

Epistemic Responsibility: an open gap for Classical Epistemology and Inferentialism

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Abstract

In broad terms, I want to argue that there are at least four conditions that must be fulfilled in order to be considered epistemically responsible for a belief: i) one should *have* an outright true belief, i.e., a belief that one can properly justify; ii) one should be *committed* to the truth of the propositional content of that belief, which in the end would be a *justified true belief* (JTB); iii) one should be *entitled* to that epistemic commitment by being able to offer reasons; and iv) one should be able to display, at least, some *disposition to exert a deliberative and active control* over one's belief forming processes and belief regulation mechanisms. In arguing so, I will take the traditional conception of knowledge and its JTB as starting point. I will present the challenge posted by Reliabilism and I will introduce this account as a naturalized version of epistemology incapable of grasping the epistemic component of our doxastic attitudes. In doing so, the Sellarsian game of giving and asking for reasons will appear as a response to that challenge and with it I will take Brandom's inferentialist approach to knowledge for introducing epistemic commitment and the corresponding entitlement as two additional conditions for epistemic responsibility. I will end arguing that the inferentialist's requirements are too weak and presenting what I consider the last two conditions for epistemic responsibility. They emerge from two gaps that I think are left open on the inferentialist approach: one related to its general explanation of 'taking someone to have knowledge' and the other to its overall explanation of the conditions under which entitlement for commitments must be assessed.

Key words: knowledge, belief, justification, epistemic commitment, entitlement, control.

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Drawing a line between being responsible for the beliefs one is justified to hold, in general, and being responsible for those beliefs one is capable to justify, may be an initial step toward the differentiation between doxastic responsibility and epistemic responsibility. This is a distinction between two different notions of justification: the doxastic justification or the notion of justification that comes with being justified in believing that p and the propositional justification or the notion of justification derived from having the justified belief that p and therefore from being able to offer the reasons one has to believe. The former will be presented as the weak notion of justification for it lends to a naturalized version of epistemology where one might be able to talk about doxastic responsibility but never about epistemic responsibility. The latter will be presented as the strong notion of justification, what I previously called “the proper justification,” in order to imply that this is the notion that allows one to talk about epistemic responsibility. I will be arguing that only with a strong notion of justification one can relate to the epistemic processes or epistemic states of the subject. This strong notion is the one to be understood as the first condition for epistemic responsibility and as the condition that enables condition number two and number three.

It may be helpful to clarify that the second and third conditions for epistemic responsibility, as I will introduce them in a moment, can also be understood as the characterization of the strong notion of justification. Yet, I present them separately because each of them helps in a different way to fulfill the explanatory gap left by the weak notion of justification. Furthermore, what I found to be a gap left open for the inferentialist approach comes mainly from the third condition.

Before anything else, why should we care about being epistemically responsible for our beliefs? Possibly because being epistemically responsible for our true beliefs implies that we have some control over them and since having control over something is not something passive, when being responsible for our true beliefs (and in most cases with them responsible for what we know), we can be said to be epistemic agents and not merely encyclopedic containers of useful true information. Whether epistemic agency is important or not, is another discussion. I would say that it is fundamental for our development as self-conscious individuals, but even the importance of it can nowadays be refuted. For the moment I will assume that epistemic agency is vital for the construction of not only responsible but also ethical knowers and with this in mind I will keep on my investigation of the needed minimums in order to consider someone as an epistemically responsible subject.

Broadly, what I want to defend in this paper is the idea that when one is epistemically responsible for a belief there are at least four conditions that must be satisfied:

1. One should *have* an outright true belief, i.e., a belief that one can properly justify.
2. (1.1) One should be *committed* to the truth of the propositional content of that belief, which in the end would be a *justified true belief* (JTB).
3. (1.2) One should be *entitled* to that epistemic commitment by being able to offer reasons.
4. One should be able to display, at least, some *disposition to exert a deliberative and active control* over one's belief forming processes and belief regulation mechanisms.

The first condition respond to the general definition of knowledge as it has been traditionally understood, the second and third conditions are introduced by Robert Brandom's

inferentialism and the last one is a condition that I consider essential in order to fill some gaps left by the traditional and the inferential explanations concerning the domain of epistemic responsibility.

Keeping this in mind I will begin by reviewing in Section I the belief condition, truth condition and justification condition, as usually posted by classical epistemology, in order to see how they could face the challenge submitted by reliabilism. In doing so, I will present reliabilism as a naturalized version of epistemology that attempts to reconstruct epistemic phenomena in natural terms by means of a weak notion of justification.

In Section II, I will present what I consider the main problem of reconstructing epistemic phenomena in such terms. In doing so, I will argue that epistemic phenomena exceeds our capacity to respond reliably in a given set of circumstances and herewith I will introduce the Sellarsian game of giving and asking for reasons as a requirement for having a belief that matches the conditions for knowledge and so that opens the possibility of assessing the epistemic commitment and the corresponding epistemic responsibility of the subject. In general, what I want to insist on is the fact that empirical descriptions of our assertional practices cannot grasp their epistemic component. This means that with empirical descriptions of our assertional practices we can only account for the weak notion of justification and cannot use them to analyze the epistemic processes or epistemic states of the subject required from a stronger notion of justification like the one that comes with Sellars' game.

Fostering this line of thought, in section III I will put forward the conceptual articulation of our epistemic commitments, as presented by Brandom, as a desirable explanation of the

type of relations that bond our beliefs and the corresponding commitments to them. In doing so, I will present the game of giving and asking for reasons essentially as a social practice and I will introduce Brandom's tripartite characterization of knowledge as a refinement of the traditional conception. Such characterization will announce commitment and entitlement to that commitment as two additional conditions for epistemic responsibility and as the two main requirements for a propositional justification derived from the reasons one has to believe. That is, as the conditions that allow us to talk about a strong notion of justification as the one required by the first condition for epistemic responsibility.

I will close this paper in Section IV by arguing two things: first, that the inferential conditions for epistemic responsibility (commitment and entitlement) must *always* go hand-in-hand in order to be considered as such. And second, that the entitlement condition must be assessed not only by the subject capability of giving reasons for a commitment, but also by her control over the belief-forming processes and over the belief-regulation mechanisms.

On the conditions for knowledge according to the traditional conception

In an initial overview it is possible to define epistemology as the philosophical research on knowledge. Since Plato, knowledge has been understood as a *justified true belief* and with this notion Classical Epistemology has posted these three conditions as the centerpieces of the discussion. There are, beyond a doubt, a number of things that could be, and probably must be, added in order to achieve a satisfactory definition of knowledge. Nonetheless, addressing the basic rationale for the three conditions that according to the traditional conception are needed for knowledge will let us pave the road for understanding the circumstances that will allow us to talk about epistemic responsibility.

The first condition of the traditional justified true belief -henceforth JTB- is the belief condition. When talking about knowledge, beliefs are usually considered propositionally contentful epistemic attitudes. They are propositionally contentful mainly because as propositional attitudes they can be taken to be true and because it is hard to see how someone could believe a particular proposition that she has never considered. Furthermore, it may be hard to say that, for example, you *know* killer whales are dolphins if you do not believe that proposition.

That said, the beliefs that will be considered as part of the conditions for epistemic responsibility will be outright beliefs. Outright beliefs will be considered as epistemic attitudes and not just as propositional attitudes as long as what is needed from the candidate knower is to have a full belief, where only having considered a proposition or being pretty confident about it is not enough for it to count as epistemic. I will come back to this later when talking about the strong notion of justification.

Meanwhile, for introducing the relation that must appear between the JTB conditions for considering someone as epistemically responsible, let us consider the case of my friend Horton who thinks that burying an egg a few inches at any spot of the field where an outdoor event is going to take place is an effective method for preventing rainfall. Last summer he was very busy planning an outdoor jazz festival and he gave me the most important mission on the task list: bury an egg close to the stage platform wherever you want. I understood what he wanted me to do, I buried it for him to be at ease, but I got a hard time trying to believe that “burying an egg prevents rainfall.”

Even after actually burying the egg, I cannot say that I believe that it can prevent rainfall because I am not committed in any sense to the truth of the propositional content of that belief. At this point there are at least two things worth mentioning regarding the JTB conditions: i) I cannot know that “burying an egg prevents rainfall” because I fail to believe so and ii) Horton cannot know that “burying an egg prevents rainfall”, even if he thinks he does, because it is not the case that putting an egg underground has something to do with the weather. The former highlights the fact that if one has serious doubts of the truth of a proposition, one cannot be said to have knowledge of it. That is, I cannot know that the concert starts at 8:00 p.m. if I don’t believe that it does so. The latter means that even if he understands what it would be required of the world for the buried egg to prevent rainfall (for example, that whenever an egg is buried the water droplets in the clouds over the field reduce their size so that rain is postponed) and he happens to believe it, one would never say that he knows that “burying an egg prevents rainfall” because it fails to be true.

It is true that when one takes someone to have knowledge, one expects the candidate knower to believe whatever she knows. But, most importantly, one expects her to have a true belief. This second condition of the JTB, the truth condition, implies that for considering a belief not only a propositional attitude but particularly a propositionally contentful epistemic attitude, the belief must correspond to what is the case. This means that, back to Horton’s case, one could hardly say that he in fact knows that the buried egg prevents rainfall, no matter how sure he may be or how strong his reasons and justification may be (BonJour, p. 29). This because knowing something is directly related to that something being the case.

But simplifying the truth condition to the conclusion that one cannot know what is not the case is problematic. Consider the case of the obsolete and refuted Phlogiston Theory. According to it every flammable object contains a flame-like substance that was supposed to be released every time combustion occurs. Taking into account the entire century during which the Phlogiston Theory was considered valid, it makes sense to say that the people believed that the flammable things contained Phlogiston and that this was something that they knew, even when we know now that it is not the case that something as that is contained on flammable things.

The fact that the theory is false and still was considered a part of the general knowledge about combustion does not undermine how helpful ‘knowledge’ is, among others, for letting us face real life issues. But one cannot hide that the case of the Phlogiston Theory is an example of the type of inquiries that can undermine the acceptance of the truth condition, as it is difficult to grasp the concept of truth and with it of knowledge when that that is the case seems to be context dependent interpretations of reality. However, as it has been recognized traditionally by different accounts of knowledge, the aim of the cognitive enterprise is truth (BonJour, p. 26). In understanding the limits of knowledge as our own cognitive limits, and after accepting the truth condition, it is possible to understand the concept of knowledge as a “success” concept that describes the successful outcome of our endeavor as knowers, that of truth. If our endeavor can be said so, then one cannot ignore the intrinsic value of truth, and why not, of true beliefs. As long as what we pretend is that our beliefs correctly describe the world, mainly because as it has been stated the success of our actions usually depend on them

to do so, and as long as our truth-seekers nature remains, the truth condition will remain firmly rooted in the basic definition of knowledge.¹

Now, consider the possible scenario where some hours after burying the egg, coincidentally, every heavy cloud disappear. Since Horton hold the belief that “burying an egg prevents rainfall” and by chance it results that after me burying the egg the heavy clouds disappear, then one could say that Horton was right and as his belief results being true, one could say that Horton knew that making me bury the egg would prevent rainfall. But it is well known that lucky guesses do not count as cases of knowledge, so one may have a hard time when trying to justify that *he did know*.

Once clarified that true beliefs are a constituent of what we call knowledge and avoiding merely accidentally true beliefs that do not generally qualify as cases of it, it may be useful to follow the traditional advice and see if the successful outcome of knowledge has something to do with the third condition of the JTB.

If I were a pilot apprentice, how could my instructor be sure that I *know* how to take-off and that I am not randomly pushing buttons and pulling levers? It would not be enough that I have a confident *belief* of the needed steps for the take-off; even if my belief turns to be *true*, and I hit the right answer by luck, it is very likely that it is insufficient. In general terms, we aim for knowledge by seeking true beliefs for which we have good reasons or strong justification (BonJour, p. 30), and so for my instructor to be convinced of my knowledge he

¹ Back to our main area of concern, it is worth noting that the requirement of the beliefs for which one can be epistemically responsible to be true beliefs is not a requirement of the epistemic responsibility itself, but of that that we call knowledge. In this sense it can be told that the requirement for being an epistemically responsible subject is not about the truth of the belief, but about the subject being committed with the truth of the content of her belief.

would probably require that I give the pertinent reasons or justification that even if not conclusive, must at least be reasonably strong.

The example can fall short if the process for take-off is reducible to a specialized sequence of buttons and levers -because this can be a mere reliable response which, in the long run, can be equated with a trained crow pushing buttons for a reward -but it can be saved if the test requires the pilot apprentice to be able to justify the activation or deactivation of the different mechanisms in a certain variety of circumstances. The reasons or justification given by the pilot apprentice must be, according to the traditional conception of knowledge, of the sort that increases or enhances the likelihood that the beliefs are true. This type of truth-conducive reasons and justification are standardly referred to as epistemic reasons or as epistemic justification (BonJour, p. 35).

For Laurence BonJour, the most “familiar and obvious way to have an epistemic reason for something that I believe is to have evidence in favor of the truth of the proposition in question. In the clearest sort of case, evidence consist in further information of some appropriate sort in light of which it becomes *evident* that the proposition is true” (BonJour, p. 36)². Therefore, the pilot apprentice might use his mastery of the different flight instruments available in the cockpit as evidence that supports the truth of his beliefs regarding the selection of the most efficient procedure for taking-off in every possible circumstance. This means that as a result of his earlier considerations and previous instruction he might

² Is not hard to make out, and even Bonjour recognizes earlier on his work, that there is a number of problems associated with the equation between a *belief* and a *proposition* as it has been treated so far in this paper. Even as concept users we believe many other things besides those that came from the conscious state of explicitly considering or asserting to the proposition that corresponds to the respective belief. But since the beliefs that can be or are related to knowledge, the epistemic beliefs, are caught up in the need of justification, they must be if not currently considered or asserted, at least be a result of a previously accepted or assented belief.

have acquired a number of true beliefs about how the different mechanisms function and this can be considered as evidence that supports his choice on every new circumstance.

But, is it really necessary to supply evidence in order to show that a belief is true and that it can amount to knowledge? A reliabilist approach to knowledge would say that true beliefs can amount to genuine knowledge even without evidence, reasons or justification for them. This is because the reliability of different process of belief formation can replace the 'having good reasons' for a belief.

If the latter is true, one could say that the more reliable a process of belief formation is, the more likely it is that it produces, in a set of given circumstances, a true belief. And since for a reliabilist account genuine knowledge can come directly from our true beliefs, the more reliable a process of belief formation is, the more likely it is that from it we obtain knowledge. To be more precise, let us consider some belief formation processes that can be named as common ground for us, i.e., those processes from which we acquire perceptual beliefs.

If under normal conditions I smell some smoky bacon in the kitchen it is very likely that I form *immediately* the belief that bacon is being fried. If my olfactory system is reliable and the circumstances are the appropriate, real bacon is being cooked and not imitation bacon bits, for example, it is very likely that my belief turns to be true. Once the reliability requirement has been met, one can say that *I know* that bacon is being fried *because* I am smelling it. There is one sense in which this is true, and *I know* that it is the case that bacon is being fried, and other sense in which this is false and even if do I smell it, I cannot *know* that it is the case. If I don't consider myself a reliable perceiver I cannot say that I *know* that bacon is being fried, how can I *know* something that I am unsure about?

If this line of thought is right, one can say that something can only be considered knowledge if the believer knows or at least believes that she is a reliable perceiver in the right set of circumstances. The latter because as a reliable perceiver she could cite her reliability as a reason that can justify her belief. In this order of ideas, contrary to what a reliabilist would like to defend, the reliability of a belief forming process is what is required to *justify* true beliefs, in this specific case non-inferentially acquired beliefs, and cannot amount to genuine knowledge by its own means³.

Naturalism, unjustified true beliefs and epistemic commitment

A reliable perceiver that could cite her reliability as a reason to justify her belief may be justified in believing something, for example that bacon is being fried, but this will be so only in what I have called earlier a weak notion of justification. Following this line of considerations, I think that the main problem with reliabilism is more easily apprehended once one understands that true beliefs that can amount to genuine knowledge without evidence, reasons or justification for it leaves us with a naturalized version of epistemology that presents knowledge as product of natural processes fully intelligible in a physicalist vocabulary. The problem is that, if something is reconstructed exclusively in natural terms, there is only room for the exemption of blame or, at most, for a weak form of justification (i.e., a form of justification where one may be justified in believing without being able to justify the corresponding belief). Without place for a stronger notion of justification, nothing coming from the domain of the natural can be reconstructed as an epistemic phenomenon.

³ Full details on this matter will be provided later when discussing the Sellarsian game of giving and asking for reasons.

For clarifying the later, briefly consider the case of a sleepwalker who suddenly wakes up at a nearby store whose owner forgot to lock the door. He cannot be blamed for trespassing for it is one thing to be exempted for blame, for example when we found ourselves in a position or state that can be traced ultimately to brute force, and another to justify or be justified (McDowell, 1994, p. 8). The question arises as to whether or not is it possible to reconstruct the justificatory relations that appear within the domain of knowledge as causal phenomena.

As it was suggested before, the problem with a reliabilist account of knowledge that pretends to undermine the traditional conception of knowledge is that with its naturalized version of epistemology it is not possible to reconstruct any epistemic phenomenon. The difference between what is and what is not epistemic may be easier to grasp with the distinction between sentience and sapience as formulated by Brandom on his book *Articulating reasons*.

In consonance with this author (1997, pp. 121-122), the distinction between sentience and sapience “is the distinction between being aware in the sense of being merely awake (which we share with non-discursive animals—those that do not grasp concepts), on the one hand, and being aware in a sense that involves knowledge either by being a kind of knowledge, or as potentially serving to justify judgments that so qualify.” These two different kinds of awareness discriminate between two different dimensions of the use of non-inferential reports, one that can be named as an epistemic phenomenon and one that certainly cannot. Think about the difference between Marissa uttering the claim “I have my glasses on” and a parrot trained to utter that same phrase when feeling on its beak the presence of glasses. The

greatest difference can be told to be the endorsement that Marissa has of the truth of the conceptual content of the claim.⁴

While the parrot may be just *reliably* responding differentially to the situation of having glasses on its beak (as a thermometer reliably responding to temperature changes), Marissa would be committing herself to the truth of a content that can both serve as and stand in need of reasons. By grasping the conceptual content of such a language-entry move and the belief behind it, she must also master other inferential moves in the vicinity of “having her glasses on”. As for example that the concept ‘my glasses’ refers to those that help her to see a more vivid image on a daily basis and are useless for watching a 3D movie. Even if the immediacy of the glasses allows us to think of Marissa’s claim as a simple empirical report, a non-inferential report such as the classical “That is red” utterance, the fact that it can be articulated conceptually to other propositional contents is what makes it an epistemic phenomenon.

Back to the traditional conception of knowledge, and in consideration of the challenge that presents the possibility of holding genuine knowledge without justification or reasons for it, it is plausible to say that for any JTB account the very specific type of commitment that epistemic responsibility requires arises from the capacity that a person may have of making a move in the game that Wilfrid Sellars describe as that of giving and asking for reasons. According to this author “In characterizing an episode or state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says” (Sellars, [36], p. 76).

⁴ This is the same kind of case as the one presented before with the pilot apprentice and the crow.

Simple empirical descriptions, as the ones that one would be giving of a reliable belief forming process that doesn't need any type of justification for it to amount to genuine knowledge of something being the case, do not relate to epistemic facts about knowers because they do not stand in the logical space of reasons but in passive causal relations to the physical world. Even if the reliability of my receptive capacities allows me to say that they are true-beliefs producers, unless I am on the capacity to justify the true beliefs, I cannot treat those states as that of knowing; at least not until I cite my reliability as a reason that can justify my belief. Still, the latter can only amount to a weak notion of justification where one may be justified in holding a belief without having it as a justified belief⁵.

In the foregoing paragraph the specific type of commitment that, for a JTB account, epistemic responsibility requires is exposed: that type of commitment that is only possible for a suitable subject, that is, one who is capable of possessing the true belief about wearing glasses and, consequently, to state properly the claim "I have my glasses on". A commitment that the parrot is incapable of endorsing due to its lack of mastery of the inferential role played by reports of that type, of relating sententially structured beliefs and committing itself to the propositional content of the claim.

The empirical description that can only be given of the parrot utterance without missing any important analyzable aspect, can be identified with the natural as a mode of discourse that is contrasted with the normative framework of Sellars' logical space of reasons. As stated by McDowell: the relations that constitute the logical space of nature are pretty different from

⁵ For an additional approximation to this distinction where I have placed considerable stress on, as an example of the relevance of separating the notions of justification, see Catherine Lowy's paper on *Gettier's Notion of Justification*. In *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 87, No. 345. (1978), pp. 105-108.

those of the logical space of reasons. Since the former is not one in which things are connected by relations where things are warranted or correct in the light of others, the relations from the latter are from a different kind (McDowell, 1994).

In furtherance of our main interest, concerning the discussion on Marissa's case one may be tempted to say that there can be different levels of epistemic responsibility in relation with her belief: responsibility for a non-inferential state and for an inferential state. In doing so, one will probably fall in one of the most dangerous forms taken by what Sellars named as the *Myth of the Given*. In this sense, the myth will consist in the idea of a kind of awareness that can constitute knowledge about the empirical world, that exceeds the mere differential responsiveness by having some sort of cognitive content, and that is prior to and independent of the possession of or capacity to apply concepts (Brandom, 2002, pp. 538-539). Think of the latter as something like Marissa having an epistemic commitment with the truth of the assertion, without her to make any move in the game of giving and asking for reasons, i.e., of Marissa holding her belief as true and considering it knowledge without *having* any justification for doing so.

Among the multiple philosophical accomplishments of Sellars included on his *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, his considerations about epistemic commitments lay the foundations for dismissing the causal treatment to the question about the conditions needed for an epistemic episode. The problem of reconstructing a normative phenomenon as a causal one, in this case, of trying to shed light on the epistemic commitment with a naturalistic or physicalist vocabulary, is that the subject's endorsement of the truth of her belief disappears. Beliefs can only be understood in a normative context that makes it possible to evaluate if

their content is correctly or incorrectly adopted according to whether or not things are indeed thus and so.

If the distinction between sentience and sapience is clear, then it must be evident that this version of the myth places both Marissa and the parrot in the same non-epistemic-state. Thus, it removes every possible sense of commitment or responsibility for both cases. With a natural explanation out of the way, what type of account can explain the normative status of an epistemic commitment in order to warrant such type of commitments?

Inferentialism and the epistemic responsibility gap

At the very beginning of this paper I introduced two different ways in which one can be responsible for one's beliefs: doxastic responsibility and epistemic responsibility. In the acquiescence that I demonstrated in relation to the importance of the epistemic realm I exposed what I consider one of our most fundamental capacities: that of knowledge. In my endeavor to characterize what it means to have or to be in an epistemic state, I presented the traditional conception of epistemology as the most favorable starting point. I did so mainly because for me its definition of knowledge as justified true belief (JTB) seems to come, at a first glance, intuitively⁶.

There are of course a number of problems associated with the road taken. One in which I am particularly interested in is that of epistemic commitments and the corresponding

⁶ Briefly imagine a five years old kid who, while in a school field trip at Suesca's coal mine, approaches to his biology teacher and ask her if those moon-shaped coal statues are allotropes. Surprised, she says he is right and ask him if he knows what that word means. He says "allotropes are the different forms in which carbon can exist". I think that she would find it strange that he knows what an allotrope is because she recognizes, probably without thinking further about it, that it is not very likely that we can attribute that type of sophisticated beliefs to a kid. Furthermore more, even if she takes the belief associated to the proposition expressed by the sentence "allotropes are the different forms in which carbon can exist" to be a *true-belief*, the fact that the kid wouldn't be able to *justify* it is very likely to make her reject the possibility of considering the kid's utterance as a case of knowledge.

epistemic responsibility that comes with them. The latter because even in the most contemporary accounts of knowledge that agree with the JTB as a valid point of departure, the gap of epistemic responsibility seems to be latent. This, if not strictly like a gap of the account itself at least as a problem that, with more or less relevance from one account to another, is still treated as an issue that must be addressed.

In order to expose this gap, I will take Brandom's Inferentialism as an excuse for showing the shape that the gap takes for an account of epistemology that agrees with the JTB and in general with Classical Epistemology. That is not to say that all contemporary epistemological researches that agree at a certain level with the JTB must also agree with the inferential explanation of the articulation of our epistemic commitments, it is really intended to demonstrate how even with a true belief properly justified and, furthermore, inferentially articulated the gap remains intact.

From a preliminary perspective the latter can be understood as a frontal criticism of an inferentialist account. However, my real goal is not to attack Brandom's framework. What I do intend are at least two things:

- i) To *make explicit* what it means to be epistemically responsible on Brandom's inferentialist account; this because I think that the question about epistemic responsibility and its conditions of possibility is for this account a fundamental issue. Even if not reconstructed exactly with this terminology, it certainly deals with the same kind of questions (questions like: can we hold someone responsible for her beliefs? If so, how can she be responsible for them?).

- ii) Directly on the insides of this account, I will show that the entitlement that he requires for us to have in relation to our epistemic commitment is an underdeveloped condition. As such, it is not sufficient for us to be epistemically responsible because it leaves the door open for cases in which we do not *genuinely know* what is the case.

With this in mind and back to the question that closed the last section, what I want to highlight is that an inferentialist account, as the one formulated by Brandom on a variety of his works, deals quite smoothly with the challenges submitted by Sellars for a naturalized version of epistemology. The latter in relation with the normative status of the epistemic commitments that we should have with our justified-true-beliefs in order for them to classify as epistemic attitudes.

In the discourse about beliefs⁷, the importance of the normative characterization that is intended for the epistemic commitment appears because it is what enables the specification of use in terms that allow the distinction between the correct or incorrect, true or false, right or wrong, representation of state of affairs. In agreement with Brandom's train of thought, the normative vocabulary gives epistemology a wide berth from a naturalized version that presents knowledge as product of natural processes fully intelligible in broadly physicalist terms and so, following McDowell's treatment of the difference between exculpations and justifications, puts a spotlight on justification as that which allows us to talk about epistemic phenomena.

⁷ It is important to note that what makes these mental states the main target of our interest is the type of attitude (the epistemic attitude) that differentiates them, not their specific type of content. If one thinks of a belief as a relationship with a content, it is possible to think that a clarification of that content is part of the explanation of the epistemic commitment. However, even when this seems to be an interesting and necessary course for an investigation, the neutrality of the content will be taken as a starting point.

The spotlight can be traced back to what Brandom denominates the Kantian normative conceptual pragmatics. According to Kant, what distinguishes judging and acting from other of our doings, and from the merely reliable responses of natural creatures, is the distinctive way in which we are responsible for them. Judgements, as actions, are the application of concepts as the rules that determine what knowers have committed themselves to or what they are responsible for. This particular normative character implies that judging and acting express commitments of our own to which we are answerable, or in Brandom's terms, to which we are entitled. Since for Kant our commitments are rational, the corresponding entitlement can be easily vindicated when offering reasons for them (Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p. 80). This noteworthy kind of commitments, those that appear in Kant's works with judgments as the smallest units of experience one can take responsibility for in the cognitive realm, are what give the special character to the type of responsibility involved in the exercise of judging.

The epistemic commitments characterized in the foregoing paragraph, in agreement with an inferentialist account of knowledge, are conceptually articulated. Their conceptual articulation consists in the way in which simultaneously they demand for justification while they can justify further commitments and preclude the justification of other epistemic commitments that are outside of their most immediate network (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 164). For instance –in a very simplified exemplification of an epistemic commitment– whenever Johnny is asked what an apple is, what he thinks or says will probably revolve around trees, seeds, juice, gravity, computers, and so on. But will certainly not go immediately to skates, pillows, carpets, videogames and others. The *presence* of the concept 'tree' on his articulated network of beliefs justifies Johnny's thoughts or claims about

concepts like ‘seeds’, preclude the justification of the *absence* of something like ‘skate’ and if appropriately challenged may demand itself a justification for its direct articulation with ‘apple’.

There are a lot of beliefs that may be articulated with Johnny’s *immediate* beliefs about an apple (e.g., apple trees are grown in cool areas, apple juice is good for avoiding the flu, technology identified with apples is expensive, etc.) to which he will be committed with, and that may need a justification for them to qualify as cases of knowledge and not of accidentally true beliefs. This means that not every belief for which Johnny may be justified in believing, justified mainly because of its articulation with his main belief, counts as a case of knowledge. For Johnny to know that, e.g., apple trees are grown in cool areas, he must have the justified belief that they do so: he must be able to offer reasons for his belief.

For Brandom, the inferential use of a concept is a kind of know-how practice that consist in being able to discriminate what does and does not follow from the usage of a concept. That is, to distinguish what else one would be committing oneself to, what would one be entitled to, by applying the concept. In this sense, becoming entitled to the inferentially articulated commitments, by exhibiting them as a conclusion of an inference from other such commitments to which one is or can become entitled, is to put them in a form in which they can both serve as and stand in need of reasons (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 11). The very Sellarsian requirement of placement in the logical space of reasons, of serving as both premise and conclusion in inferences and in the demand for justifications; the same requirement from which a *strong notion* of justification is derived.

Even in Marissa's case one can highlight some non-inferential language entry moves in her perception and language, but the cognitive and practical normative significance of her reliable responsive capacities, even in such cases, can only be understood within the inferential articulation of her propositional commitments (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 23). Most importantly, one can only relate to her epistemic states if Marissa is able to justify such language entry moves with what I have called "the proper justification", i.e., the strong notion of justification that requires reasons.

Only recognizing the cognitive and practical normative significance of one's language entry moves one can undertake the corresponding epistemic commitments, and only so it is possible for others to attribute it to oneself. This is not intended to mean that the corresponding commitment can only be attributed by external subjects, but that the inferential significance of our claims make their collateral commitments available not only to us but also to every other knower.

The different contents to which Marissa is committed by using the concepts that constitute her claim, under circumstances of appropriate employment that the parrot cannot satisfy, are represented by the inferences she implicitly endorses by such use. The inferential interconnection that allows her to identify her epistemic commitments if necessary, to say what something is and what it is incompatible with, and that opens the possibility for us to attribute her the responsibility of properly justifying the claim and its inferential significance, bring to the spotlight the social dimension that constitutes, in an essential way, the inferential articulation of our epistemic commitments.

Following the latter, it is worth noting that the Sellarsian game of giving and asking for reasons is a social practice so long as it requires not only a subject who understands the propositional contents⁸ of her claim, but also that every other interlocutor playing such game is capable of keeping the score on what others are committed and entitled to. The mastery of the know-how practice of being able to tell what is a good and a bad reason for what, implies knowing how beliefs, or claims, or reports –which can be considered as candidates for knowledge– would change the scores in various social contexts (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 165).

That precise social dimension is “unavoidable because the inferential significance of a claim, the appropriate antecedents and consequences of a doxastic commitment depends on the background of collateral commitments available for service as auxiliary hypotheses” (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 183). In the end, that Sellarsian game is the game of communicating with interpersonal content inherited from our social relations with others since the very beginning of our learning processes. If human beings are reliable differential responders that are capable of possessing beliefs and that, accordingly, master the inferentially articulated role of the contents they introduce as premises and conclusions of inferences; then the engagement in the game of giving and asking for reasons that characterize us is a social practice that allows a certainly better account of the kind of conscious awareness and, ultimately, the self-consciousness that distinguish us as cultural and not merely natural creatures (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 35). The fact that we are cultural and not merely natural creatures is what makes me think that is worthwhile to think carefully our role as ethical

⁸ Propositional contents are what can be said or believed or thought, in general, what can be taken to be true and that can serve both as premise and as conclusion of inferences (Brandom R. B., 2001, pág. 161).

knowers and this is, ultimately, the main reason why I consider that we must be responsible at least for the beliefs we hold true. I do not think this is an easy task, however, I am pretty sure it is worth the effort.

Back to our initial inquiry and as per Brandom's inferentialist position, knowledge is understood as a normative social status, and taking someone to have knowledge is then very likely to be as described by what this author names as the traditional tripartite response: "*attributing a commitment* that is capable of serving both as premise and as conclusion of inferences relating it to other commitments, *attributing entitlement* to that commitment, and *undertaking* that same commitment oneself" (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 119).

In understanding knowledge as such, the sort of commitment that is attributed is a *belief*. A belief that, as it has been already argued above, is inferentially articulated with other commitments due to its conceptual contentfulness. But for that which is attributed to be knowledge, the believer must not only hold the belief, she must in some sense be *entitled* to it. It must be noted that, even if entitlement has been so far presented as directly linked with the subject's capability of possessing a belief and endorsing the corresponding commitment by putting them in a form in which they can both serve as and stand in need of reasons, being able to offer an inferential justification –as a strong notion of justification– of a conceptually contentful commitment is not the only way in which a believer can come to be entitled to it. Entitlement to a commitment can also be attributed "on the basis of an assessment of the reliability of the process that resulted in the commitment's being undertaken" (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 118). This not to forget that as reliable perceivers we could cite our reliability as a reason that can justify, in the weak sense of justification, our beliefs.

But attributing inferentially articulated commitments and the entitlement to those commitments is not enough. Not all the beliefs to which one, as a believer, is entitled to count as knowledge; for them to do so one should also take them to be *true*. Since knowledge is understood as a normative social status, our true beliefs may come not only from ourselves as reliable sources but from others as such. In doing so, one could be understood as a scorekeeper of other's commitments and entitlements and in this sense, to take a belief coming from an external subject to be true turns to be endorsing that belief oneself (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 119). In other words, when I say that Ryan *knows* that the only letter that does not appear in the periodic table is letter J, I am: a) attributing Ryan the commitment to the conceptual content of the belief, b) attributing Ryan the entitlement to that commitment and c) undertaking that same commitment, i.e., I am taking that belief to be true.

For the nonce, at least as posted by an inferentialist account, what we got here are at least two things: 1) the justification condition that comes with the traditional *belief* and *truth* conditions of the JTB must be a case of the strong notion of justification for the JTB to count as a case of knowledge; 2) there are two requirements that must be added to this *properly justified true belief*, from now on J_sTB^9 , in order to talk about epistemic responsibility: that of undertaking the commitment to the conceptual content of the J_sTB and that of being entitled to that commitment.

Now, imagine that I believe that the only letter that does not appear in the periodic table is letter J because one day I overheard Ryan asserting it so. Some days later, during my chemistry class, I remembered this belief and decided to check my periodic table in order to

⁹ From this moment on, the “s” in J_sTB stands for the “strong notion of justification” as the “w” will stand for the “weak notion of justification” in J_wTB .

see if it is true that J is the only letter that does not appear on it. After verifying that my belief is true, I undertake the commitment with its truth and become entitled to it. But, what about those days between the moment that I overheard Ryan and the moment in which I confirmed the truth of the belief? I think that if we follow the inferentialist requirements we could affirm that what would be missing during that period is my epistemic responsibility: without commitment or entitlement there is no space for such.

Then, could I be considered as 'epistemically irresponsible' during these days? I do not think so. After all I was not *knowingly* holding the belief in the absence of reasons for it, I just held it without a second thought. I think that these type of beliefs are very common on daily-life scenarios and this may be one important reason why I do not think that we can be epistemically responsible for all of our beliefs, yet, this does not exempt us of our responsibility of at least trying to be so.

For the time being, it seems that being entitled to the commitment with the truth of the conceptual content of a properly justified belief is enough for being epistemically responsible. In the remaining section I will expose the reasons why I think this conditions are insufficient for counting as conditions of possibility enough for epistemic responsibility and, in doing so, I will suggest the dispositional control over our justified true beliefs as the final condition for us to meet the needed requirements in order to be considered as epistemically responsible for our beliefs.

Limits of the inferentialist explanation and introduction of dispositional control as condition for epistemic responsibility

I think that the core idea behind the inferential explanation of what it means to be epistemically responsible is that for being so the candidate knower must display the normative statuses of undertaking a commitment and of being entitled to that commitment as two interconnected aspects of the same phenomenon: that of knowledge¹⁰.

Allow me to clarify why I think this is so. In accordance with Brandom's theory *commitment* and *entitlement* offer two different dimensions of our assertional practices. The *commissive dimension* is the one in which our reasons or justification for a claim are assessed, meaning this that what is assessed are the different commitments one undertakes when giving reasons for a claim. The *critical dimension*, as named by the author himself, is the one in which the propriety of those commitments is assessed. That is, in the critical dimension what is assessed is one's demonstration of entitlement to that commitments and this assessment becomes evident when asking for the reasons that warrant one's commitments (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 193).

The interaction among this two different dimensions is briefly announced on Brandom's *Articulating reasons*:

These two flavors of normative status are not simply independent of each other.

They interact. For the entitlements at issue are entitlements to commitments. We

can say that two assertible contents are *incompatible* in case *commitment* to one

¹⁰ Regardless that for Brandom is possible to have a commitment with the truth of the content of a belief without being entitled to it, as in the case of faithful people who usually undertake commitments without claiming the corresponding entitlement. And, that in this sense is possible that the conviction of the faithful turns out to be true and (unbeknownst to them) result from reliable belief forming processes, so that it seems to be no reason for not taking their belief to constitute knowledge (2001, p. 105). I think that one would easily refrain of considering them as epistemically responsible, among others, because this may be considered as a case of the Sellarsian *Myth of the Given* and thus it would not be a case of *genuine knowledge*. Commitment and the corresponding entitlement must go hand in hand for them to be taken as conditions of possibility of the epistemic commitment.

precludes *entitlement* to the other. Thus commitment to the content expressed by the sentence “The swatch is red” rules out entitlement to the commitment that would be undertaken by asserting the sentence “The swatch is green.” Incompatibilities among the *contents* expressed by sentences, derived from the interaction of the two normative dimensions articulating the force of assertions of those sentences, induce their own sort of inferential relation. For we can associate with each sentence the set of all the sentences that are incompatible with it, according to the rules of the particular assertional game of giving and asking for reasons within which it plays a role (Brandom R. B., 2001, p. 194)

Here the interaction of the two normative dimensions is what makes possible to grasp the type of contents that are compatible, and those that are not, with a previously undertaken commitment to a specific content. I think that understanding the incompatibilities among the contents of our beliefs is important, but I consider that in order to talk about epistemic responsibility and the type of epistemic commitments that are or not compatible with ours, it is necessary to include an additional condition for the attribution of entitlement to commitments.

The type of attributability that I consider problematic is exclusively that of entitlement. Since Brandom’s overall usage of the term “attributability” is way more extensive than the one I want to focus on, at least for this specific section of my paper, from here on I will call the attributability of entitlement to the commitment with content of our justified true beliefs the “e- attributability”.

Up to this point we have seen that, for Brandom, being able to offer reasons for a specific commitment when requested or required is one way, if not *the* way, to be entitled to one's commitments. In this sense, it seems that the main condition for the e-attributability is the subject's capability of giving reasons for a claim. However, I think this must not be its only condition.

The problem with the latter is that, at least within the discussion about epistemic responsibility, if one equates being epistemically responsible with being entitled only in the e-attributability sense, a risky possibility arises: there can be a subject with a system of beliefs for which he would not be epistemically responsible and that can remain to be articulated in an inferential manner without any type of inconvenience.

In other words, if all that is required for epistemic responsibility is that our belief-forming processes and belief-regulation mechanisms are immerse in the game of giving and asking for reasons, and if the entitlement to the commitments to our beliefs need only to be assessed through the reasons we can give; then even if a person has been directly manipulated or brainwashed and it has been implanted an inferentially articulated system or subsystem of beliefs (inferentially articulated within itself or within the general system of beliefs) or just if the person is simply unable to modify her beliefs or create new ones after gathering new evidence, she would still be epistemically responsible if she can offer reasons for the beliefs she holds true.

In order to avoid the misstep of having an inferentially articulated system of beliefs for which one cannot be responsible, I think that the additional condition for entitlement, and thus for epistemic responsibility, may be the control over the belief-forming processes and

over the belief-regulation mechanisms. If we expect someone to be epistemically responsible for her beliefs, we are also expecting that she has some form of control over her justified true beliefs. If her beliefs change in accordance with the reasons she has but she has no control over those reasons, i.e., if her beliefs change in accordance to reasons but not due to something done by her but as our perceptual experiences change in response to external stimuli, then she cannot be epistemically responsible for her beliefs even if she can give reasons for them.

Now, how can we have control over our belief-forming processes and over our belief-regulation mechanisms? I think that this question may be easily addressed with the presentation of delusional-type cases.

For illustrative purposes, let me introduce persecutory delusions as an example of the delusional-type cases. A persecutory delusion is a type of paranoid delusion that emerges “from a search for meaning that reflects an interaction between psychotic processes, the pre-existing beliefs and personality of the individual, and the (often adverse) environment” (Freeman & others, 2002, p. 336).

They are not just an automatic defense mechanism, they arise usually from negative schematic beliefs in conjunction with the search for meaning which end up in the attribution of an explanation for events. These attributions are of the type “that camera is looking at me” when finding a camera on the supermarket. In cases like such, the person will start looking for an explanation of the triggering event (here, the camera on the supermarket). With her pre-existing beliefs and the cognitive biases explanations will be formed, and once the explanation has been found the person would be looking for confirmatory evidence.

It is very usual that the individual, even with a bunch of evidence and good reasons for finding alternative explanations, is unwilling to consider them. She would rather concentrate on obtaining confirmatory evidence, i.e., evidence consistent with her beliefs. This is usually because “the cognitive component of the persecutory delusions centers upon the concern of anticipating danger” (Freeman, & others, 2002, p. 335). And since from negative schematic beliefs easily derives the formation of threat beliefs, the delusions end on reaffirming and exacerbating previously held beliefs about the vulnerability of the delusional subject or about the hostility of others or the environment.

The persistence of the persecutory delusion depends on the subject capability of offering to herself reasons enough for her to hold the belief, even when having access to reasons that contradict the delusion itself. The fact that the disconfirmatory evidence is usually discarded by the subject herself allows us to talk about a sort of evaluable *doxastic agency*. This in the sense that the person with the persecutory delusion can be seen as active in relation to her *choosing* the commitments with the truth of certain beliefs as more desirable or adequate than others. Thus, she may be justified in believing everything that counts as confirmatory evidence and in rejecting everything else: she would be doxastically responsible, but not epistemically responsible.

The greatest challenge that the persecutory delusion entails emerges from the fact that “not only does the subject in fact fail to recognize the evidence against her delusional belief as providing reasons to give it up, but she also would not recognise (almost) any other evidence you might present her with. She would take her epistemic reasons to favour her belief, regardless of her actual evidential situation. It is this tenacity of the subject’s take on

her reasons that distinguishes the pathology of paranoid delusion from merely irrational belief” (McHugh, 2013, p. 144).

Having clarified the challenge, let me make some brief remarks about our belief-forming processes and our belief-regulation mechanisms. As it was subtly implied, within the debate on epistemic responsibility, the relevance of delusional-type cases is not the pathology itself or its characteristics. What matters is the fact that they classify among the type of cases where the belief-forming processes are kind of hermetic, i.e., they are similar to brainwashing-type cases¹¹, among others, in the impossibility of the subject to modify her system or subsystems of beliefs even after dealing with disconfirmatory evidence. Thus, they belong with the group of cases where the inferentialist requirements of undertaking a commitment and of being entitled to that commitment are met without them to be cases of epistemic responsibility.

It is usual for us, as responsible cognizers, to form, maintain and revise our beliefs. This is not to say that we must be fastidious cognizers who question every epistemic move we make, which may be a very unpractical practice, but to highlight the fact that we are doxastic agents.

These labors of belief regulation –forming, maintaining and revising our beliefs– are usually the product of conscious mental activity or automatic regulation mechanisms. The conscious activity of regulation of our beliefs is the conscious activity of inquiry, through it we usually form doxastic attitudes in favor or against beliefs we hold. In fact, inquiry is a

¹¹ For discussion relevant to this type of cases and further explanation on the role of the idea of “ownership” in the investigation about what it means to hold people responsible for their beliefs, in broader topics that the ones considered pertinent for this paper, see Miriam McCormick’s paper on the notion of doxastic control based on John Fisher’s discussions of “guidance control”. *Taking control of belief*, Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2011.

form of cognition that stands out for being directed towards the goal of making one's mind up (McHugh, 2013, p. 134). Normally, the conscious activity of inquiry concludes in the act of judging, which is standardly recognized as the act of forming and maintaining beliefs. As in the aforementioned 'Kantian normative conceptual pragmatics', not only it is a conscious act of forming and maintaining beliefs, more importantly, judging is an act of the cognitive realm for which we are responsible.

Besides the conscious regulation of beliefs, we may be very familiar with automatic mechanisms of belief regulation. These mechanisms work just like our perception with our immediate environment. We are constantly forming beliefs such "there is a white ball on the couch", for which we are also responsible because they are, under normal circumstances, beliefs that we would endorse in judgement if we consider their content. If we are responsible for the outcome of automatic belief-regulation mechanisms it is because we are normally ready to intervene actively and consciously if we find ourselves under circumstances that can call into question the veracity of the resultant beliefs (McHugh, 2013, p. 134). This means that even the contents of automatically formed beliefs are susceptible to control by acts at the level of conscious judgement and inquiry that will extinguish those beliefs that contradict the contents of our inferentially articulated epistemic commitments (McHugh, 2013, p. 135).

The kind of control that epistemic agents exert over their beliefs may not always be conscious and active, but it must at least be a form of dispositional conscious control. Dispositional control can be defined as a kind of control where the person does not have in mind the reasons or justification against the dubious belief, but is *disposed* to accept or assent to them if it is the case that some evidence that cast doubt on the belief arises and to act

accordingly by extinguishing the dubious belief. Having at least dispositional control over our beliefs does not imply that we are exempt of having false beliefs, but that in case that a certain belief is called into question we should be able to revise its contents and maintain or discard the corresponding commitment and its inferentially articulated network¹². I would like to insist on the inclusion of the term “conscious” on the form of control that I consider as the missing requirement for epistemic responsibility. This to stress on the fact that having a dispositional *conscious* control is the same as having the disposition to exert a deliberative and active control when the circumstances require so¹³.

When a person’s control over her belief-forming processes and belief regulation mechanisms fail, such as in the persecutory delusion and similar type cases, one could hardly say that she is an epistemically responsible subject. And yet, it seems that for an inferentialist account of epistemic responsibility that same person may be considered as epistemically responsible. Let us briefly consider once again the person who believes that she is being observed through the camera of the supermarket.

Accepting her belief as reasonably true, taking into account the not absurd possibility of a security guard regularly checking the tapes, she may be committed to a true belief and in fact she would be able to offer reasons that justify her belief and her entitlement to the commitment with the corresponding belief. Furthermore, her articulated network of beliefs in relation to her situation in the supermarket, due to her pathological condition, may not only

¹² For detailed examination of this point see, once more, Miriam McCormick’s *Taking control of belief*.

¹³ It is not enough to be epistemically flexible and having the disposition to modify one’s belief at the sight of new evidence –as the delusional, brainwashing and similar type cases do not have–. There *must* be satisfied the requirement of having, at least, the disposition to exert a deliberative and active control in order for one to be considered as epistemically responsible.

be coherent within itself but with her general beliefs about how cameras function in the city as observation devices. Thus, in a case like such, an inferentialist would have to recognize her as epistemically responsible for her belief.

In a nutshell, the problem that the delusional-type cases present for an inferentialist explanation and its e-attributability as the final condition of epistemic responsibility is that, if a subject's epistemic responsibility is to be assessed under the interconnected committive and critical dimensions, then the propriety of the assessed commitment is all that would matter. And this type of cases usually introduces believers who can give reasons for their doxastic attitudes, in Brandom's sense of being entitled to them, but that we would not easily recognize as epistemically responsible.

At this juncture, I think it is time to match the pieces. The social context remains to be the necessary background for the assessment of our epistemic commitments, so long as it makes it easier to see in delusional-type cases and alike, even if the subject considers her belief-forming and belief-regulation mechanisms reliable, how they are not so. That she can be considered a doxastic agent without meeting the qualifications enough for being epistemically responsible for her beliefs, let us conclude that for being epistemically responsible one must fulfill stringent standards. This stringent standards mean that not only one must be responsible of one's true beliefs –as it was preliminary proposed– but one must also be able to justify one's beliefs through the reasons one can give for them, one must be committed with the truth of the conceptual content of the belief itself and the articulated network that comes with it and one should be entitled to that epistemic commitment and its corresponding network.

The fact that one's entitlement must be subject to a double assessment, assessment of the reasons one can give and assessment of the control one have over one's belief-forming processes and belief-regulation mechanisms, suggests that an inferentialist account of epistemic responsibility is a good but insufficient starting point. Even if such account allows us to dispatch easily a possible reconstruction of the justificatory relations that seem to appear within the domain of knowledge as causal phenomena and even if it can explain the normative status of one's epistemic commitments, it cannot grant all the conditions for having an epistemically responsible cognizer. Just as it allows the coexistence of *genuine* knowledge and a strange version of 'knowledge' that does not requires the candidate knower to give reasons, it also leaves open the door for epistemic commitments to appear without epistemic responsibility for them. And that is the main reason why epistemic commitments must go hand-in-hand with at least dispositional control from the subject.

Bearing all this in mind, I think at least one more question is left open. As it has been mentioned before, having a *true* belief is a requirement of knowledge and not of epistemic responsibility itself. Thus, the requirement of a strong notion of justification seems to be the only intrinsic condition of epistemic responsibility. If a certain well-structured argument demonstrates that this condition is expendable, so we can grasp the possibility of a false belief constituting 'knowledge' (e.g., beliefs like the ones included in the Phlogiston Theory, refuted, but certainly valid for a while); should we at least consider the possibility of taking someone with this 'knowledge' as epistemically responsible for his beliefs? If so, may the *strong notion of justification* be considered as the final condition for taking someone as epistemically responsible?

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