so is section 5's argument beside the point?) This is the question of whether epistemologists react – rightly so – just to *part* of the whole

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24 Here, I am relying upon a graded closure condition like this: *To the extent* that *A* is constitutive of something's being a Gettier situation, knowing that one is in such a situation requires knowing that *A* is present. For an application of a more general condition like this, see Stephen Hetherington, "Knowing (How It Is) That *P*. Degrees and Qualities of Knowledge," in *Perspectives in Contemporary Epistemology,* ed. Claudio de Almeida, *Veritas,* 50 (2005): 129-52, and Hetherington, *How To Know*, ch. 3.

situation (so that, in effect, knowledge is precluded *before* the rest of the situation need be described).

Here is an example of what I mean by that way of thinking. (The example treats flukiness as a representative *analysans* of the situation's putative lack of knowledge.)

> (a) If an epistemic agent within a Gettier situation centred upon p was to know first of the situation's flukiness, most probably she would not proceed to believe that p. If she was nevertheless to proceed to form that belief, it would not be justified. Hence, given her awareness just of the situation's containing marked luck, her knowing that p would not arise – because she would not proceed both to believe that p and to be justified in doing so. (b) Even if she never becomes aware of such luck operating within her situation, onlookers (such as epistemologists) can infer on her behalf the absence of the knowledge that p. And they can do this on the basis just of her situation's containing the marked luck. (c) From (a) plus (b), we might say that the luck preemptively drives away the knowledge that p.

In other words, all we need to notice is the flukiness, say, if we are to ascertain the knowledge's absence. Nothing else in the situation – we are confident – would undo the epistemic damage wrought by that pronounced luck. Nothing else in the situation would "restore" the knowledge already removed by that pronounced luck.

Reasoning along those lines could well be contributing significantly (even if unstatedly) to standard reactions to Gettier situations. En route to denying knowledge's presence within such situations, epistemologists do generally remark upon the luck (or some other putative failing). And then, in effect, they halt – due to their not thinking that more needs to be described if the knowledge's absence is to be explained. Unfortunately, however, such reasoning explains at most why there is a lack of knowledge within a Gettier situation, *if* such a lack obtains. It does not entail that there *is* such a lack.

Why is this so? Here is what we *must* grant, after accepting that Gettier situations include notable luck or oddity:

> Such flukiness within a situation is unlikely to yield a justified true belief. (For example, if the epistemic agent was to be told only of there being flukiness affecting her belief-forming situation, then yes indeed: she should be doxastically cautious.)

How far does that observation take us, though? The unlikelihood which is being described reflects how flukiness operates *normally* – within situations in general. It reminds us of how a situation's including odd luck *normally* affects

believers – which is to say, by decreasing their chances of gaining a justified true belief and thence knowledge. However, that observation is not sensitive to how the luck operates within Gettier situations specifically. These situations are special – *not* normal – in the present respect: within these situations, flukiness *has* generated, or allowed there to be, a justified true belief. We may allow that, for a plausible value of "*A*" (such as flukiness in forming a justified true belief), one would in *general* be lucky to know. But that remains compatible, in the following way, with knowledge's being a justified true belief:

> Given normal flukiness within a situation where one is forming a belief that p, one would be lucky there to know that p. Yet this could be because one would be lucky to form a justified true belief that p – with such a concatenation being knowledge that p.

It remains possible, therefore, that an epistemic agent knows that *p* within the abnormal confines of a Gettier situation in particular – where, after all, the flukiness has *not* prevented a justified true belief that *p* from arising.

At any rate, this is so, unless (as is perhaps being claimed standardly) flukiness in forming a justified true belief is *already* sufficient in any possible situation for that belief's failing to be knowledge. But section 4 showed that flukiness *per se* lacks this power, *not* entailing the absence of knowledge that *p*.[25]

It might be useful to generalise the foregoing argument:

> The proffered analysans A (such as flukiness or an essential false belief) would normally suffice for an absence of justified true belief that p – and thereby of knowledge that p (if justified true belief is necessary to knowledge). But this effect could be counteracted within appropriately abnormal situations; which is what occurs within Gettier situations. What would normally be the effect of A's presence is reversed within Gettier situations – where there are justified true beliefs.

The point is as follows. Suppose we reach the Standard Gettier Interpretation by noticing the luck, or some significant false assumption, say, involved in the epistemic agent's gaining her justified true belief within a Gettier situation. Then our Standard Gettier Interpretation will reflect the fact that such a circumstance – the luck; the significant false assumption – *normally* chases away knowledge: we will therefore deny that in this particular situation there is knowledge. Now,

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[25] We may even – if this paper is right – understand Gettier situations as having the potential to *show* or *display* this putative entailment's not obtaining.

Gettier situations are not normal belief-forming situations. Are they therefore situations from which knowledge is absent? I return to this question in section 7, asking whether there is something prescriptively definitive about how normality interacts with knowing. Until then, a simple manoeuvre is available. We may surmise that what is *normally* the consequence of luck, for example, within a belief-forming situation – namely, an absence of knowledge – need not obtain in *all* situations containing such luck. We may parry the Standard Gettier Interpretation with this thought: What normally chases away knowledge need not always do so.

Accordingly, in assessing whether, within a particular situation, this banishment of knowledge occurs, we must take into account the situation as a *whole*. If the situation is suitably abnormal, we might even need to modify the initial pessimistic epistemic assessment of it – the one that seemed correct when we were reacting only to *part* of the situation. We need not *always* deny that knowledge is present, when a circumstance is present which *normally* chases away knowledge. Gettier situations are not normal; and earlier sections have shown that within these situations (each considered as a whole) knowledge *is* possible. Hence, we judge such situations too limitedly, reflecting what are probably our own normal situations, if either (i) we ignore their particular form of abnormality or (ii) we assume that it automatically chases away knowledge.[26]

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[26] Bear in mind how much freedom we have when describing the abnormality within Gettier situations. I have been talking generically of luck or flukiness or oddity, for instance. By describing the luck so vaguely, I was strengthening my opponent's case (the argument for knowledge's absence), because we are then free to imagine *bad* luck's affecting the various Gettier situations. But I could instead have talked of good luck, noting its resulting in a justified true belief that *p*. Would *this* mode of description obviously provide sufficient reason to deny knowledge that *p*'s presence? Not manifestly; which is why this section began with the idea of the lack of knowledge that *p* being established *before* we reach further, less clearly epistemically threatening, descriptions of details within a Gettier situation. Nevertheless, *all* these descriptions are equally applicable. Consequently, it is question-beggingly arbitrary (in spite of being standard practice) to assess the epistemic agent's epistemic fortunes within a Gettier situation in terms of some single favoured one of those possible descriptions – reacting merely to her being lucky, or to her using a false belief, for instance. We have found that when we survey the *whole* situation, a different assessment could well emerge, with knowledge being present after all. Thus, such situations are ones about which our initial epistemic impressions can be misleading. For more on this methodological moral – Gettier-*holism*, I call it – about interpreting Gettier situations, see Hetherington, *How To Know*, ch. 3).

7. Normality and knowledge

Inadvertently, therefore, what Gettier described was not necessarily a way of lacking knowledge. It was potentially a way of *having* knowledge – albeit an unusual way, perhaps a lucky way. He overlooked this possible interpretation of his stories, as others have done since then. Why has this happened? Here, section 6's talk of normality is suggestive.

Within a Gettier situation centred upon p, let us agree, no knowledge that p arises in a normal way, a standardly replicable way.[27] Yet people expect – or so I am suggesting – that it is *normal* to have knowledge that p (for most values of "p", certainly for "normal" values). Accordingly (they also believe), such knowledge is only ever present in normal *ways*. Thus, it seems, people expect knowing to be a fundamentally normal accomplishment.

By this, I do not mean merely that they expect knowing to *normally* be accomplished normally. Rather, they expect it *always* to occur in a normal way (a normal way for a given piece of knowledge's subject-matter). *Deep* normality is presumed to be part of knowing. Is it any wonder, then, that analytic philosophers readily and definitively test knowledge-claims via "intuitions", "what we say", "what is plausible", and the like?[28] Epistemologists' reactions to Gettier situations are a paradigm exemplification of that analytic philosophical methodology. Seemingly, they think like this:

> There could not be normal knowledge that p within a Gettier situation centred upon p. Therefore, no knowledge that p at all is there.

But that normal thinking is too conceptually limited. We have found the potential for Gettier situations to reveal *not* all knowledge to be like that. Correlatively, we will continue misinterpreting such situations until we discard that needlessly restrictive conception of knowledge. We should be open to the possibility of knowledge – even knowledge of everyday truths (such as about who will get a job or about someone's seeing a barn) – arising in odd ways. Even a "normal" p might be known in an abnormal way – as Gettier has unwittingly revealed. He described a kind of situation where someone might know that p, even

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[27] Significantly, the value of "p" in the usually discussed Gettier situations is always quite mundane. It is not abstruse or technical, in ways that would make knowledge that p difficult – hence abnormal in that sense – to attain.

[28] Exceptions are allowed when the object of the putative knowledge is technical. But, as the previous note mentioned, epistemological discussions of Gettier situations typically do not attend to such cases.

a "normal" *p*, partly by believing in the relevant normality of her situation, *and* in spite of this belief of hers being false (as it is within Gettier situations). The knowledge would not be normal, although she would believe it to be. No matter; we do not always know that we know that *p*, even when we do know that *p*. Nor need we always know *how* we know that *p*, even when we do know that *p*. Gettier – supplemented by this paper's analysis – helps to make this apparent. We can know within Gettier situations, without knowing that or how we do.

8. Knowing within all Gettier situations?

As section 2.1 acknowledged, Gettier took what we may now appreciate as an initial step towards showing how that is possible. Still, we have needed a few further steps (which is why section 7 all-but-began with the word "potentially"). Gettier was right to mention Smith's *not knowing the Gettier-circumstance's presence* (even if he did this when saying why Smith *lacked* knowledge that (e)). But Smith would most likely lack that knowledge, of any Gettier-circumstance's being present, not through any *failing* on his part. He would most likely – and quite normally – believe *the situation to be normal by being free of Gettier-circumstances*. As section 3.1 showed, if he also knows that he has the belief – probably not difficult knowledge for him to have – then he *does* know that (e).

Confronted by a Gettier situation centred upon *p*, therefore, we need only ask whether its epistemic agent knows that she believes the situation to be free of Gettier-circumstances. If she lacks this belief, she is allowed even by my analysis not to have knowledge that *p*. For she would fail what section 3.1 identified as a sufficient condition of having such knowledge within such a setting (a condition which may, moreover, be the only such sufficient condition).

And that sufficient condition might *often* be satisfied within Gettier situations. Satisfying it could even be normal within a Gettier situation: since one would never be *aware* of being embedded within the abnormality of such a situation, it would be natural to regard one's situation as epistemically normal. It would be normal within *any* situation to presuppose or believe that the situation is free of Gettier-circumstances. Hence, too, such a belief would be easily possessed within Gettier situations. It would then be correlatively easy to know that one has a belief to that effect. And to have this knowledge within a Gettier situation is to satisfy section 3.1's sufficient condition of knowing within such a situation. Could this occur within *all* Gettier situations? Surely so; in which event, knowledge would likewise be present within all Gettier situations.[29]

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[29] As to whether knowledge *is* present in this way within all Gettier situations, my account – appropriately – makes this an empirical matter. Within a particular Gettier situation, does the

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Or is that presumption of normality overly generous? Do people generally have the concept of a Gettier-circumstance, let alone the belief that their neighbourhood contains no such circumstances? I have been using the term "Gettier-circumstance" schematically, applying no particular precisification. Indeed, section 3.1 did indicate that we may state the paper's sufficient condition (of knowing within a Gettier situation) in such "everyday" ways as these:

> The epistemic agent knows that she believes her justified true belief to have been formed normally, not flukily.

> The epistemic agent knows that she believes no further aspect of the situation to be precluding her justified true belief's being knowledge.

Her knowing herself to have a belief like one of those (e.g. "I'm sensing, reasoning, and believing normally, within a normal setting – where nothing else prevents these from giving me knowledge") would be part of *why* she has her belief on the basis of her specific evidence – feeling no need for further evidence. In short, it is not at all difficult to believe that one's situation is epistemically normal, in some way extensionally equivalent to the absence of Gettier-circumstances.

Quite possibly, therefore, we have an explanation of both (i) the falsity of the Standard Gettier Interpretation, and (ii) why the Standard Gettier Interpretation arises so readily. Throughout the paper, I have been emphasising (i); but (ii) matters for understanding why epistemologists have overlooked (i).

First (from section 2.3), the Standard Gettier Interpretation is true only if the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation is true; and (from section 3.1) the latter interpretation is false. When we tried to show the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation to be true, we discovered how easily an epistemic agent can *have* knowledge within a Gettier situation.

Second, the Standard Gettier Interpretation arises readily (with no accompanying recognition of its needing to become the Expanded Standard Gettier Interpretation), because epistemologists overlook something almost too apparent and simple to be taken seriously. They do not notice, within any Gettier situation, the epistemic agent's knowing that she regards her situation to be epistemically normal. (Yet this is part of why she is then presumed to reason normally within the Gettier situation.)

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epistemic agent have a particular belief (the one I have described as amounting to a silent Gettier-circumstance)? Does she also know that she does? Those are empirical questions.

Thus, from (i) and (ii), we see why knowledge has seemed to epistemologists to be absent from Gettier situations – *and* why it is not.

Does this imply, unwelcomely, that there has been no point to epistemologists developing their accompanying theories of knowledge over the past forty-five-plus years – talking about causality, defeasibility, reliability, and so on? No. We have learnt much from those theories. We have been taught extensively about shapes and shades of justification, along with forms that can be exemplified by instances of knowledge. Our mistake has been in expecting these theories also to model the correctness of the Standard Interpretation of Gettier situations; for that interpretation is false. We should respect the theories independently, without expecting them to provide understanding of why knowledge is absent from Gettier situations.

I noted in section 2.1 that Williamson[30] gazes upon the history of what he regards as fruitless attempts to use such theories to solve the Gettier problem; he then interprets that history as good evidence of knowledge's being unanalysable. But an alternative interpretation of that frustrating epistemological history is available, as we have found in this paper. Because the Standard Interpretation of Gettier situations was mistaken from the outset, epistemologists should *never* have inferred the existence of a Gettier problem.

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[30] Williamson, *Knowledge*, ch. 1.