

# KK and objections to KK

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# Outline

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- (BB) If  $S$  believes that  $P$ , then  $S$  believes that  $S$  believes that  $P$ .

Are they valid?

Let us consider a putative counterexample to each:

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# Introduction

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Let us consider a putative counterexample to each:

(KK) The Unwitting Historian;

(BB) The Implicit Sexist;

# Putative Counterexample to (BB)

## Implicit sexist

John is an avowed anti-sexist. In particular, he is prepared to defend vigorously the equality of the sexes in intelligence. Yet, in a variety of contexts, John's behavior and judgments are systematically sexist. Concerning the individual women he knows, John rarely thinks they're as intelligent as the men he knows, even when John has ample evidence of their intelligence. In group discussions, John is systematically less likely to pay attention to and take seriously the contributions of women. On the rare occasions when he does judge a woman to have expressed a novel, interesting idea, he is much more surprised than he would have been if a man had expressed the same idea. Still, John is unaware of these dispositions, and he would deny that he had them if asked.



# Putative Counterexample to (KK)

## The Unwitting Historian (Radford 1966)

Jean insists that she knows nothing about English history. As a matter of fact, she studied English history in secondary school, but doesn't recall taking the course. She hasn't forgotten the content of what she learned, however. If you force her to guess as to matters such as when William the Conqueror landed in England, the dates of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and so on, she'll reliably respond correctly. But if told that her answers are correct, she'll be quite surprised, as she takes herself to have no way of knowing these facts.

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  1.  $S$   $V$ 's that  $p$ .
  2.  $S$  does not  $V$  that  $S$  knows that  $p$ .

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- ▶ In the case of the implicit sexist, the relevant attitude is belief—John believes various claims about the inferiority of women, without believing that he believes them.
- ▶ So it seems like one can know something without knowing that one knows it, just as one can believe something without believing that one believes it.



# Questions for discussion

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- ▶ Can a form of contextualism about knowledge ascriptions and belief ascriptions be invoked to defend (KK) and (BB) against such putative counterexamples?

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- ▶ Sentences such as the following are contradictory sounding:
  - ▶ It is raining but I do not know that it is raining.
  - ▶ Juventus won against Milan, but I do not know that.
- ▶ Williamson has suggested that the oddity of such assertions is explained by the fact that in making them one must be violating the norms of assertion.

# Timothy Williamson

## Cast of Characters



- ▶ Ph.D., Princeton 1965
- ▶ Wykeham Professor of Logic, Oxford University
- ▶ Author of 5 books, including *Knowledge and its limits* (2000) and *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (2007);



# Williamson's explanation

- ▶ Even if both conjuncts are true of some subject, they cannot both be known by that subject, since one only knows the first conjunct if the second conjunct is false (and so not known).

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- ▶ So we can explain the infelicity of those sentences by taking knowledge to be the norm of assertion.

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- ▶ Now, consider the following sentences:
  - ▶ It is raining but I do not know whether I know that it is raining.
  - ▶ Juventus won against Milan, but I do not know that I know that.
- ▶ These sentences also seem infelicitous like the former ones.

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*If the (KK) principle fails (one can know without knowing that one knows) then it's hard to see why such utterances should be infelicitous. After all, if one knows Iteration and Fragmentation that P, but doesn't know that one knows that P, what could be wrong with dubious assertions like the ones above? How else should one express one's first-order knowledge, while acknowledging one's ignorance of whether one knows? But such utterances are infelicitous in much the same way that the original Moore-paradoxical sentences are.*

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# Ernie Sosa

## Cast of Characters



- ▶ Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh 1964.
- ▶ Board of Governors Professor of Philosophy, Rutgers University,
- ▶ Author of 7 books, including *A Virtue Epistemology* (2007) and *Knowing full well* (2011);

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## Safety II

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- ▶ Such belief could easily been false: in a nearby possibility, the guy Norman sees every day driving a Ford borrowed it from somebody that does not work in Norman's office.
- ▶ In this case, the belief would be false.



# The safety argument against KK

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- ▶ The argument that this leads to failures of KK turns on the idea that the relevant nearness relation is not **transitive**.
- ▶ This argument against (KK) is also due to Tim Williamson.

# The safety argument against KK

## Spatial analogy (Greco 2013)

There might be no nearby houses in which serial killers live, but there might be nearby houses in which there are nearby houses in which serial killers live (if, e.g., houses count as nearby to one another iff they are within five blocks, and my house is 7 blocks away from the closest house in which a serial killer lives).

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- ▶ If things work out this way, then I may know that P while failing to know that I know that P.
- ▶ We might say that both cases involve being safe, but not safely safe.