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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

A capacity view of ignorance

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Abstract
I motivate and defend a new account of ignorance for which ignorance is the lack of a suitable explanatory connection between (i) one's exercise of epistemic abilities and (ii) believing the truth. This view carves out a previously unexplored option space in the ongoing conceptual debate about ignorance in analytic epistemology and is shown to yield better results than competing views of ignorance, including those that define ignorance as a lack of knowledge, a lack of true belief, or as characterized by a failure of inquiry. Unlike these other views, the account defended here places an agent's exercise of her epistemic abilities at its core, enabling it to provide a more nuanced explanation for various instances of ignorance and non-ignorance, as well as for the evaluative character of ignorance.

Keywords Ignorance · Knowledge · Epistemic abilities · Inquiry · Blameless ignorance · Epistemic luck

1 Introduction

Despite the increasing interest in ignorance within analytic epistemology, there doesn't seem to be a unified or well-defined account of its role in epistemological theorizing.[1] One reason for this is that it's unclear which aspect/state/condition of

[1] Carter and Piedrahita (Forthcoming), DeNicola (2017); El Kassar (2018, 2025), Kyle (2021), Meylan (2020, 2024), Peels (2019, 2023), Piedrahita (2021), Pritchard (2021ab), as well as contributions in Peels & Blaauw (2016).

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suboptimal epistemic situations and processes should be the hallmark of ignorance. The traditional approach presents ignorance as the *lack of an epistemic positive*. In this context, the nature of ignorance depends on identifying which positive epistemic state, when absent, corresponds to ignorance; either knowledge or true belief (Le Morvan & Peels, 2016). However, a more recent perspective challenges this by asserting that ignorance is *more than merely* the absence of a positive epistemic state and is essentially normative as it involves *the presence of a failure of inquiry* (Meylan, 2020, 2024; Pritchard, 2021ab).

This paper aims to motivate an account of ignorance that carves out what is thus far unexplored option space in the ongoing conceptual debate about ignorance within analytic epistemology. In § 2, I start by pointing out some problems with the current views on their extensional adequacy. These challenges point to the need for an account of ignorance capable of capturing four distinct criteria related to ignorance's factivity, blamelessness, and to the differences between types of epistemic luck. In § 3, I articulate and defend an alternative account—the Access or Capacity View—and explain how it captures the identified criteria. Drawing on recent work on abilities, the proposed view states that ignorance of a fact is the absence of an explanatory connection between (i) exercising one's epistemic abilities and (ii) believing the truth. One's epistemic abilities play such a role to the extent that one exercises them to a high degree, as evidenced by the epistemic quality of the performances delivered.

Before I begin, I should say that, like most contenders in the debate, I rely on the traditional method of cases. In § 2, some transitional ideas are based on intuitions, which are further supported in § 3. Similarly, my discussion will focus on factual ignorance, that is, ignorance *that p* is the case or that *p*'s truth conditions are satisfied. This contrasts with practical and objectual kinds of ignorance, which refer to ignorance of *how to* do something, and ignorance *of* something (including a proposition), respectively.

2 Traditional and normative views of ignorance

2.1 The knowledge view, or whether lack of knowledge entails ignorance

What does it mean for a subject to be ignorant? Consider the common view that ignorance equals lack of knowledge:

Knowledge view S is ignorant that *p* iff S doesn't know that *p*.[2]

The Knowledge View is based on the idea that knowledge is both necessary and sufficient to escape ignorance. On this view, knowledge and ignorance are complements: the presence of one implies the absence of the other. Besides its simplicity,

[2] It can be found in Blome-Tillmann (2016), Bondy (2018), Lynch (2015), Haas and Vogt (2023), Williamson (2000), and Zimmerman (1988, 75; 2008, ix). Pierre Le Morvan defends this view under the label "Standard View" (2011ab, 2012, 2013).

the Knowledge View has intuitive appeal: any instance of ignorance is an instance of lack of knowledge.

One version of the Knowledge View, proposed by Le Morvan (2011ab, 2012, 2013), holds that ignorance is equivalent to lack of knowledge *regardless of how knowledge is defined*. In this sense, the Knowledge View is neutral regarding contentious claims about the nature of knowledge:

> […] Ignorance has no substantive and positive nature of its own. […] Every theory or conception of knowledge automatically yields by negation a theory or conception of its complement ignorance (cf. Le Morvan & Peels, 2016, 16–17).

Despite its parsimony and intuitiveness, the Knowledge View faces significant challenges. The view is committed to:

SUF: Not knowing that *p* entails ignorance that *p*;

NEC: Ignorance that *p* entails not knowing that *p*.

The problem is that, while NEC is plausible, SUF contradicts intuition in cases involving false propositions and barn-façade scenarios.[3]

Falsehoods. Given SUF, the Knowledge View entails that ignorance is non-factive, in the sense that not-*p* entails ignorance that *p* (Le Morvan & Peels, 2016; Le Morvan, 2022). However, as Kyle (2021) has argued, this gives us reason to reject SUF.

Assume for the sake of argument that knowledge is factive: knowing that *p* entails *p*. You know Bogotá is the capital of Colombia only if Bogotá is the capital of Colombia. If knowledge is factive, and SUF is true, then everyone is ignorant that *p* when not-*p*. For instance, everyone is ignorant that the Earth is at the center of the Milky Way, because no one can know such a thing since it's not true. However, it's counterintuitive that everyone, including the deceased and the unborn, is ignorant of every non-fact. While there's no problem in saying that geocentrists didn't know the Earth was at the center of the universe,[4] and in that sense, "not knowing" seems applicable to *p* when not-*p*, it doesn't seem appropriate to apply "ignorant that" to *p* when not-*p*. To think otherwise assumes that our intuitions about ignorance ought to track, and entirely as a function of, the absence of knowledge, exactly as implied by a commitment to SUF. However, it's far from clear that ignorance ascriptions are, or should be, responsive exclusively to knowledge's presence or absence. The idea I rely on is just that ignorance attributions—and in our case of interest, the withholding of such attributions (e.g., as in cases when *p* is false)—might very plausibly track that *p* is true, which isn't necessarily accomplished by tracking the lack of knowledge.

Friends of the Knowledge View can reply that "S is ignorant that *p*" implies *p* (say, via pragmatic presupposition) without entailing the truth of *p*. So, ignorance is indeed non-factive, and the awkwardness of saying, e.g., "everyone is ignorant that the Earth is at the center of the Milky Way" is a pragmatic effect explained by presupposition

[3] See Carter and Piedrahita (Forthcoming) for an additional argument against SUF, which contends that knowledge-undermining infringements on a belief's autonomy don't necessarily lead to ignorance.

[4] For different examples, see Hazlett (2012) and Kyle (2021).

failure.[5] However, as Kyle argues (cf. 2021, 7750–7753), that "S is ignorant that *p*" implies *p* without entailing it is presumably at odds with the factivity of knowledge. If "S is ignorant that *p*" implies *p* without entailing it, the same should apply to "S isn't ignorant that *p*", because the pragmatic mechanism through which "ignorant that *p*" implies *p* is constant under negation. Now, if the Knowledge View is true,

(a) S isn't ignorant that *p*.

is equivalent to:

(b) S knows that *p*.

This means that if (a) implies *p* without entailing it, then (b) also implies *p* without entailing it. But if (b) doesn't entail *p*, then knowledge isn't factive. If knowledge entails truth, there's reason to think that pragmatic factors such as presupposition failure don't adequately explain the incongruity of attributing ignorance of non-facts. Furthermore, responding on behalf of the Knowledge View in a way that is at odds with the factivity of knowledge would violate the Knowledge View's commitment to neutrality about the nature of knowledge.

One might think that the problem is sidestepped by restricting ignorance to facts.[6]

Knowledge view* For any true proposition *p*, S is ignorant that *p* iff S doesn't know that *p*.[7]

[5] See Le Morvan and Peels (2016, 24). For discussion see Kyle (2021, 7749 and ff.).

[6] Le Morvan (2022, 173 and ff.) offers examples motivating the intuition that one can be ignorant that *p* when not-*p*. Consider a situation where you suspect a book contains false statements and decide to remain ignorant of its content. If the book contains both true and false propositions, you are ignorant *of* both (in the sense that you are *objectually* ignorant, that is, you aren't aware *of* them). Le Morvan suggests that granting ignorance *of* both true and false propositions leads to the view that ignorance is non-factive. His case rests on the assumption that ignorance of *p* strictly implies ignorance that *p* (2022, 171). However, if not-*p*, and you have never entertained *p*, it doesn't follow that you're ignorant *that p* is the case or its truth-conditions are satisfied—since, presumably, there's no fact corresponding to the satisfaction of the truth conditions of a false proposition. On a similar note, an anonymous referee questions whether the factivity of ignorance should be rejected on the grounds that one can be ignorant of whether *p* (e.g., of whether Godot will come) when not-*p* (cf. Le Morvan, 2022, 175). However, ignorance of whether *p*—or erotetic ignorance, ignorance of answers to questions—is distinct from factual ignorance, ignorance-that. One cheap reason is that ignorance-wh takes interrogative complements, whereas ignorance-that takes declarative complements. Now, one might think that ignorance-wh is a form of ignorance-that. For instance, if S is ignorant of whether Godot will come, it seems that S is ignorant that Godot will or will not come. But we should be careful here. Ignorance-wh *involves* a proposition—typically, S's ignorance with respect to a question Q implies that there's a proposition *p* that answers Q and S is ignorant that *p* (cf. Nottelmann, 2016; Willard-Kyle, 2024). But involving a proposition in this way doesn't make the ignorance-that involved in ignorance-wh non-factive, nor does it make ignorance-wh a form of ignorance-that. On the one hand, the ignorance-that concomitant to ignorance-wh doesn't take a false proposition as its object. Suppose Godot will not come (not-*p*). In that case, in being ignorant of whether Godot will come, S is both ignorant-wh *p*? *and* ignorant *that* not-*p*. Notice that we don't say that S is ignorant *that* Godot will come, because it's *false* that Godot will come. This suggests that ignorance-that is factive, even if ignorance-wh isn't factive. On the other hand, ignorance-wh should be kept separated from ignorance-that because it's possible for S to be ignorant-that without being ignorant-wh. Suppose S is told and assured that Godot will not come, but due to irrationality or a fact about S's circumstances, fails to believe that Godot will not come. In that case, S isn't ignorant-wh: she isn't ignorant of the answer to the question "will Godot come?", yet by failing to believe *that* Godot will not come S is ignorant *that* this is the case.

[7] Cf. DeNicola (2017), Goldman and Olsson (2009), Nottelmann (2016), Zimmerman (2017).

This maintains the intuitiveness, parsimony, and neutrality of the original Knowledge View. However, this restriction to facts amounts to rejecting SUF—not knowing that *p* when not-*p* doesn't entail ignorance that *p*. Moreover, there's a further problem with SUF even when it's restricted to facts.

Environmental luck. A different kind of criticism targeting SUF, even in its restricted version, comes from Alvin Goldman's (1976) barn-façade case:

> Tourist forms the justified true belief that there's a barn in front of her. She has seen and identified barns in the past and her perceptual capacities work perfectly fine. Unbeknownst to Tourist, her environment is such that most things that look like barns are actually barn-façades. So, despite being in front of the barn, she could easily have been mistaken.

As is well known, and as I will assume, most epistemologists think that Tourist's belief is justified and luckily true in a way that prevents it from meeting a necessary condition for knowledge (for instance, safety). At the same time, Tourist isn't ignorant that there's a barn in front of her, because she is connected, via the evidence and the method of belief formation, to this fact in a way that supports the intuition that she isn't ignorant (see Piedrahita, 2021). Tourist saw the barn, was actually in front of it, and believed it because she saw it. She is so connected to the fact even if in that environment she cannot tell barns from barn-façades. Tourist's belief differs from the epistemic profile exhibited by beliefs in standard Gettier cases, where subjects have a justified belief that is made true by a sheer lucky *intervention* in the circumstances:

> Juan believes Sam owns a Ford because he saw someone identical to Sam driving one. From this, Juan infers that Sam owns a Ford or Pedro is in Barcelona. However, it turns out that Sam doesn't own a Ford (the person Juan saw was Sam's twin brother). Nevertheless, at that moment, Pedro coincidentally had an unexpected connecting flight in Barcelona. While Juan's belief in the disjunction is true and justified, it falls short of knowledge (cf. Gettier, 1963).

Juan neither saw Sam driving the car nor heard anyone say anything about Pedro's whereabouts. Juan lacked a connection to the target fact, and his belief could have easily been false, *were it not for the lucky intervention*. In contrast, the knowledge-undermining luck affecting Tourist's belief is environmental, because in her surroundings (where misleading evidence or fakes are prevalent), she could easily have been wrong, *were it not for actually seeing the barn*.[8] The differences between these

[8] For the environmental/intervening luck distinction, see Pritchard (2012, 2015). Previous distinctions between two types of knowledge-undermining luck include Fogelin (1994, 23–26) and Hetherington (1999, 571–574). In Piedrahita (2021), I applied this distinction to theories of ignorance, suggesting that differentiating between environmental and intervening luck enables accounts of ignorance to steer between the Truth View and the Knowledge View. Pritchard (2021b) also incorporates this distinction into his normative account of ignorance (see § 2.3 below), though his focus diverges by emphasizing that whether a case of lucky true belief constitutes ignorance depends on (1) whether the subject is aware of the target fact (if she is, she isn't ignorant), and (2) whether her lucky true belief results from a failure of inquiry (if it doesn't, she isn't ignorant). This convergence highlights the broader applicability of the environmental/intervening luck framework in theorizing about ignorance.

two cases suggest that one's belief can still enjoy a type of epistemic support (e.g., seeing that *p*) that falls short of knowledge due to the environment without thereby entailing ignorance of the target fact. So, if one accepts the intuitions elicited by these two cases, one must reject the idea that lack of knowledge is sufficient for ignorance and hence reject the Knowledge View*.

In defense of the Knowledge View*, one could accommodate the intuition that Tourist isn't ignorant and deny that she lacks knowledge. One could follow Sosa (2007, 2015) and grant Tourist a kind of (animal) knowledge, understood as true belief that results from the exercise of competence. Alternatively, one could endorse results from empirical studies indicating that lay people tend to attribute knowledge in barn-façade scenarios (Colaço et al., 2014; Turri, 2016). While it's open to a friend of the Knowledge View to go that way, it comes with a caveat: mainstream epistemology typically favors the opposite verdict. Barn-façade cases share a common feature with standard Gettier cases: in both, the target belief is subject to a type of luck that prevents it from meeting a necessary condition for knowledge. Similarly, defending the Knowledge View* by allowing knowledge in barn-façade cases not only challenges the view's plausibility but also compromises its neutrality. Granting knowledge in barn-façade cases is in tension with the claim that ignorance equals lack of knowledge regardless of controversies about the nature of the latter.

None of the problematic cases above denies NEC. There's some truth in the Knowledge View*, as anything that makes one ignorant also takes one away from knowledge. However, the cases above indicate that ignorance ought not to track, and entirely as a function of, the absence of knowledge, exactly in the way that would be borne out by a commitment to SUF. Adherents of SUF might not find the cases above compelling, but they are certainly appealing to neutral parties and to those who aren't already committed to the idea that lack of knowledge is *both* sufficient and necessary for ignorance. Furthermore, the cases suggest that, to the extent that ignorance and lack of knowledge diverge, they have different epistemic profiles, challenging the idea that ignorance's epistemic profile is exhausted by the lack of knowledge.

2.2 The truth view, or whether true belief entails lack of ignorance

An alternative to the Knowledge View is the other traditional account—ignorance equals lack of true belief:

Truth view S is ignorant that *p* iff *p* is true and S doesn't believe that *p*.[9]

The Truth View and the Knowledge View agree that having a false belief, or lacking a true belief, are sufficient for ignorance. Both views disagree, however, on whether justification for a true belief or further (say, anti-luck) conditions necessary for knowledge are also necessary to escape ignorance. The Truth View also rejects SUF, is compatible with ignorance's factivity, and entails that Tourist isn't ignorant that there's a barn in front of her—after all, her belief is true. Further support for the

[9] Also known as the "new view", defended in Peels (2010, 2011, 2012, 2023). It can be found in Goldman, Alvin (1986, 26), Guerrero (2007, 62–63), and van Woudenberg (2009, 375).

Truth View comes from the intuitive idea that one can act free of ignorance, which allegedly doesn't require acting from full-blown knowledge (more on this below).

However, a crucial criticism of the Truth View is that it's too weak. If the Truth View is true, one escapes ignorance *whenever* one believes truly, no matter how irrational or disconnected from the facts one is. The view thus predicts that intuitive cases of ignorance aren't cases of ignorance. Consider:

> Crédulo believes everything he is told and his friends (as a joke) tell him that his house is on fire. Unbeknownst to everyone, old wiring ends up triggering a fire in his place, making Crédulo's belief true.[10]

Gullibility isn't a ticket out of ignorance, even if it can sometimes lead to believing the truth. In general, we normally don't think that irrationality is a proper way out of ignorance, which poses a significant problem for the Truth View. Additionally, unlike Tourist's case, Crédulo's belief is true thanks to the lucky intervening circumstances, with no connection between the basis for his belief and the target fact. Crédulo's friends had no idea about the house actually being on fire, and his belief, so formed, would have been false were it not for the fortuitous intervention (i.e., the faulty wiring). If this is correct, true belief isn't sufficient for lack of ignorance, contrary to what the Truth View says.

The defender of the Truth View might reply that our intuition about Crédulo is misguided (cf. Peels, 2011, 352; 2023, 57). Peels suggests we wrongly judge Crédulo as ignorant about his house being on fire only because we're influenced by his obvious ignorance about related facts (e.g., the cause of the fire or his friends' deception). If we properly isolated just the proposition expressed by "Crédulo's house is on fire", we'd see he has a true belief about it and thus isn't ignorant of this specific fact. Whether this is a successful defense depends on whether the intuition that Crédulo is ignorant that his house is on fire indeed rests on our being distracted by his broader ignorance about related facts. However, this is not convincing. Even focusing on the target proposition, the intuition that he is ignorant persists because there's no connection between the basis for his belief and the target fact, which suggests that ignorance ought not to track, and entirely as a function of, the absence or presence of true belief. No distraction seems to be driving the intuition that Crédulo is ignorant that his house is on fire.[11]

Another possible defense of the Truth View draws from the literature on moral responsibility and ignorance (van Woudenberg, 2009, Peels 2014, cf. Rosen 2008). It's commonly accepted, both in the law and morality, that ignorance sometimes excuses wrongdoing, as when one poisons someone while falsely and innocently believing that one is putting sugar in their coffee instead of arsenic. In such cases, ignorance excuses when one acts *from* ignorance, in the sense that one's ignorance of a fact (e.g., that one is putting arsenic in this coffee) makes one ignorant of the wrong-making features of one's act (e.g., that what one is doing is harmful). As it

[10] This case is found in Pritchard (2005, 146).

[11] This is consistent with Crédulo ceasing to be ignorant of the target fact when he goes home and sees the lit house (in that case the basis for his belief has changed).

turns out—so this line of reasoning goes—Crédulo's irrational true belief that his house is on fire fails this test. Therefore, he isn't ignorant. For instance, assume that after hearing and believing his friends' testimony, Crédulo, now homeless, decides to break into an elderly woman's home and coerce her into allowing him to live there. He does something morally wrong from the belief that his house is burning. Assume Crédulo meets the control, aka free-will condition for moral responsibility, so he is generally accountable for his actions. Intuitively, we wouldn't excuse Crédulo for his wrongdoing. But if Crédulo isn't eligible for an excuse *from* ignorance, he isn't ignorant that his house is burning. According to this line of reasoning, in cases of blameworthiness for action, we normally don't treat *true-but-unjustified*, or *true-but-lucky*, or *true-but-irrational* beliefs as epistemically defective in the way that blocks the adjudication of blameworthiness—we treat them the same way we would treat the subject as if she were not ignorant (cf. Rosen 2008, 597).

This response, however, seems to conflate what ignorance is with the eligibility for an excuse from ignorance. Consider Gideon Rosen's "conjecture", which motivates the line of reasoning above:

> Whenever some plausible-seeming principle of moral culpability adverts to *knowledge* or the lack thereof, the relevant mental state is simply *true belief* (2008, 597).

Instead of being a claim about the nature of knowledge or true belief, Rosen's conjecture works as a warning for moral responsibility theorists not to distort the cognitive components of morality (e.g., *knowing* what one does) by importing ideas from epistemology (e.g., Gettier-proof belief is necessary for *knowing* what one does). This caution cuts both ways: epistemologists should be careful not to conflate the nature of ignorance with what people normally say about ignorance in contexts where what is at stake is the moral appraisal of an agent and her action in light of her cognitive states. In the latter case, and as Rosen notes, acting from true belief is sufficient for acting from something that isn't ignorance. However, this in itself doesn't support the view that ignorance's nature is a lack of true belief. Rosen himself seems to agree with the latter, as he reasons from his conjecture:

> When we say that *pertinent ignorance* sometimes excuses and then try to identify the conditions under which it does, *the relevant sort of ignorance* is simply the absence of true belief (2008, 597, emphasis added).

The pertinent and relevant ignorance here refers to the ignorance that must be identified in order to answer Rosen's paper's question: what is it to act from ignorance and under what conditions can this excuse wrongdoing? (cf. 2008, 592). This doesn't constrain the nature of ignorance in epistemology.

So far, we have identified three different constraints that any account of ignorance must satisfy to plausibly improve upon traditional accounts of ignorance:

factivity. S's ignorance that p entails p.

lucky lack of ignorance. Environmental lucky true beliefs—e.g., Tourist's belief—need not entail ignorance.

more than truth. True belief—e.g., Crédulo's true belief—doesn't entail lack of ignorance.

2.3 The normative view, or whether ignorance is failure entailing

Recently, Pritchard (2021ab) and Meylan (2020, 2024) have proposed accounts of ignorance that satisfy the criteria above.[12] Their accounts are motivated by an argument against the Knowledge and Truth Views to the effect that lack of knowledge/true belief is insufficient for ignorance, since these concepts seem to differ in their normative profiles. For instance, Pritchard relies on linguistic intuitions that suggest that it's odd to ascribe ignorance to subjects with respect to pointless or unknowable facts, as such ascriptions may seem like incongruent forms of criticism. We don't normally say, for example, that someone is ignorant of the number of hairs on their head or of the highest prime number. In the same vein, Meylan (2024) argues that the state of ignorance differs from the states of not knowing/truly believing in terms of epistemic disvalue, in the *prima facie* sense that being ignorant tokens a kind of state that is epistemically worse than merely lacking knowledge/true belief.[13] According to Pritchard and Meylan, these data points indicate that *ignorance* is an inherently normative notion and always and everywhere involves a negative assessment. They argue that the traditional views need to be supplemented with a normative condition: one doesn't count as ignorant *unless* one's lack of knowledge/true belief results from a failure on one's part as an inquirer.

Normative view S is ignorant that p iff S lacks knowledge/true belief that p and S ought to have known/truly believed that p (Pritchard, 2021b, 237; Meylan, 2024, 210).

The Normative View is compatible with the traditional views, as any of the latter can incorporate an additional normative necessary condition (cf. Pritchard, 2021a, 117–

[12] Although Meylan's and Pritchard's papers were published around the same time, Pritchard's version of the Normative View had been circulating since 2015 through talks and unpublished online drafts of his 2021a paper. This, incidentally, explains why Meylan's, 2020 paper, published a year earlier, responds to and defends Pritchard's version of the Normative View. Thanks to Duncan Pritchard for inviting me to clarify this point.

[13] Meylan's view isn't that *every* instance of ignorance is disvaluable, but that ignorance *prima facie* involves epistemic disvalue, in the sense that ignorance—in virtue of the type of state it tokens—falls short of "the ideal of intellectual success, of making for ourselves a precise and comprehensive idea of the world around us" (2024, 212). This is meant to be compatible with the undeniable claim that ignorance can be *all things considered* valuable (consider, for example, privacy). According to Meylan, the *prima facie* disvalue of ignorance can be outweighed by other considerations, such as the value of what ignorance protects. As I shall explain in § 3.3 below, the view of ignorance I propose allows for the possibility that ignorance involves a form of epistemic evaluation without entailing that ignorance ascriptions necessarily assess the subject or her epistemic state negatively.

118; 2021b, 226–227). The Normative View easily takes care of *Factivity*: ignorance is factive because rational inquiry doesn't require to know/truly believe *p* when not-*p*. The Normative View accounts for *Lucky lack of ignorance* and *More than truth*: If Tourist's true belief manifests the proper exercise of her perceptual capacities without failure of inquiry, then she isn't ignorant that there's a barn in front of her. If Crédulo's belief that his house is burning manifests gullibility and, as such, manifests a failure of inquiry, he is ignorant of this fact—even if his belief is true. Compared to the traditional views, the Normative View seems to ride on the right track.

However, any view that says that ignorance entails a failure of inquiry will struggle to capture intuitive and common instances of ignorance, particularly in cases of justified suspension of judgment and blameless ignorance.[14]

When I believe that *p* and later acquire evidence against *p*, I'm justified and hence permitted to suspend about *p*. By suspending, I become ignorant with respect to either *p* or not-*p* (depending on which one is true). Moreover, if I'm expected to make up my mind about the issue for which I have equally weighty evidence, suspending on *p* can be rationally required. For instance, after tossing a coin several hundred times and observing a proportion of "heads" to "tails" within the expected range for a fair coin, someone asks me if the coin will land heads on the next toss. Given that my evidence supports the fairness of the coin, I should suspend on whether it will land heads next time. Importantly, suspending in both cases (when permitted and when required) doesn't indicate improper inquiry or a failure on my part *qua* inquirer.[15] At the same time, it's accurate and non-contradictory to describe me as ignorant of the relevant fact. Hence ignorance doesn't entail failure of inquiry.

One might reply that these verdicts about justified suspension conflict with the normative characteristics of ignorance that motivate the Normative View. If S has done what inquiry demands by suspending justifiably, why would she be subject to an epistemic evaluation that carries criticism or ascribes a *prima facie* epistemically disvaluable state? In response, note that the question seems to assume that an ascription of ignorance should always be traced back to a failure of inquiry, which is precisely what is at stake here. The defender of the Normative View insists that ignorance shouldn't be ascribed in the absence of criticizable behavior by the inquirer. This indicates that the Normative View, and this is a second problem for it, conflates what ignorance is with whether one is blameworthy for being ignorant. Suppose a detective believes that X committed a crime. If, unbeknownst to the detective, the belief is false, he is clearly ignorant that someone other than X committed the crime. Now assume that we learn that he formed this false belief by rationally gathering and impeccably reasoning on fabricated evidence carefully crafted by Y's criminal mastermind. Learning this doesn't lead us to revise the ascription of ignorance to the detective. Therefore, ignorance can be *blameless*, in the sense that the epistemic appraisal of an ignoramus' epistemic state as an instance of ignorance isn't neces-

[14] In Piedrahita (ms), I offer an extensive critique of the Normative View and, in doing so, vindicate non-normative views of ignorance.

[15] See Miracchi (2019) for an account of the rationality of suspension based on manifesting respect for the aim of knowing, and see Sylvan and Lord (2022) for an account of the rationality of suspension based on respecting the value of truth. See also Friedman (2017) and Sosa (2021).

sarily traced back to a blameworthy failure of the ignoramus. Insofar as this condition isn't met by the justified agnostic or the detective, their ignorance is blameless and hence the epistemic appraisal concomitant to an ascription of ignorance can be disjointed from the negative evaluation of the subject. The distinction between blameless and blameworthy ignorance is amply accepted in the moral responsibility literature (cf. Smith 1983; Fischer & Ravizza 1998; Guerrero, 2007; Peels 2014; Rosen 2003, 2008; Van Woudenberg, 2009; Zimmerman 1997) and the epistemology of ignorance (cf. Le Morvan & Peels, 2016; Le Morvan 2019; Peels, 2023). However, the Normative View rejects it, claiming that ignorance "by its nature is never blameless" (Pritchard, 2021b, 235). This is itself a reason to rule out the Normative View as a plausible account of ignorance. This indicates that we need a fourth criterion in our list of constraints:

> *blamelessness*. S can be ignorant that *p* without exhibiting any blameworthy failure *qua* inquirer.

In the rest of the paper, I articulate and motivate the Capacity or Access View of ignorance, explaining how it satisfies all four constraints. A bonus of the view, as I shall show in § 3.3, is that it accounts for ignorance's seeming evaluative character without making ignorance a failure-entailing notion.

3 The capacity view of ignorance

3.1 Factivity and blamelessness

One important form of epistemic evaluation involves considering whether someone's belief is true and why she's right about it. This evaluation targets both the epistemic subject and her epistemic states in order to understand how she arrived at the truth of her beliefs.[16] Now, not all explanations for why someone believes the truth are consistent with positive epistemic evaluation. For instance, if the correct explanation of why S is right about *p* is that S drank a double espresso or was hypnotized, then S's belief fails in this form of epistemic appraisal. The basic idea behind what I call the Capacity or Access View is that ignorance tracks the type of epistemic appraisal resulting from explanations that cite the subject's own contribution to believing the truth.[17] The view is based on the idea that epistemic appraisal and the value of positive epistemic states, as extensively discussed in virtue-theoretic epistemological accounts, are closely tied to the subject's dispositions and powers in pursuing epistemic goals.[18] In particular:

[16] For discussion of this form of appraisal in the context of knowledge, see Belkoniene (2023, ch. 5). See Goldman Alan (1984), Rieber (1998), Jenkins (2006) for explanation-centered accounts of knowledge. See McCain and Moretti (2021) for an explanationist theory of epistemic justification.

[17] Under this view, ignorance is the opposite of what I term "epistemic access" (Piedrahita, 2021)—a connection to the world in which the subject's epistemic agency explains her being right about a target fact.

[18] See, for instance, Greco (2009, 2012), Sosa (2015). For useful discussion of accounts of abilities in the context of virtue epistemology, see Butts (2014), Jaster (2020, 180 and ff.), and Carter (2023). For a discus-

Capacity view For any true proposition *p*, S is ignorant that *p* iff it's not the case that S truly believes *p* due to S's exercise of her epistemic abilities (EAs).

In other words, S is ignorant that *p* unless, and insofar as, her believing the truth is explained by her exercise of her EAs. There are two main ways in which it might be the case that S doesn't truly believe *p* because of her exercise of her EAs. First, S might lack a true belief that *p*. Since S's truly believing *p* cannot be explained unless S actually truly believes *p*, S's lack of a true belief that *p* implies that her exercise of her EAs doesn't explain S's having a true belief that *p*. Not believing *p* when *p* is sufficient for ignorance that *p*, because absence of true belief that *p* entails that S's exercise of EAs has no role in explaining why she truly believes *p* (for there's no true belief that *p*). This captures the intuitive idea that believing a falsehood and not believing the truth are cases of ignorance. This also begins to explain *Blamelessness*. A justified agnostic is ignorant of the target fact because she lacks a true belief. She is ignorant because her exercise of EAs is insufficient to arrive at the truth. This could happen even if she exhibits no failure of inquiry. Hence, one's ignorance is independent from one's blameworthiness for one's ignorance (I will return to this in § 3.3 below).

Notice that this first way in which S's exercise of her epistemic abilities fails to explain her being right about *p* doesn't license ignorance that *p* when not-*p*. If, as a form of epistemic appraisal, ignorance ascriptions track the explanatory connection between S's EAs and her believing the truth, S can be ignorant that *p* only if *p*. The Earth isn't flat. I cannot form a true belief that the Earth is flat because it isn't. My EAs aren't evaluated in their contribution to my truly believing the Earth is flat, as there's no contribution to be made.

The second way for it not to be the case that S truly believes *p* due to her exercise of her EAs occurs when S truly believes *p*, but this belief, given the way it was formed, isn't explained by S's exercise of EAs. As I shall explain below, the subject's contribution to believing the truth can be absent in the presence of true belief (which distinguishes our view from the Truth View), present in the absence of knowledge (which distinguishes it from the Knowledge View), and independent of the subject's failures of inquiry (which distinguishes it from the Normative View).

3.2 Lucky lack of ignorance and more than truth

To capture these criteria, we need to clarify how EAs play an explanatory role in one's believing the truth.

To start with, I will assume, as is widely held, that abilities connect subjects to forms of behavior. For instance, one rides a bike down the road *by* exercising the ability to ride a bike.[19] I will also assume that an ability is *epistemic* insofar as it relates a subject to patterns of behavior that systematically contribute to the rational support, formation, revision, or regulation of their epistemic and doxastic states. They make it more rational for one to engage with those states in a particular way,

sion of how ignorance further shapes subjects' epistemic abilities, see Arfini (2019).

[19] For useful discussion, see Maier (2020).

in light of her epistemic goals. EAs thus encompass powers and dispositions exercised in the process of forming true beliefs, avoiding error, gaining understanding, or seeking knowledge. For instance, the ability to visually identify mid-sized objects is epistemic because, by exercising it, one might have reason to form, revise, shed, or support beliefs about mid-sized objects. EAs include not only methods and patterns of belief formation, but also tendencies to gather evidence and to manage one's attention given the constraints posed by the environment, as well as one's power to participate in testimonial exchanges—the ability to trust and learn from others.[20] Patterns of behavior that don't rationalize epistemic or doxastic states aren't EAs. For example, the ability to play minigolf, when exercised, may lead to introspection and engagement with one's beliefs. However, the ability to play minigolf doesn't qualify as epistemic because it doesn't engage with one's epistemic and doxastic states in a way that directly concerns epistemic goals.

Before we get into the explanatory role of EAs, let's consider a few ideas from the literature on abilities. According to Jaster (2020, 23 and ff.), abilities are gradable—one can have or exercise an ability to a higher or lower degree. This is indicated by comparative talk of abilities, including EAs. Holmes reasons better than Watson, and my mother remembers events more vividly than my father. A biased listener has the ability to learn from others to a lower degree than an unbiased listener. Drinking alcohol impairs one's ability to drive, because one is less attentive and reactive after drinking, and so on. Jaster distinguishes two dimensions on which an ability can be exercised to varying degrees: achievement and reliability.

The dimension of achievement refers to the quality of the delivered performance. For instance, the degree of Holmes' ability to reason abductively depends on the impeccability of the reasoning that he delivers. Does he hesitate to draw a conclusion? Or does he, as they say, leave no stone unturned? The higher the quality of the performance, the more polished its exercise, the higher the degree of the ability. The dimension of reliability refers to the "range of circumstances across which the agent manages to deliver a performance" (Jaster, 2020, 25). For instance, compared to inspector Lestrade, Holmes is better at abductive reasoning because he does it correctly in most cases, even when he is in the shower, angry, or drunk. This doesn't mean, as Jaster notes, that degrees of ability depend on *any* circumstances in which one might fail to perform successfully. For instance, the degree of my ability to visually identify mid-sized objects isn't lowered because I cannot identify them in circumstances where there's no light.

The achievement and reliability dimensions of an ability can be considered simultaneously or separately. For instance, one's ability to pilot an aircraft depends not only on smoothly maneuvering the aircraft and making precise decisions, but also on maintaining control in various weather conditions. However, depending on the ability and domain in question, one dimension may be more important than the other. For instance, while the evaluation of a performer's ability to dance is more sensitive to achievement, a goalkeeper's ability to guard the goal is more sensitive to reliability.

[20] Epistemic abilities that require trusting and depending on others (including people and objects) not only enable one to escape ignorance, but can sometimes also engender forms of other-mediated ignorance. For discussion see Carter and Piedrahita (forthcoming) and Copeland (2022).

One's abilities contribute to successful performance as a function of the degree to which one exercises them. For instance, if drinking impairs driving safely, this ability becomes less relevant in explaining why I arrived home safely. However, the two dimensions of abilities might not play an equal explanatory role. When I drive on an icy road, I arrive at my destination safely by exercising the ability to drive to a high degree on both the reliability and achievement dimensions. But sometimes only one of the dimensions is sufficient to make the exercise of my ability explanatorily relevant. Imagine that I only drive when there's no traffic because other vehicles make me nervous. I can still arrive at my destination through my ability to drive to a high degree on the *achievement* dimension, despite my failure to exhibit a high degree of ability on the *reliability* dimension.

This brings us to the idea that explanations are sensitive to contrasts and background conditions, including the interests and mental states of those involved in giving and seeking explanations (cf. Garfinkel, 1981; Lipton, 1990). Suppose my colleague X knows about my aversion to driving on busy roads and sees me parking the car in the university parking lot. X might ask, "Why did you drive?", and a sensible interpretation of his question might be, "Why did you drive instead of using another form of transport?" Any given *explanandum* can have a number of contrasts, and each contrast might restrict what counts as an adequate explanation. A response such as "because I know how to drive" or "because I exercised my ability to drive" wouldn't satisfy my colleague. Although it's true I arrived because I know how to drive, this is not what X wants to know. He is interested in why I chose to drive over, e.g., taking the bus, and his curiosity would be satisfied with an answer like "because there was no traffic".

We should expect the same sensitivity to contrast when explaining why someone believes the truth (cf. Rieber, 1998; Jenkins, 2006; Greco, 2009). Suppose that, by exercising her perceptual abilities, S truly believes there's a hand in front of her. If asked, "Why is S right about there being a hand in front of her?", a response such as "because she sees it" would be on point. But the same response wouldn't explain why S is right about there being a hand in front of her rather than knowing that she's not undergoing hallucinatory experiences about hands. If it's possible that S is hallucinating hands, then her belief can be assessed in terms of gross cognitive failure on her part or of its immunity to skeptical hypotheses. In this case, simply saying that S (seems to) see the hand wouldn't explain why she's right about the hand as opposed to merely hallucinating that she sees it. This doesn't mean that S is ignorant that there's a hand in front of her—it means that the form of epistemic appraisal in question isn't the one corresponding to ignorance. Since we're interested in tracking the subject's contribution to believing the truth, the relevant contrast is why S is right about *p*, rather than wrong (and not whether the belief is, for instance, immune to skeptical hypotheses).[21]

[21] That explanations are sensitive to contextual considerations doesn't entail (as in, e.g., Rieber, 1998) that the explanation relation between *explanans* and *explanandum* is itself context-dependent. While the act of giving and seeking explanations can vary with epistemic and practical considerations—leading to differences in what is considered worth explaining and what counts as an adequate explanation—the explanation relation rests on dependence relations between *explanans* and *explanandum*, including causal and non-causal dependence (e.g., structural and constitutive relations) (cf. Kim, 1994 67 and ff.; Pincock,

Putting all this together, we're now in a position to address the cases that are problematic for the other views. Recall what our view says: S is ignorant that *p* just in case either S doesn't truly believe *p*, or in case she does, then given the way the belief was formed, her exercise of her EAs doesn't explain why S believes something true rather than false. First of all, the explanatory power of S's exercise of an EA to believe the truth is a function of the degree of S's EA. Roughly, the lower the degree to which S exercises her EA, the less relevant it is in explaining why her belief is true (when it is and given the way it was formed). This still doesn't tell us when one's EAs play an explanatory role, because abilities are gradable along two different dimensions. Does escaping ignorance require high degrees of both reliability and achievement? Or can one escape ignorance by exhibiting a high degree of EA on only one dimension?

The first option seems too demanding, because—as with driving safely only when there's no traffic—one's exercise of EAs can explain why one believes the truth, even if the degree of reliability of such ability isn't high. This is actually what Tourist's case shows: she believes that there's a barn in front of her by looking at the barn and seeing it, despite being unable to tell barns from barn-façades across slightly different circumstances. This indicates that escaping ignorance doesn't require a high degree of EAs in both dimensions.

If this is on the right track, ignorance primarily tracks the *achievement dimension* of one's EA. In barn-façade county, Tourist isn't reliable at telling barns from barn-façades. This lack of reliability makes her true belief unsafe, thus falling short of knowledge. Despite this, Tourist retains the ability to visually identify barns in that environment. In particular, a low reliability score doesn't impair the quality and accuracy with which she visually identifies a barn when she is in front of one. Tourist's performance is of no lower quality when she believes that there's a barn in front of her by looking at it. Our view tells us that, to escape ignorance, one's exercise of EAs must exhibit a high degree of epistemic quality, which can happen even if it lacks reliability. This explains why one can be free from ignorance in knowledge-precluding epistemic environments: in those environments, one can retain a high degree (in the achievement dimension) of EAs, which is sufficient to explain why one is right about some fact. This captures *Lucky lack of ignorance* in our list of constraints—lack of ignorance is less sensitive to environmental luck than knowledge.

The nuanced relationship between believing the truth and exercising EAs gradable along two different dimensions allows us to address a potential concern. Isn't our view just a variant of the Knowledge View*? After all, an explanatory connection between the exercise of EAs and believing the truth sounds a lot like knowledge, at least under virtue-theoretical accounts for which knowledge is true belief produced by ability (cf. Greco, 2009, 2012). Now, as is well known, such accounts of knowledge often end up granting knowledge in barn-façade cases (cf. Sosa, 2007, 2015) or asserting that Tourist loses her ability to identify barns in barn-façade county (cf. Greco, 2009), both of which aren't dialectically satisfying. However, recognizing that one can truly believe *p* through ability with a high degree of achievement despite a low degree of reliability allows us to avoid these positions. Although an unfriendly

2018). The explanation relation is thus independent of the interests and circumstances of those involved in giving and seeking explanations (cf. Ruben 2012, 19–20).

epistemic environment may affect the reliability of one's EAs, it doesn't necessarily compromise the quality of one's exercising a particular EA. So, Tourist can be in a place where she doesn't correctly tell barns from barn-facades across a wide range of similar circumstances, without thereby being unable to accurately identify a barn when there's one in front of her. This lack of reliability affects her knowledge, but it may not undermine the explanatory role of her EAs in her being right about the presence of a barn, just as a poet's diminished reliability to write a good poem in a noisy coffee shop doesn't prevent her from writing, at least sometimes, a really good poem due to her creativity and power of expression. Tourist lacks knowledge but isn't ignorant. Not everything that prevents knowledge leads to ignorance, and this crucial difference between lack of knowledge and ignorance prevents our view from collapsing into the Knowledge View*.

Now, let's consider our ignorant subjects, Crédulo the gullible and Juan the Gettierized. Our account says that they're ignorant just in case their respective beliefs, given the way they were formed, aren't explained by their exercise of EAs along the achievement dimension. On the one hand, Crédulo's gullibility is unreliable and irrational, which is enough to disqualify such a disposition from being an EA. Believing everything one is told doesn't rationalize one's doxastic and epistemic states in a particular way. On the other hand, even if it were granted that gullibility is an EA, Crédulo's gullibility fails to explain why he's right about his house being on fire. While his gullibility (or any other EA) may explain why he believed something true *rather than not believing anything at all*, it doesn't explain why he believed something true *rather than false*. The unlikely faulty wiring explains the latter contrast.

In contrast, Juan exercised genuine EAs by gathering and operating on evidence relevant to the belief that Sam owns a Ford and correctly applying the rule of inference "disjunction introduction". However, although these abilities might be normally reliable, Juan's performance falls short on both the reliability and achievement dimensions. On the one hand, he is unable to tell Sam from his twin (the one he actually saw driving the Ford), which reduces the degree (reliability) of his ability to gather evidence in those circumstances. This unreliability leads him to form a false belief, on which he applies the rule disjunction introduction despite having no reason to believe that Pedro is in Barcelona. This indicates that his ability to reason, by applying the inference rule, lacks in quality. Affected in both reliability and achievement dimensions, Juan's EAs don't explain why he is correct about the disjunction ("Sam owns a Ford or Pedro is in Barcelona"), once he formed such a belief. So Juan is ignorant that Sam owns a Ford or Pedro is in Barcelona. This aligns well with what was discussed in § 2.1 above about Gettier cases, where there's a disconnection between the agent's forming the belief on the basis she has and the relevant fact, and yet a connection is guaranteed by an unlikely and unbeknownst combination of events. Such disconnection indicates that the subject's EAs don't explain why she has a true belief, as a more salient part of the explanation includes the fact that an intervention occurred. This, combined with what was said about Crédulo's case, captures *More than truth* on our list—true belief doesn't entail lack of ignorance.

Here's another potential worry about our account: Isn't Tourist's belief true because she luckily happened to stand in front of the only real barn? After all, absent her good luck, Tourist would have formed a false belief. If so, there's no difference

between Tourist and the Gettier subjects in terms of what explains their believing the truth. And if there's no difference, there's no principled basis for claiming that the two types of cases differ in terms of the presence of ignorance. However, this is misleading. We have already noted that explanations are sensitive to contextual considerations, including background conditions and contrasts. While it's true that Tourist would have had a false belief if she were in front of a barn-façade, this isn't the relevant aspect when assessing why agents, given their exercise of their EAs, form true rather than false beliefs. Tourist could have easily been in front of a fake barn and formed a false belief, which is compatible with saying that, as things actually happened, she formed a true belief because she saw a real barn and formed the belief on that basis. If we were asking, "Why did Tourist truly believe, *rather than know*, that there is a barn?", the relevant explanation might include the fact that Tourist was by way of luck in front of a real barn or that she was in barn-façade county. But this question isn't primarily about how Tourist is right about the barn, but about how her being right doesn't amount to knowledge.

3.3 Ignorance and evaluation

Let's now explain how our view addresses the main consideration that motivated the Normative View: ignorance ascriptions seem to involve a form of epistemic appraisal that isn't explained by noting that an agent lacks knowledge or true belief. This will shed extra light on *Blamelessness*.

Ignorance can be evaluated from various sources of value and norms. The main one is epistemic:[22] ignorance's disvalue is due to the specific type of lack that ignorance tokens—a lack of proper connection to the world through the exercise of one's EAs. Under the Capacity View, ignorance ascriptions *qua* ignorance ascriptions involve an assessment of the subject's exercise of EAs in relation to the role that such abilities play in an explanation of her believing the truth. At the same time, ignorance can also be prudentially disvaluable (e.g., ignorance of basic traffic norms in one's city), or morally disvaluable (e.g., ignorance of basic facts about injustice, such as racism and sexism, in the world). If one can form a belief that p by exercising EAs, and if such a belief is susceptible to epistemic and non-epistemic norms and values, then the exercise of these abilities, including refraining from their exercise, is similarly open to various forms of evaluation.

This, in turn, explains why ignorance can be *prima facie* epistemically disvaluable and, under the right conditions, all things considered valuable. While we can agree with Meylan that ignorance is *prima facie* epistemically disvaluable, we must add that it can be all things considered valuable when it aligns with the norms and values governing one's exercise of EAs. So ignorance that protects privacy, innocence, or the proper exercise of one's EAs—as when one intentionally forgoes inquiry into pointless or unknowable facts—can be all things considered valuable. In this sense, all things considered valuable ignorance may be understood as a form of "rational

[22] We can remain neutral on whether this form of appraisal amounts to *epistemic* blame, and nothing in what follows should hang on this. For an account of what's at stake in epistemic blame, see Piovarchy (2021).

ignorance"—when the cost of inquiry outweighs the net benefit of knowledge, making it rational for a subject (given her goals and constraints) to remain ignorant (cf. Somin, 2023). Although rational ignorance is normally discussed in the context of political ignorance and voting behavior, its rationale extends to any situation where the net benefit of inquiry is outweighed by its costs.

The issue of whether to criticize someone for their ignorance becomes nuanced when considering the various axes along which ignorance can be evaluated. Ignorance attributions often target the subject's EAs in her circumstances. For example, it may not be reasonable to criticize someone who lacks opportunities for education, access to reliable information sources, and has never heard of the Moon landing, for her ignorance. In such cases, the individual's ignorance can still be epistemically disvaluable, even if a direct criticism of her may not be warranted, and corresponding attitudes such as disappointment may be inhibited. Inhibiting criticism of an ignorant subject doesn't make her ignorance any less epistemically disvaluable.

Now, ignorance's different forms of evaluation and criticism also seem to be scalar. Although we cannot settle here what the different forms of criticism amount to, we can at least acknowledge that one's degree of criticism might depend on whether one is responsible for one's ignorance. Thus, someone who has never heard of basic forms of injustice is less criticizable for his ignorance than someone who has heard of such issues but has forgotten them because more pressing concerns occupy his mental economy, such as working a job and providing for his family. In turn, this latter subject might be less criticizable for his ignorance than someone who has also heard of basic forms of injustice but forgets about them due to spending his life counting grains of sand on a beach.

The Capacity View accommodates these nuances by recognizing that an exercise of EAs can be suboptimal even if the subject herself isn't directly blamed for the limitations imposed by her circumstances on the way she exercises her EAs. This last point suggests why ignorance can be evaluative without necessarily being blameworthy. The Normative View misconstrues the evaluative character of ignorance by asserting that ignorance ascriptions always and everywhere carry a negative assessment. Ignorance is *prima facie* epistemically disvaluable even if ascriptions of ignorance don't necessarily involve a negative assessment of the agent or the lack of explanatory connection between her exercise of EAs and her believing the truth. The corresponding ascription of ignorance is still a form of assessment because one's epistemic behavior (in its explanatory role) is up for evaluation, which can be so even if there's no failure on one's part *qua* inquirer.

4 Conclusion

Ignorance is a matter of how one forms or fails to form one's beliefs, and less a matter of hitting the truth or acquiring knowledge. In particular, ignorance tracks the explanatory connection between exercising epistemic abilities and believing the truth. In an

important sense, ignorance is an agential notion.[23] Besides improving over existing views and capturing core aspects of ignorance (such as its factivity, its sensitivity to normative considerations, and the different ways it interacts with epistemic luck), the view proposed allows one to address applied questions about ignorance. A no-small payoff is that if ignorance is a disease, it would turn out that its cure might not necessarily be gaining more knowledge or true beliefs, but a strengthening of the quality of the epistemic abilities that subjects deploy in their individual and social epistemic practices.[24]

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[23] El Kassar (2025) recently proposed a view of ignorance as a disposition partially constituted by a subject's epistemic conduct (cf. 60). She develops this view, in part, by raising primarily metaepistemological and methodological criticisms of the Knowledge, Truth, and Normative views (cf. ch. 3)—in contrast to the extensional criticisms I have offered in this paper. El Kassar's book came out while this paper was under review, and its rich account of ignorance merits careful engagement—one that I must, regrettably, leave for another occasion.

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