

Beyond Belief Trust, Deception and Knowledge*

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Epistemology is largely concerned with beliefs and their justification.¹ Knowledge is understood to be the set of justified true beliefs. Although the Gettier problem questions this assumption, epistemology has continued to be preoccupied with justification of beliefs. The foundationalist theories of knowledge only delay this inevitable recourse to the question of justification. Internalist and externalist theories are also completely embedded in this question. There is this basic problem: Why should we ask for justification of beliefs in the hope that it guarantees knowledge? Is this disjunction between belief and 'structures' of justification 'natural' and given? Equivalently, what is the justification for believing that justified true belief constitutes knowledge? How does justification justify itself?

What does the phrase 'justification of belief' entail? Firstly, it facilitates the distinction, correct or otherwise, between mental states of belief and a process of justification which may perhaps be internalist or externalist in character. This phrase also underscores the fact that the space of beliefs is far more than the domain of 'acceptable' beliefs and that some notion of justification is needed to reduce one space to the other.

But what exactly is a belief-state and what constitutes justification of it? Is the process of justification independent of the space of beliefs? How is it possible to differentiate between a belief and justified belief, in non-normative terms? Granted that justification may be the path towards knowledge, we have to ask, how is justification possible, what

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is it that really gets justified and why justification in the first place. Before we accept any theory of knowledge based on the notion of justification these questions should be first addressed.

I. WHY JUSTIFICATION?

'Why justification?' is perhaps the easier question to answer. If we assume that beliefs are fundamental states to begin with, then we find that the domain of possible beliefs is much larger than the domain of 'probable' beliefs. We find we can construct, if we so like, beliefs contradictory to some elemental reality that we can relate with. And the way to understand this conundrum is to assume that there are mechanisms of justification that can help us hold 'reasonable' beliefs. Thus the leap towards justification is a way to separate beliefs into a hierarchy of true/false and so on.

There are different kinds of beliefs about our basic belief regarding the need for justification. One of which is our awareness of the presence of error (perceptual and conceptual) and illusion. One may form a belief based on genuine perceptual error, fancy or imagination. In all these cases some notion of justification helps us in differentiating the beliefs as being justified or not.

Yet another category is that of deception, a wilful re-construction of beliefs with particular aims as its end. The structure of justification, as we usually see it, is largely responsive to the possibility of error. The process of routing beliefs through the washing machine of justification is mainly to eliminate error, which includes the errors of the imagination also. Later on, I shall argue that since the structure of justification is so partial to that of error and illusion, they are not sufficiently capable of dealing with deception. Thus leaving the link between belief and justification incomplete as far as the question of knowledge is concerned.²

If the 'why justification' seems a bit easier to answer, the structure of justification is more complex to discover. There is no one 'structure' of justification, a manual of do's and don'ts to find out if a belief is justified. Whether we can even identify a coherent structure itself is not clear. But there are similarities in the various theories of knowledge, which show some common characteristics of induction, evidential argumentation, deduction and so on. But if the structures of justification are themselves justified only by their own internal norms then it reopens the problem of finding legitimacy for 'valid' knowledge

across different schema of justification. The problem of legitimisation common to 'local' knowledge, scientific knowledge and narrative knowledge reflects this conundrum.

Finally, how is justification possible? This seems a very Kantian question. I must confess that the answers may also seem to be overly influenced by a Kantian tendency to look for *a priori* possibilities. But I believe that it is through asking this question that we can generate some understanding of the link between belief and justification.

II. HOW IS JUSTIFICATION POSSIBLE?

How is justification possible? First one needs the notion of belief, for justification always arises in conjunction with belief. With no other state of the mind is the notion of justification so readily invoked. The moment there is a belief the question of justification seems to pop up. There are certain necessary preconditions that allow for the possibility of justification itself. Even assuming that we start with the basic premise of belief-states, there must be appropriate conditions under which the notion of justification appears. I shall discuss some of these preconditions in the hope that they will lead to some clarification on the nature of justification.

(a) Objectification of Belief

What is the relationship between belief and justification? Many conventional theories of knowledge understand this relationship in terms of normative criteria. There are beliefs and then there are justifications. Any theory of knowledge that begins with belief-states has not gone beyond justification as the next step, because beliefs by themselves are seen to be uncontrolled, have no norms that regulate their initial appearance. More often than not, beliefs are seen to be false. One finds that one can generate beliefs that are blatantly unjustified. Beliefs seem to set no bounds on whims and fancies. Justification arises in the hope that if one cannot control the emergence of a belief at least one can force it to be moderated. As we know, justification, for the most part, functions as a normative system. Such a view is often found in many different theories of knowledge. The foundationalist theories, for example, also ask for justification of beliefs except that a set of basic beliefs is outside this norm.

Of course, one may take a slightly different position - all beliefs

are pre-justified. Beliefs do not arise in a vacuum and for a belief to manifest itself as one means to have already given into some 'reason'. This is similar to the arguments of coherence theories. One can never step out of a belief-system to validate it; you can only go from one belief to another. But even for coherence theories the question of justification is of crucial importance.

Thus this much is common: there are beliefs and then there are justifications of beliefs. This disjunction seems as natural as having beliefs themselves. But if I hold the position that all belief-statements are pre-justified in the sense of having reasons behind their appearance, then what is the role of justification? That is, what gets justified and how? What happens when you place a statement of belief under the gaze of justification?

To place belief under the gaze of justification is to objectify belief; to make it an object for justification's gaze. *To objectify belief is to remove it from the immediacy of its own appearance and bring it into the folds of normative judgement.* This project does not allow for justification to reflect on the belief-statement but only on other structures of justification inherent in that belief. Thus justification justifies other and pre-justified structures rather than the belief itself. Leading us to reflect that, perhaps, justification is not about belief but only about itself and its many forms inherent in belief.

The objectification of belief also does this: it distributes *the multiplicity of beliefs into multiplicity of justification.* That is, it creates homogenous mental states called belief-states. Thus it is assumed that the difference among the many belief-states is not a difference in 'kind' but in 'content': All beliefs differ only in what they state but never in the kind of mental state they are. It is not clear as to why the plethora of beliefs should all be of one 'kind'. It is like putting all creatures with two eyes or four legs as one kind without allowing for divisions within them. Such a gathering-to of beliefs into one category is made possible only because justification carries away the differences in the kinds of belief-states into differences within structures of justification. That is, there is a displacement from the multiplicity of the kinds of belief into the multiplicity of kinds of justification. It is through such a process that the artificial distance between belief and justification is made possible. In trying to maintain this distance, justification turns its gaze on justification itself.

Thus the objectification of belief works under the premise that belief-states open up impartially into the mechanisms of justification.

Questioning this is only an explicit acknowledgement that methods of justification do not address a belief-state but are in themselves linguistic utterance filled with contextual, justificatory statements. Thus, beliefs are not objects for a justificatory gaze but already co-constitutive of justification.

(b) *Reference and Justification*

But this does not negate the possibility of asking for 'justification' of beliefs. We can do that provided we know what it is that we are asking to be justified. It also means asking for the relationship of what is to be justified and the terms of justification.

What is the referent in a belief-statement in the context of justification? What are the terms of reference when we bring a belief under the scrutiny of justification? What happens in the process of justification?

Let us say we have a belief-statement whose justifiability is to be ascertained. The first step in this process would be to make sure that at least the 'central' terms in both the belief and justification are the 'same'. That is, if the belief-statement has to do with cats, then justificatory modes relevant to elephants are usually not applicable. It is this overlap of terms in the belief and its modes of justification which makes it possible to justify beliefs. So every process of justification is a process of moving from one term to another across the division of belief and justificatory modes.

But terms do not derive meaning in isolation. But neither does the sphere of meaning get unbounded merely by contextual extrapolation. There is an inherent normative ordering when we tend to conflate 'same' terms occurring in different contexts. If the context has to be specified in detail at every utterance, communication would be impossible. This inherent normative ordering which allows communication to be possible is the *essence of approximation*.

Consider this belief: *Ramu helps old ladies cross the road*. I may hold this belief because I know that Ramu is a kind and helpful character. I have very good reasons to believe that because he is so and I have seen him behaving in a manner that makes me sustain this belief, he will help old ladies cross the road. Now it may so happen that Ramu has had a bad experience in helping old ladies cross the road and thus will not venture to do so again. Perhaps, as it happened in Delhi recently, he went to help a lady cross the road and she thought he was

trying to rob her and shouted for help. Thus Ramu may now believe it more prudent to go on his way without helping old ladies. This may not change the already justified belief that he is kind and helpful.

Justifications of beliefs work on similar lines. There is a set of already justified beliefs that can then be used to justify a new belief. In the above example, the term to be justified was Ramu's act and the term in the mode of justification was 'kind'. Being kind may also mean helping old ladies cross the road. It is possible to open my belief to justification because I already possess a pre-justified belief that Ramu is a kind man. Thus justification, as in this simple example, is possible only through the overlap in meaning between the terms occurring in the belief and its modes of justification.

This leads us to the question of terms of reference that arises in justification. Can one use a justificatory statement outside the context in which it was originally justified? This leads to the question: What terms in a belief-statement get justified? When we ask for justification of a belief, most often we are asking for justification for the central referring terms in that belief. So when we use a justified belief to uphold another belief, how are the central terms related? Does it not seem as if there are central terms that commonly refer in both the belief-statement and the modes of justification? In the above example, 'kind' and 'helping old ladies' seems to refer to a common 'entity'. So the first question is whether such commonly referring terms can be used in different contexts. Or should one rename every act, specific to the context?

This problem with referring terms has been much discussed in the philosophy of science (Laudan, 1996a). In the traditional image of science, it was believed that theories that were displaced by others, continued to maintain certain fundamental referring terms used in the previous theory. It was important to hold such a view because of the belief that theory formation was convergent towards a teleological truth. For this it was necessary that the 'successor' theories were indeed so. This meant that both the new and old theory had to have common methodological and ontological commitments. This also suggested that a new theory only refined certain aspects of the old theory, implying that there was insignificant incommensurability between the new and the old theory.

This view was strongly criticised by some philosophers of science on the grounds that theories, including successor ones, were indeed incommensurable. Their arguments arose from the view that centrally

referring terms are different in different theories. So one does not move on from one theory to the next, retaining certain essentials common to both, but actually one creates new theories which may be incommensurable with the old one, thereby questioning the belief in convergent truth, especially through the mechanisms of theory formation. A commonly quoted example has been the anti-realists position that the electron so named in the Thomson model is not the electron used by Bohr and so on. Although the name seems to be the same, the entities they denote are (or can be) very different.

The consequence of this position is that one can have well justified theories along with a plethora of entities which go to make these theories but when there is a paradigmatic jump in understanding the phenomena a new theory is formed which may have little to do with the old one. So even when the new theory may refer to entities of the old one, the reference may only be a matter of naming rather than of substance. Many examples have been discussed in the philosophical literature on this matter. What is of interest to me here is that a very similar drawback is seen in the case of justification of beliefs.

As mentioned earlier, the first question while talking about justification is the question of what terms in a belief are to be justified? And if one can isolate central terms in a belief which have to be justified, then what is their connection with these terms in an already justified belief which is invoked to justify the new belief? In the structure of belief-justification there are common terms. These common terms may be common only because of the convenience of naming and not for other reasons. This then negates the commonality. Therefore the possibility of justification has to address itself to incommensurability of this kind.

This would then imply that justification, on the lines of theory formation, is not convergent in character. It is not a logical conclusion that an already justified belief need be a 'justificator' for another belief which 'talks' about similar things. That is, there is no logical entailment of the form: If P is justified and Q refers to justified terms in P, then Q is justified.

In response to this problem in theory formation, certain philosophers take the position that there is an approximate notion of truth and reference which allows for the possibility of using the same terms in different theories. My contention is that if one has to hold on to the traditional notions of justification, belief and knowledge, then a recourse to a similar kind of approach is needed. For that, we first need the notion of 'approximately justified'.

(c) Approximation and Justification

Approximation is not the same as incompleteness. If some arguments are incomplete, then one can hold the belief to be partially justified. This partial justification is then open to further justification or denial depending on newer conditions. But approximation does not have this partial denotation. Approximation has to do with the notion of limit, of being close to but not exactly equal. It is equivalent to saying that for all practical purposes they are the same. Thus acknowledging that while the terms may not be exactly the same in terms of the whole domain of properties etc., they are so 'close' that one can assume them to correspond to something that is the same.

Approximation is also not probable in nature. While one can say that it is probable that a tossed coin will yield head, it cannot be said that a tossed coin will be in a state that is approximately head. How is approximation useful in understanding beliefs? Beliefs by themselves are not approximate in nature. You either have beliefs or you don't. Your beliefs may be either justified or not, or maybe probable but you are never in a state of approximate belief. Thus the nature of approximation can only refer to the propositions of the belief.

There is a practical sense in which one can understand approximation. In terms of quantification, approximation is the measure of 'sameness' at a particular 'level' you choose. That is, approximation implies equivalence of kinds in a particular schema. In the context of the example discussed above, one can say that helping old ladies to cross the road falls approximately within the category of being kind. Thus one would, in general, expect Ramu to help old ladies to cross the road, because he is kind. But it may so happen that for various other reasons, he may not do so. This does not necessarily imply an essential gap between being kind and helping old ladies to cross the road.

How are notions of approximation possible in terms that are not quantifiable? The answer to this lies in the way we use approximation in our daily activities. This may also include normative criteria. If Ramu has a set of rules of what it means to be kind and for some reason he is expected to be kind and helpful whatever the results of his actions, then he will still continue to help old ladies to cross the road even if once or twice he is accused of trying to rob them.

The primary reason why approximation is not seen as an epistemologically sound way out of the reference problem is because

we lack a coherent theory of approximation (Boyd, 1996). Let me identify two important problems with approximation. One is the slippery nature of approximation itself. When is one entity approximately equal to the other? What degree of separation will parameterise this? For example, it is conceivable to imagine this in some context: black is approximately grey, grey is approximately white and finally, black is approximately white. This propensity of bridging contradictory gaps through recourse to approximation makes this category suspicious (Worrall, 1996). The second problem has to do with understanding approximation without having an 'absolute' background against which approximation makes sense. In other words, if approximation is a limit to a quantity then that quantity should be assumed to remain stationary as we approach it epistemologically. Such a possibility engenders its own kind of ontology and epistemology.

In response to this, some philosophers of science look at the range of evidential support for a theory arising from different and sometimes unrelated theories. There is a surplus of evidential support occurring across a range of domains which makes it possible to support some kind of approximation. My interest here is not to go into the possible merits and demerits of this approach. I mention this in order to establish my contention that these evidential supports across different domains only reflect a kind of normative structure that is already inherent epistemologically.

The capacity for us to attain knowledge is not razor-sharp. We work within a spread. There is a spread of both perceptual and conceptual realms within which we make our judgements and construct knowledge. Sharpness is a philosophical category that is very difficult to imagine. The emphasis on determinate knowledge does not imply conceptual or perceptual 'singularity'. We do not see the world as the lines of a spectrum; rather we see it as in terms of thickness. The project of epistemology is to make this thickness as small as possible, but the thickness cannot be wished away. The notion of approximation reminds us of this and is an acknowledgement of this spread.

Thus my conclusion: Approximation is itself an epistemic norm. The ability to deal with different spheres of meaning and placing them within the 'same' pattern in order to have effective communication is the role of approximation. Placing them in the same pattern does not mean that they have to be automatically correct. More often than not, approximation may tend to generate 'wrong' conclusions. But that does not negate the fact that the tendency to understand through

approximation seems to be a basic norm. By a basic norm, I mean a norm that functions similar to basic beliefs. These are norms upon which other norms are based. It is only because there is wide latitude in our understanding terms of reference in beliefs and their modes of justification that any statement of knowledge is possible. Further refinement of the position is only a refinement of the structure of justification.

I view approximation as an example of *synthetic a priori* norms. Such norms are open to change and new meanings through contingent experiences. Our ways of understanding the concept of kindness may differ in each of us to various degrees, depending on our experiences and in the ways in which we have learnt to use and act upon this notion of kindness. But at the foundational level, we learn to work with this notion (in terms of belief and justification at least) through some kind of approximation. The details are what make this *synthetic* and the necessity of approximation is what makes it *a priori*.

III. DECEPTION AND THE PROBLEM OF REFERENCE

The inability to deal clearly with the referring terms and their relations in belief-statements bring into prominence the issue of deception, because we find that it is not only possible to say many things but also justify them because of the ambiguity in reference-terms.

But what is deception? The ordinary usage of this term defines it to be an act by which the deceiver wants the person deceived to believe in something contrary to what the deceiver believes in order to accrue benefits to the deceiver.

The problem with justification is that it opens itself to the possibility of deception. The character of justification in terms of evidences, knowing by other means, inductive and deductive in nature, are all lightning conductors for the category of deception. By placing the nature of knowledge on justification of beliefs, one opens it up to the continued presence of deception.

The different structures of justification do not have enough ammunition to tackle deception. Beliefs meant to deceive very often function as valid knowledge and can be quite easily justified under the usual canons of justification. This implies that it is not enough to merely ask for justification of beliefs as constituting knowledge because deception is a device to counter it.

Deception may seem to be an artificial and unimportant guest,

especially in a discussion on epistemology. Deception by its very definition allows for the possibility of its negation. If this negation were not possible, then the act would not be a deception. But one can hold this view only if one continues to believe that justification is the only avenue through which beliefs get converted into knowledge.

There is yet another reason why I believe that deception plays a dominant role in belief generation. Deception seems to be a 'natural' behaviour. It manifests itself in the behaviour of even very young children. There are also significant cases of deception among primates. As many experiments on children have showed, there is an enormous capacity for deception among them. This manifests in many ways, both in controlled experiments and under natural observation (Spinney, 1998). Spinney reports on some new tests done by a team of psychologists which showed that 'lying and cheating come naturally to us long before (the age of four)' (ibid., 23). The result of their careful experiments and observations was 'a startling catalogue of subterfuge—not just formulaic fibs learnt by association, but highly creative lies tailored to individual situations...' (ibid., 23). All this goes to suggest that deception is perhaps as fundamental a state as belief. Deception among adults is of course much more complex thus making the problem more difficult to handle.

It is important to remember that it is not only the belief-states which can be justified; lies also are justified, perhaps in ways which ordinary beliefs cannot! There is in deception a structural similarity with rationality and justification, even when taken in totality with 'actions', 'aims' and some kind of justification which makes this action possible. In fact, Laudan in talking about rationality has this to say: '...it is a necessary condition for ascribing rationality to an agent's action that he believed would promote his ends' (Laudan, 1996b, 198). Further, he goes on to say that 'there is no viable conception of rationality which does not make these ingredients essential to, even if not exhaustive of, the assessment of an agent's rationality' (ibid., 199). These quotes stand word for word when talking about deception also.

Let us see how the conventional theories of epistemology deal with this. Perhaps the reason why deception is not so obviously studied in these mainstream theories is their starting belief about 'belief'. There is no individual agency in beliefs; beliefs are what all of us have. Deception is seen to be a very subjective, individually oriented activity. Thus deception is seen as a paradox or an anomaly in human thought. Again, objectification of beliefs allows for such a division between error

and deception. The subjective position of holding beliefs is normally subsumed under wishful thinking, obstinacy, irrationality, etc. But often overlooked (and I imagine this overlooking is itself a position of morality) is the inherent presence of deception in a large number of knowledge-claims. We cannot remain silent to the project of deception in valid knowledge.

There are big lies and there are small lies. Lies are not mistaken or unjustified beliefs. Lies are not beliefs at all – at least not in themselves. But one can hold a lie as a belief, to oneself as in self-deception, or to others as in deception. The lie, being more than a belief, already comes with its structure of justification. A good lie is one with a complex layer of justification. For every defeater posed, a good liar can come up with a defeater defeater and so on. Lies, more than beliefs, are intimately tied with justification. The possibility of a lie is nothing but the possibility of justification! If there were no structures of justification present and made visible, there would be no lies; only collection of beliefs.

This means that to lie is to have understood the modes and mechanisms of justification. And one of the most powerful tools for clever deception lies in exploiting the ambiguity of referring terms alluded to before. International diplomacy is the art of creative and artful deception in the guise of justifying beliefs and positions. The most used medium of this deception is double-talk, multiple referencing and exploiting the difference in meaning in the various terms in a statement.

What is important to note is that there are norms of deception. There are justified norms of deception. I believe our speech acts lie more in the grey areas of convenient little lies than in the pure spectrum of justified belief. And we especially lie when it comes to justifying various individual and social beliefs.

IV. BEYOND BELIEF: TRUSTING BELIEF OR BELIEVING TRUST?

The above, meandering, arguments are primarily to help us approach the notion of trust which, in my opinion, makes possible the notion of belief. I shall approach this position through two directions. One is through deception and the other through the idea of epistemic justification as constitutive of habit. There is a third argument different in kind from the above two. This has to do with the belief in beliefs as being the foundational mental state from which knowledge arises. To

me the troubling question is: What makes belief possible? Are we just doomed to beliefs or is there another existential state which is a precondition for beliefs to manifest themselves as such? Is there a need for epistemology to look beyond belief?

The route to trust through deception is easy to see. Deception itself stands in opposition to trust. There is a high redundancy of trust in our daily life. What seems amazing is that given the 'advantages' of deception there is not a large-scale presence of deception in our daily interactions. There is among the lake of deceit a sea of innocence surrounding it. I don't believe this has to do with cost benefits alone. Deception reduces the cost in most cases. And given the plethora of tiny lies we are embedded in, it is surprising that the jump to more serious deception does not take place more routinely and as a matter of fact.

This dilemma can be answered by acknowledging a pre-belief state of trust. Trust is not a matter of belief; it is not even a matter of emotion. Not emotion in the sense that it is triggered off by certain stimuli. There is already a notion of trust underlying all emotions. Betrayal is an emotion responding to the stimuli of breaking trust. Joy affirms trust. Trust: not belief, not emotion, not even a mental-state but the very possibility of knowing.³

Trust is also not a state of morality as understood in a normative sense. There is no injunction to trust. We have largely understood trust in this ethical perspective and thus kept trust outside epistemology. But when we ask for the very condition of belief-generation then we are already implicated in the notion of trust.

Thus it is not a question of believing in trust. It is trusting belief to *be* belief.

The other route towards trust is through epistemic justification. Trust by itself is not a mode of justification. Far from it. In fact, we tend to say we have trust in a belief but that belief may be far from justified. But this usage of trust is not the *a priori* state of trust I am talking about, that which is manifested before the question of justification arises. It is also the precondition for justification to be possible. As such, it has little to do with matters of right and wrong.

Why has trust been kept outside epistemology? Firstly, as mentioned earlier, trust has been tied to a psychological state with ethical overtones. Secondly, the presence of 'distrust' may tend to question the validity of trust as a fundamental state of being. Thirdly, in the concerns of epistemology through the project of bifurcating

belief and justification, trust seems to have no role in the justification process. I am not convinced by the third argument since the point at stake is also that trust is the pre-condition for justification to be possible.

The route to trust through epistemological justification follows from a position taken by, for example, Pollock (1986). In trying to understand 'When is it permissible to believe P,' Pollock arrives at epistemic justification through epistemic norms that describe the epistemic permissibility of beliefs. Epistemic norms not only guide us towards this permissibility but are also instrumental in 'forming' beliefs. If there are such norms then we must have an account of them. We must have access to what are the correct epistemic norms and also the reasons that make them so.

Pollock holds that 'epistemic norms must, and apparently do, play a role in guiding our epistemic behaviour at the very time it is occurring' (Pollock, 129). How is this possible? One way would be to have explicit norms that govern this behaviour consciously; that is a checklist of how and what to do. Although this is one way of acquiring norms, it is not the way in which we use norms in our daily lives. We do not need a manual every time we drive. Pollock emphasises the point that 'norms can govern your behaviour without you having to think about them' (ibid., 129). In his view, 'norms are descriptions of what we *try* to do' (ibid., 130). Therefore, epistemic norms are 'manifestation of the general phenomena of automatic behaviour' (ibid., 131).

Although Pollock doesn't explicitly state so, his position is very similar to that of the pragmatists. They called this automatic behaviour 'habit' and the truth of an act was nothing more than the content of the habitual act itself.

So Pollock's position is that habits are procedural rather than declarative in character. Epistemic norms function in this way and thus also enable us to form appropriate beliefs. Granted that Pollock's emphasis on automatic behaviour may be relevant, the question remains as to how the procedural norms get encoded and then made accessible. This question is not asking for a psychologicistic mechanism but rather for its possibility.

Thus the route to trust through habits. We live by habits and habits alone. When I go to the market I do not function from a system of beliefs about the route I should take or worry about whether those beliefs are justified. Pollock may be largely right when he talks of epistemic norms as manifestation of automatic behaviour but he neglects to take the next step beyond. The automatic behaviour or

habit is possible only because I trust. Because I trust, I can know. I do not expect the road to vanish suddenly or the market to vaporise in an instant. Every little act of ours is predicated on this notion of trust. Distrust then is not the 'kind of state' which trust is. Distrust has to do with the post-cognate reflection of trust and its conflict with justification. It is also because of trust that deception, for all its advantages, does not seem to be a dominant player in knowledge games.

But merely positing trust and arguing for its foundational status in human thought does not answer the question of the relevance of incorporating trust in epistemology. What role does this *a priori* trust play in knowledge gathering? Or does it only generate the belief-states and modes of justification and stays outside their struggle to legitimise each other?

The latter view cannot be entirely correct. It is more fruitful to understand knowledge not in the restricted terms of belief and justification alone; many times, it would help to look at knowledge in terms of belief and action. So, in the final analysis the thematisation of trust in epistemology is a way to force us to re-look at the artificial division of belief and justification.

There is another advantage with this formulation. This has to do with finding common ground for incompatible systems of knowledge, like scientific knowledge, local and indigenous knowledge, narrative knowledge and so on. Basing valid knowledge on the binary of belief and justification does injustice to systems of knowledge whose structures of justification are seemingly incompatible with those of a dominant one. There have been many attempts to try and develop a framework that will allow for a common code of justification for these different knowledge systems. They have not worked, largely because there is very little opening in the norms of justification which are present in these different systems. Thus all we are left with are claims and counter-claims of validity.

Thematising trust is a way out of this difficulty. I do not see any conceivable way of bridging together the justificatory mechanisms of, say, modern medicine and local medicine. They are not only incompatible but because of the stakes involved they are also exclusive—modern medicine, for economic and political reasons, will not yield to other norms of justification which may dilute its power. It is my contention that this problem with incompatible systems can be best handled through this notion of trust. Human knowledge based on epistemic norms of habits that are based on trust have a common origin.

It is through this common origin of trust that they get bound together as knowledge. Trust manifests itself in terms of habits, unconscious or conscious. The stake of knowledge is not in its claims, it also lies in its actions. It is not that a person following the Ayurvedic system of medicine finds justification for her belief in this system. *The legitimacy of that system lies in the act of putting herself under the dictates of that system.* There can be no better legitimacy than this. *This does not mean that this legitimacy makes claims of truth. That is a project beyond habits and trust.* Once we understand that different systems of knowledge have created new worlds of habits and trust then there is a common framework within which we can place different systems of knowledge together. Other modes of justification come much later and can never reach compatibility if this notion of trust is not acknowledged as a legitimate guarantor of knowledge.

V. CONCLUSION

Epistemology has invested much in the division of belief and justification. I have argued that the notion of justification is only possible by objectifying the notion of belief in order to open it to the gaze of justification. By opening belief thus, we are not sensitive to the nature of beliefs themselves. In particular, this division only continues to emphasise the preoccupation of epistemology with 'objective' agencies of knowledge. That is, epistemology as a response to human error, illusion and so on. Subjective, wilful categories of lying and deception have been kept outside because the structures of justification as we usually have it, are not fully equipped to deal with lying and deception. I believe that our sphere of knowledge is filled with the dark matter of lies, small and big. That does not make the project of knowledge impossible. Lies have played a prominent part in justification of beliefs that have been found to be justified in other ways later on. What it calls for is a critical reflection on this naive assumption of accepting belief states as the foundational-states from which epistemology begins and structures of justification as the means to establish the validity of these beliefs.

Following this, I argued that trust as an *a priori* category should be acknowledged as the precondition for belief and justification to be possible. For any cognition and epistemology to occur, we have to first acknowledge our indebtedness to 'trust'. Epistemic norms are also intimately tied in with our habits. I have argued that habit is made

possible only because of trust. Thematising trust in epistemology allows us a new way of understanding how to relate different systems of knowledge whose set of beliefs and justificatory mechanisms remain incompatible with each other. For such incompatible systems, the notion of habit and praxis underlying these systems will generate the required common legitimisation.

NOTES

1. For a comprehensive discussion on the relationship between beliefs and justification, see Audi (1993).
2. Helm (1994) deals with the idea of belief policies and their relation to epistemology, as also the link between belief policies and self-deception.
3. For a discussion of the inherence of trust in societal interactions, see Misztal (1996).

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