**Introduction**

Jessica Brown, University of St Andrews &

Mona Simion, University of Glasgow

**Abstract**

Traditionally, the notion of defeat has been central to epistemology, practical reasoning and ethics. Justification, be it moral, practical or epistemic, is widely thought to be defeasible, in that it can be undermined or undercut. However, the traditional conception of defeat has recently come under attack. Some have argued that the notion of defeat is problematically motivated; others that defeat is hard to accommodate within externalist or naturalistic accounts of knowledge or justification; others that the intuitions which support defeat can be explained in other ways. This volume brings together recent work to re-examine the very notion of defeat, and its place in epistemology, and in normativity theory at large.

**1. Introduction**

The notion of defeat has been central to epistemology, practical reasoning and ethics. Within epistemology, it is standardly assumed that a subject who knows that *p*, or justifiably believes that *p*, can lose this knowledge or justified belief by acquiring a so-called ‘defeater’, whether evidence that not-*p*, evidence that the process which produced her belief is unreliable, or evidence that she has likely misevaluated her evidence. Within ethics and practical reasoning, it is widely accepted that a subject may initially have a reason to do something although this reason is later defeated by her acquisition of further information.

The notion of defeat has been central to a wide range of different philosophical debates, including, but not limited to:

(1) **The nature of justification and knowledge**: since knowledge and justification are taken by many to be defeasible, the extent to which one account or another of the nature of knowledge/justification is able to account for/accommodate defeat constitutes an important ground for assessing its theoretical credentials (see e.g. Sudduth 2018).

(2) **Internalism versus externalism**: Several epistemologists worry that epistemic externalism has a hard time accommodating psychological defeat; at the same time, conversely, if justification supervenes on mental states alone, as per internalism, it seems mysterious that it could be defeated by normative defeaters lying outside of the cognizer’s ken (see e.g. Pappas 2017).

(3) **Epistemic** **norms and reasons**: For accommodating the phenomenon of defeat, debates on epistemic norms and epistemic reasons owe us, at a minimum, an account of epistemic normative overriding, as well as an account of reasons against belief (see e.g. Simion & Kelp 2017).

(4) **Evolutionary Debunking Arguments**: The nature of defeat has repercussions for the debate about the metaethical implications of evolutionary explanations of morality. It is argued that some, if not all, human moral beliefs are the product of evolutionary forces: we were selected for having useful rather than true moral beliefs. Learning about the evolutionary origin of our moral beliefs undercuts their prima facie justification, or so the challenge goes (see e.g. Silva 2016).

(5) **Evidence and Higher-Order Evidence**: Since evidence is widely taken to be defeasible, a plausible account of evidence should come with a corresponding plausible account of defeat. For instance, one important desideratum on any such account is that it explains the defeating power of higher-order evidence, namely of evidence that one’s first-order beliefs are the output of a flawed process (see e.g. Brown 2018).

(6) **Closure and Transmission**: One popular solution to alleged failures of closure principles for knowledge and transmission principles for warrant is known as ‘the defeat solution:’ roughly, the thought goes, closure and transmission hold *prima facie*, and the intuitions of failure are to be explained in terms of psychological defeat. This solution, of course, hangs on the assumption that there is such a thing to begin with: i.e., that psychological defeat is a genuine epistemic category (see e.g. Pryor 2014).

(7) **Disagreement**: One way to characterize the debate between conciliatory and steadfast views of disagreement is as centred around the question: Can the testimony of one’s peer carry defeating power? Steadfast-ism answers ‘no,’ Conciliationism answers ‘yes.’ The correct account of the nature of defeat can help settle the issue (see e.g. Frances and Matheson 2019).

(8) **Reductionism versus anti-reductionism about testimony**: Say that a suspect for murder S tells you that she did not do it. According to both of the main views in the epistemology of testimony, you are not justified to believe S. According to reductionism, that’s because you always need positive, non-testimonial reasons to believe what you are being told. In contrast, according to anti-reductionism, you are *prima facie* justified to believe S, but your justification is defeated. The correct nature of the nature of defeat will likely go a long way in the direction of settling the issue (see e.g. Green 2008).

It is useful to categorize contributions to the defeat literature as falling under one of the following two broad categories: (i) the nature and extent of defeat; (ii) kinds of defeaters. In what follows, we will first briefly run through the state of the art thus categorized (Sections #2 and #3). Last, we give an overview of the volume’s chapters and explain how they build on the state of the art (#4).

**2. The Nature and Extent of Defeat**

*2.1 Defeaters as Reasons*

The first and now considered the classic view on the nature of defeat in epistemology is due to Pollock (1986). According to this view, *D* is a defeater of *E*’s support for *p* for *S* if and only if (i) *E* is a reason to believe *p* for *S*, and (ii) *E*&*D* is not a reason to believe *p* for *S* (henceforth *Pollock’s view*).

The account has a lot going for it; it nicely promises to cut across normative domains, in virtue of being framed in terms of reasons; after all, epistemologists hardly enjoy exclusivity on reasons. With Pollock’s view in play, it is easy to see how we could generalize it to cover different targets (e.g. actions) and types (e.g. moral, prudential) of normativity. Second, Pollock’s view makes good on the intuitive thought that defeaters are actualizers of the possibility of a positive normative status to be overridden or undercut; what the view says, in a nutshell, is that defeaters are the kind of things that render a permissible belief impermissible.

More recently, though, Pollock’s view has come under heavy attack. First, as Chandler (2013) points out, Pollock’s view is problematic in that it cannot accommodate what can be called *justifying defeaters*. As the name suggests, a justifying defeater *JD* of *E*’s support for *p* for *S* does double duty: it prevents *E* from being a reason to believe p for *S* but, at the same time, it gives *S* a new reason to believe p. So *JD* is a defeater for *S*, but it does not fulfil clause (ii) of Pollock’s view, as *E*&*JD* still is a reason for *S* to believe p.

Second, the view has been found wanting on prior plausibility in virtue of the very fact that it’s stated in terms of reasons. Pollock’s view fits snugly with evidentialism about justification: the epistemic status of a belief is determined by the reasons for and against believing. As such, on Pollock’s view, there is no defeat without reasons. With the increased popularity of externalist, process-based accounts of justification, however, conceiving of defeat in terms of reasons is not very helpful. One reason for this is that, on standard forms of reliabilism (process reliabilism, virtue reliabilism, proper functionalism), one can be justified in forming a belief even in the absence of any reasons or evidence. If reasons don’t have any justificatory power, however, it is mysterious why they might have defeating powers. Furthermore, notable defenders of reliabilism deny that reasons are substantive epistemic normative categories to being with (e.g. Lyons 2009, Kornblith 2015).

*2.2 Defeaters as Reliable Processes*

Reliabilist theories of justification have been extremely popular in the last three decades and come in a variety of forms, but the gist of the view is that a belief is justified if and only if formed via a (normally) reliable procedure, or ability. Reliabilism is a theory of *prima facie* justification. As such, in line with normative theories in general, it needs a theory of defeat in order to hold water. The standard reliabilist account of defeat comes from Alvin Goldman:

**The Alternative Reliable Process Account** (ARP): *S*’s belief is defeated iff there are reliable (or conditionally reliable) belief-forming processes available to *S* such that, if *S* had used those processes in addition to the process actually used, *S* wouldn’t have held the belief in question (Goldman 1979).

One can see how ARP is an elegant reliabilist translation of the Pollockian thought that defeat is the kind of normative entity that, when taken in conjunction with the extant epistemic support for the relevant belief, fails to render it justified.

Bob Beddor (2015) is the *locus classicus* for criticism of ARP; if Beddor is right, ARP is both too weak and too strong. Against ARP’s sufficiency direction, Beddor offers the following case:

**Thinking About Unger:**Harry sees a tree in front of him at *t*. Consequently, he comes to believe the proposition TREE: 〈There is a tree in front of me〉 at *t*. Now, Harry happens to be very good at forming beliefs about what Peter Unger's 1975 time-slice would advise one to believe in any situation. Call this cognitive process his Unger Predictor […]. What's more, […] whenever it occurs to Harry that Unger would advise him (Harry) to suspend judgement about *p*, this causes Harry to […]suspend judgement about *p*. So if Harry had used his Unger Predictor, he would have come to […] suspend judgement regarding TREE.

What this cases shows is that ARP is too weak: contra ARP, for my belief that *p* to be defeated, it is not enough that I would change my mind about *p* in a counterfactual world due to employing some reliable process. What this objection identifies is that ARP is normatively too weak: just because I would change my mind in world *W*, it does not follow that I *should* change my mind in world *W*: defeat is a normative notion.

Here’s Beddor’s case against ARP’s necessity direction:

**Job Opening:** Masha tells Clarence that her department will have a job opening in the fall. Clarence believes Masha; assuming that Masha is usually reliable, Clarence's belief counts as prima facie justified. Sometime later, Clarence speaks with the head of Masha's department, Victor, who informs him that the job search was cancelled due to budget constraints. Now suppose that Clarence harbours a deep-seated hatred of Victor that causes him to disbelieve everything that Victor says; what's more, no amount of rational reflection would rid Clarence of this inveterate distrust. Consequently, he continues to believe that there will be a job opening in the fall.

This case shows that ARP is also too strong: just because, in all counterfactual words, I would irrationally and stubbornly hold on to my belief, it does not follow that I *should* do so. Once again, ARP is not normative enough to do the job it is supposed to do.

*2.3 Defeat Scepticism*

We have seen that, within epistemology, it is standardly assumed that a subject who knows that *p*, or justifiably believes that *p*, can lose this knowledge or justified belief by acquiring a defeater. Within ethics and practical reasoning, it is widely accepted that a subject may initially have a reason to do something although this reason is later defeated by her acquisition of further information.

However, the traditional conception of defeat has recently come under attack. Some have argued that the notion of defeat is problematically motivated (Lasonen-Aarnio 2010, 2012, 2014, Hawthorne and Srinivasan 2013). According to a second strand of attack, the notion of revisionary defeat is inconsistent with important desiderata on an account of knowledge or justification such as naturalism, externalism, evidentialism, or a rule-based account (Greco 2010, Lasonen-Aarnio 2010, 2012, forthcoming, Beddor 2015, Baker-Hytch and Benton 2015, Weatherson forthcoming). A further worry concerns how the defeat of a proposition’s status as evidence is compatible with a Bayesian framework (e.g. Weisberg 2009, Pryor 2013, Greco 2017). Furthermore, those who adopt a steadfast view in the peer disagreement literature can be understood as denying the defeating effect of evidence that a peer disagrees with one (e.g. Kelly 2005).

In the light of these attacks, some have suggested that we should diagnose the intuition that there is something wrong with someone who continues to believe that *p* in the face of defeating evidence not by the suggestion that the relevant belief loses its status as justified or as constituting knowledge but instead in some other way, e.g. by some variety of error theory.

According to (Williamson 2009: 315), for instance, when we intuit that one’s knowledge gets defeated, we are, in fact, confusing between whether one knows and whether it’s probable on one’s evidence that one knows. Another popular suggestion is that continuing to believe that *p* in such circumstances is to exhibit an epistemic disposition likely to lead to trouble in the long run (Lasonen-Aarnio 2010, Hawthorne and Srinivasan 2013) According to this view, in cases of alleged defeat, our intuitions fail to distinguish between impermissibility and mere blameworthiness generated by irresponsible behaviour.

Against Defeat Scepticism, in recent work, one of us (Brown 2018, Ch. 5) has argued that it involves an unnoticed and unacceptably high cost: once we explicitly distinguish between contributory (i.e., synchronic) and revisionary (i.e., diachronic) defeat, it is hard to argue against revisionary defeat. That is because it is deeply implausible to deny the contributory notion of defeat – i.e., roughly, evidence against *p* that is part of the initial body of evidence. For, to do so is effectively to deny that when evidence affects justification, it is one’s overall evidence that matters and not merely a part of it. But, once we accept the contributory notion of defeat, it is hard to deny the revisionary given the plausible epistemic symmetry between cases of contributory and revisionary defeat.

*2.4 Higher-Order Defeat*

Higher-order evidence is evidence about what evidence one possesses or what conclusions one’s evidence supports. One interesting question involving higher order evidence is: how should our beliefs respond to our beliefs about our beliefs when we do have higher-order evidence (Feldman 2005; Christensen 2010; Kelly 2005, 2010). A related issue in recent epistemology is explaining the defeating power of higher-order evidence namely of evidence that one’s first-order beliefs are the output of a flawed process (see for instance Christensen 2007, 2010, Kelly 2010, Lasonen-Aarnio 2014). Suppose, for illustration, that you are a pilot who calculates whether they have enough fuel to reach the closest airport. Upon calculating, you reach the conclusion that you have more than enough fuel to get to an airport fifty miles further than the one in your initial plan. Suppose you then glance at the altimeter to see that you’re at 10,500 feet and remember that hypoxia is a risk at altitudes of 10,000 feet and higher. You now have evidence that you might have hypoxia, and thus you have evidence that you might have miscalculated. Are you now justified in believing that you can get to the more distant airport? Are you justified in believing that your evidence supports that claim? (Christensen 2010).

Answering ‘yes’ to both questions is intuitively extremely problematic: it licenses an extremely form of dogmatism. Answering ‘no’ to the first question and yes to the second doesn’t seem very promising either: even if you can’t actually bring yourself to believe *F*, being justified in believing your evidence supports *F* prima facie justifies you in believing *F*. Answering ‘no’ to both questions is the traditional way to go for champions of defeat, and probably the most widely spread view in the literature. For one, this is the answer that suggests itself on both the main views on the nature of defeat (the reasons-based and the alternative reliable process-based accounts).

One highly debated view in the literature combines defeat scepticism with answering ‘yes’ to the first section and ‘no’ to the second question. On this view, then, your second order evidence fails to defeat your first order justification: you are still justified to hold your first order belief that you’ll reach the second airport, but you are no longer justified to believe that your evidence supports your claim. This view has become known as ‘level-splitting view’ (Lasonen-Aarnio 2010, 2014, Wedgwood 2011, Coates 2012). Thus, on this ‘level-splitting view’, the pilot is justified to believe that they’re going to reach the second airport and that their evidence does not support this conclusion (henceforth Rational Akrasia).

Feldman (2005: 110–111) argues that it is impossible for this belief to be both true and reasonable since the second conjunct undermines the reasonableness of the first conjunct (see also e.g. Elga 2007, Christensen 2007 and 2010, Horovitz 2014, and Titlebaum 2015). Furthermore, the level-splitting view has also been argued to licence problematic theoretical and practical reasoning. (e.g. Brown 2018, Horovitz 2014, Horovitz and Sliwa 2014). For instance, if Rational Akrasia obtains, if the pilot believes that she has enough fuel to reach the second airport, then it seems that she can exploit the claim that she has enough fuel to reach the second airport in her practical reasoning. For example, she might reason that since she has enough fuel to reach the second airport, she should not bother to land on the first airport. Nonetheless, while ignoring the first airport on the grounds that she has enough fuel to reach the second one, she ought to also admit that it’s unlikely on her evidence that she’ll reach the second airport! But acting in this way seems entirely unreasonable.

**3. Kinds of Defeaters**

*3.1 By Mechanism*

How does defeat work? Pollock’s distinction between rebutting (also known as overriding) and undercutting (also known as undermining) remains the classic answer two this question.

According to (Pollock 1986), there are two ways in which defeaters act: roughly, they either speak against the content of one’s belief, or against the credentials of its formation procedure. To see how this works, say that my friend Mary tells me that TRAIN: The train leaves at eight sharp, and thereby I come to justifiably believe that TRAIN. Now, say that my other good friend, Alice, sharply disagrees: according to Alice, the train leaves at 8.30. The thought is that, after receiving Alice’s testimony I am no longer (fully) justified in believing TRAIN, in virtue of acquiring evidence against TRAIN being the case. In this case, Alice’s testimony constitutes itself in a rebutting defeater for my believing TRAIN.

In contrast, undercutting defeaters speak against the credentials of the source of my belief. Consider for instance, an alternative scenario in which Alice tells me that Mary is a compulsive liar about trains’ schedules. After receiving her testimony, I am no longer (fully) justified in believing TRAIN based on Mary’s assertion.

On Pollock’s view, a rebutting defeater, then, for a belief that *p* of *S* is a reason for *S* for either believing non-*p* or for believing some proposition *q*, where *q* is incompatible with p. In that, on Pollock’s view, rebutting defeaters work by overriding the reasons in favour of believing that *p*. In contrast, undercutting defeaters don’t speak against *p*, but rather against the credentials of the belief formation procedure employed in forming the belief that *p*. An undercutting defeater for a belief that p of S is a reason of S that attacks the connection between S’s ground for believing p and *p*.

One worry that arises about Pollock’s distinction is whether it is plausible that it is an exclusive one, as the account seems to suggest. Pryor (2013), for instance, gives an example meant to illustrate that a rebutting defeater can, in virtue of its rebutting normative power, also constitute itself in an undercutting defeater: to see this, suppose S’s justification for believing p from evidence E is rebutted*,* as S acquires new evidence E\* that more strongly supports q, which is incompatible with p. When this happens, Pryor argues, S is left with the question of why p is false even if E is true. Pryor’s suggestion is that the best answer available to S is that, in the present context, E is not a reliable indicator of the truth of P. Hence E\* also acts as an undercutting defeater, since it supplies S with some evidence against the reliability of E in supporting p.

In contrast, Sturgeon (2014) argues that undercutting and rebutting defeaters exemplify two essentially different kinds of defeat. According to Sturgeon, for instance, in contrast to rebutting defeat, undercutting defeat is not fully independent: it acts in tandem with the subject’s belief that the source under attack is the one that is actually responsible for generating the belief in question.

*3.2 By Normative Status*

An important question addressed in the literature on defeat concerns the normative status of defeaters. The normative status question concerns the issue of whether defeaters need to be justified themselves. Lackey’s (1999, 2006) distinction between doxastic (aka merely psychological) and normative defeaters is central to this debate. In Lackey’s view, doxastic defeaters are merely psychological defeaters: they are beliefs of S, not necessarily true or justified, that speak in favour of the claim that S’s belief that p is false or is based on an unreliable source. Normative defeaters are (good) reasons for entertaining doxastic defeaters. According to Lackey, then, the answer to the normative status question is ‘no:’ defeaters need not be justified themselves.

Many epistemologists agree with Lackey, and it is fair to say that Lackey’s distinction – which itself entails that defeaters need not have positive epistemic status - has become a classic in the epistemological literature of the last years. According to Alvin Plantinga, for instance, (2000: 364-65) irrational and unwarranted beliefs can defeat beliefs that have impeccable epistemic status. Suppose I believe that I’m made of flesh, blood, and bone. I then come to believe, due to some cognitive disorder, that my head is made of blown glass. According to Plantinga, given that I come to hold this second belief I now have a defeater for the prior belief, even if the defeater was formed by way of cognitive malfunction. According to Plantinga, this case is one where I have a ‘rationality defeater:’ given that I acquire the second belief, it is no longer rational for me to hold the first one.

Contra Plantinga, Alston (2002) argues that only beliefs with positive epistemic status can defeat beliefs that have positive epistemic status, and, furthermore a belief *D* can defeat belief *A* only if *D* has greater warrant than *A*. One of us (Simion 2019) has also argued that the existence of merely psychological defeat implies the existence of merely psychological justification, i.e. it implies justification internalism. If this is so, externalists about justification should be especially worried about the category of mere psychological defeat.

*3.3 By Psychological Status*

Another important question for taxonomizing defeat concerns whether defeaters need to enjoy psychological status or not, or, more clearly put, whether only mental states (e.g. beliefs) can do defeating work, or, to the contrary, facts outside our skull can also have defeating influence over the normative status of our beliefs.

It is fair to say that it is widely acknowledged that, in the case of knowledge defeaters, the answer to the psychological status question is ’no:’ facts out there in the world can act upon our knowledgeable beliefs and thereby lower their epistemic status. The classic case to illustrate this point is Gilbert Harman’s (1973, pp. 143-44) Assassination case: Suppose that a political leader has been assassinated. A reporter who is a witness to the assassination dictates details of the event to his news agency so that the story may be included in the day’s final edition of the paper. Jill picks up the paper and reads the story and believes that the political leader has been assassinated. However, before Jill picks up the newspaper and reads the story, loyalists to the political leader declare on nationwide television that the bullet actually struck and killed someone in the political leader’s entourage. Jill reads the true story in the paper but misses the false report on television. Many people believe with Harman that Jill doesn’t know that the political leader has been assassinated. There are, however, several different views on the market as to what explains this datum. According to Swinburne (2001) and Pollock (1986), the explanation is social: the fact that Jill does not have knowledge is the consequence of there being a true proposition (suggestive of a defect in justification) that is widely believed in Jill’s society. Others think that the explanation lies with the easy availability of the relevant defeating information (Sudduth 2018).

We have seen that epistemologies that incorporate doxastic defeaters typically take them to defeat justification (Alston 1989: 238-39; Bergmann, 2006: 155-56) or some species of rationality (Plantinga, 2000, pp. 357-66). When it comes to non-doxastic defeaters, however, things look slightly differently: while non-doxastic defeaters are widely taken to have impact on knowledge, whether mere facts out there, in the world, can defeat justification is a more controversial issue. The epistemic internalist will have to answer ‘no: ’ after all, by internalism’s lights, justification supervenes exclusively on facts internal to the cognizer’s mind. Epistemic externalists, however, can afford to have mixed views about the issue. Sandy Goldberg (2016), for instance, argues that evidence one does not have, but that one *should* have had, can defeat one’s justification. He thinks this comes about in virtue of social facts, i.e. in virtue of the reasonable expectations of others grounded in norms internal to a social practice. According to Lackey (2008), too, mere normative (non-doxastic) defeat can defeat justification in cases where the believer has negligently ignored important counter-evidence, in virtue epistemic responsibility constituting a crucial component of epistemic justification.

**4. Summary of the Volume**

This volume brings together recent work to re-examine the very notion of defeat, and its place in epistemology, and in normativity theory at large.

**Defeaters as Indicators of Ignorance**

Clayton Littlejohn and Julien Dutant

In their contribution, Littlejohn and Dutant develop a novel account of the nature of rationality defeat. According to their view, defeaters are indicators of ignorance, evidence that we’re not in a position to know some target proposition. When the evidence that we’re not in a position to know is sufficiently strong and the probability that we can know is too low, it is not rational to believe. Littlejohn and Dutant argue that their account retains all the virtues of the more familiar approaches that characterise defeat in terms of its connection to reasons to believe or to confirmation but provides a better approach to higher-order defeat. Furthermore, it is argued, the view provides a unified normative framework, one that gives a unifying explanation of the toxicity of different defeaters that is grounded in a framework that either recognises knowledge as the norm of belief or identifies knowledge as the fundamental epistemic good that full belief can realise.

**The Structure of Defeat: Pollock’s Evidentialism, Lackey’s Framework, and Prospects for Reliabilism**

Peter Graham and Jack Lyons

The chapter by Peter Graham and Jack Lyons investigates the structure of defeat. It has two main aims; the first is mostly critical: it argues that several classical distinctions that the literature on defeat endorses are problematic. In particular, according to Graham and Lyons, the traditional categorization of defeaters as doxastic and normative is mistaken: first, unjustified beliefs can’t defeat, therefore there are no such things as merely doxastic defeaters; second, the reason why ignored evidence can defeat is different from the rationale traditionally taken to support the existence of normative defeat. The second aim of the chapter is to develop a novel, reliabilism-friendly view of the nature of defeat. On this view, having a defeater for a belief that p is a matter of either having warrant to believe not-p, or else having warrant to believe that her warrant for believing that p are inadequate (where warrants is understood in non-evidentialist terms).

**Losing knowledge by thinking about thinking**

Jennifer Nagel

Jennifer Nagel’s contribution puts forth a novel defense of infallibilism in epistemology against the threat coming from the phenomenon of defeat. Defeat cases are often taken to show that even the most securely-based judgment can be rationally undermined by misleading evidence. Jennifer Nagel argues that defeat cases really involve not an exposure of weakness in the basis of a judgment, but a shift in that basis. For example, when threatening doubts are raised about whether conditions are favorable for perception, one shifts from a basis of unreflective perceptual judgment to a basis of conscious inference. In these cases, the basis of one’s knowledge is lost, rather than rationally undermined.

**Dispositional Evaluations and Defeat**

Maria Lasonen-Aarnio

In her contribution, Maria Lasonen-Aarnio argues that what explains the intuition of impermissibility in putative cases of defeat resides not in the impermissibility of the target beliefs themselves, but rather in the believer’s criticisability for manifesting bad epistemic dispositions to believe. Subjects who retain their beliefs in the face of higher-order evidence that those very beliefs are outputs of flawed cognitive processes are at least very often criticisable. This, however, on Lasonen-Aarnio’s account, is not because such higher-order evidence defeats various epistemic statuses such as justification and knowledge. Instead, she argues that they manifest dispositions that are bad relative to a range of candidate epistemic successes such as true belief and knowledge. In particular, being disposed to only give up belief in response to higher-order evidence *when that evidence is not misleading* would require subjects to have dispositions that discriminate between cases in which their original cognitive processes is fine, and cases in which they merely seemed to be fine. But, according to Lasonen-Aarnio, such dispositions are not normally humanly feasible.

**Suspension, Higher-Order Evidence, and Defeat**

Errol Lord (Pennsylvania) and Kurt Sylvan (Southampton)

Lord and Sylvan’s contribution focuses on the epistemic effect of higher-order evidence. The chapter makes two main claims: a negative and a positive one. Their negative claim is that extreme views about the issue – claiming either that higher-order evidence has trumping effects, or that it has none whatsoever – are mistaken. The positive view in turn has two parts. The first part defends the idea that higher-order evidence provides direct reasons for suspending judgment that typically leave evidential support relations on the first order intact: instead of destroying these relations, the reasons for suspension defeat or compete with the epistemic reasons for belief generated by these relations. Secondly, the Lord and Sylvan framework purports to explain how this defeat is possible by showing how these distinctive reasons for suspension of judgment flow from the constitution of suspension of judgment.

**Reasons for Reliabilism**

Bob Beddor

Beddor’s contribution motivates and develops a synthesis between two leading approaches to justification which are typically developed in isolation from each other; the first one comes from the reliabilist tradition, which maintains that a belief is justified provided that it is reliably formed, while the second one comes from the ‘Reasons First’ tradition, which claims that a belief is justified provided that it is based on reasons that support it. On the view proposed by Beddor, justification is understood in terms of an agent’s reasons for belief, which are in turn analyzed along reliabilist lines: an agent’s reasons for belief are the states that serve as inputs to their reliable processes. Beddor argues that this synthesis allows each tradition to profit from the other’s explanatory resources. In particular, it enables reliabilists to explain epistemic defeat without abandoning their naturalistic ambitions.

**Knowledge, Action, and Defeasibility**

Carlotta Pavese

Pavese’s essay reviews some motivations for a ‘knowledge-centred psychology’ — a psychology where knowledge enters centre stage in an explanation of intentional action, — it outlines a novel argument for the claim that knowledge is required for intentional action, and discusses some of its consequences, in particular for the debate on the defeasibility of know-how. As Pavese argues, a knowledge-centred psychology motivates the intellectualist view that know-how is a species of know-that. In its more extreme form, this view is committed to an epistemologically substantial claim — i.e., that the epistemic profile of know-how is the same as that of propositional knowledge. If that is correct, one corollary of intellectualism is that the defeasibility of know-how patterns with that of knowledge.  Against recent challenges, Pavese argues that this prediction is burned out, for know-how and knowledge are indeed defeated exactly when one’s ability to intentionally act is defeated.

**Undercutting Defeat: When it Happens and Some Implications for Epistemology**

Matthew McGrath

McGrath's contribution investigates recent scepticism about the Pollockian operative commonality between rebutting and undercutting defeat. In particular, the chapter looks into the plausibility of the claim that the mechanism of undercutting defeat, in contrast to that of rebutting defeat, occurs only in conjunction with certain higher-order contributions, i.e., with beliefs about the basis on which one does or would believe. McGrath argues that that in the case of defeat of inferential justification, undercutting defeat is a genuine phenomenon and takes roughly the shape Pollock suggests, not needing help from higher-order beliefs or justifications. However, according to McGrath, for noninferential justification the Pollockian account is in trouble. This difference, it is argued, has important implications for epistemology: for one, what seems to follow is that there is less noninferential perceptual or testimonial justification than is commonly thought.

**The Normativity of Knowledge and the Scope and Sources of Defeat**

Sanford C. Goldberg

In his contribution, Sandy Goldberg investigates the nature and scope of defeat with an aim to argue in support of the category of normative defeat, as well as in favour of there being a social dimension to knowledge. To this effect, the chapter appeals to a prior grasp of the normativity of knowledge itself – its role in entitling a subject to confidence and in authorizing others to believe on the strength of one’s epistemic standing – to shed light on the nature and scope of defeat. Goldberg’s strategy is to focus on cases in which an otherwise epistemically well-positioned subject fails to enjoy these normative standings, and to argue that the best explanation is the presence of normative defeaters.

**Competing Reasons**

Justin Snedegar

# Snedegar’s chapter investigates different ways that reasons bearing on our options can compete with one another to determine the overall normative status of those options. Two key claims defended in the chapter are (i) that the theory of this competition must include a distinct role for reasons *against*, in addition to reasons *for*, and (ii) that the theory must allow for *comparative* verdicts about which options are more strongly supported than others, rather than simply which options are required or permitted. Snedegar rejects a simple and familiar balancing account of the competition, as well as an account that understands the competition in terms of giving and answering criticisms of the options, and he introduces a new account that incorporates a distinct role for reasons against.

**Perceptual Reasons and Defeat**

Mark Schroeder

Schroeder’s contribution focuses on the defeasibility of perceptual evidence. If something looks red to you, it is reasonable to believe that it is red, but if you realise you are wearing rose-tinted glasses, it may not be reasonable at all to believe this, unless you have some independent source of evidence. Schroeder compares several models for how to understand this phenomenon. These models differ in their answers to two questions: what evidence we get about the external world through perception, and what our having that evidence consists in. According to Schroeder, some models have the advantage of fitting seamlessly into general accounts of non-monotonic inference, but carry with them a commitment to a restricted space of possible options in general epistemology. Their challenge is to extract an adequate treatment of objective defeat from their elegant treatment of subjective defeat. Other models lead to commitments about the differences in what explains reasonable belief in good and bad cases. Their challenge is to extract an adequate treatment of subjective defeat from their elegant treatment of objective defeat. According to Schroeder, his favourite, non-factive content model shares neither of these problems, and it offers parallel elegant treatments of both objective and subjective defeat.

**References**

Alston, W. (1989). *Epistemic Justification*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Alston, W. (2002). Plantinga, Naturalism, and Defeat. In James Beilby (ed), *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga’s Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 176-203.

Baker-Hytch, M. and Benton, M. (2015). Defeatism defeated. *Philosophical Perspectives* 29, 1: 40–66.

Beddor, B. (2015). Process Reliabilism’s Troubles with Defeat, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 65(259): 145–159.

Benton, M. (2014). Knowledge Norms. Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/kn-norms/>

Bergmann, M. (2006). *Justification without Awareness*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brown, J. (2018). *Fallibilism: Evidence and Knowledge*. Oxford University Press.

Chandler, J. (2013). Defeat Reconsidered. *Analysis*, Volume 73, Issue 1: 49–51.

Christensen, D. (2007). Epistemology of Disagreement: the Good News. *Philosophical Review*, 116(2), 187-217.

Christensen, D. (2010). Higher-Order Evidence. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 81(1), 185-215

Coates, A. (2012). Rational epistemic akrasia. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1, 2: 113–24.

Elga. A. (2007). Reflection and disagreement. *Noûs* 41, 3: 478–502.

Feldman, R. (2005). Respecting the Evidence. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 19, Epistemology: 95– 119.

Frances. B. and Matheson, J. (2019). Disagreement, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Winter 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/disagreement/>.

Goldberg, S. (2016) On the Epistemic Significance of Evidence You Should Have Had. *Episteme* 13 (4): 449-470.

Goldman, A. (1979). What Is Justified Belief? In G.S. Pappas (ed.), *Justification and Knowledge*, Dordrecht: Reidel, pp. 1–25; reprinted in A.I. Goldman, *Reliabilism and Contemporary Epistemology*, NewYork: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 29–49.

Greco, J. (2010). *Knowledge as an Achievement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Greco, D. (2017). Cognitive mobile homes. *Mind* 126, 501: 93–121.

Green, C.R. (2008). The Epistemology of Testimony. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, available at http://www.iep.utm.edu/ep-testi/

Hawthorne, J. and Srinivasan, A. (2013). Disagreement without transparency: some bleak thoughts. In Christensen and Lackey, eds., *The Epistemology of Disagreement: New Essays*. Oxford University Press: 9–30.

Harman, G. (1973). *Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Horowitz, S. (2014) Epistemic Akrasia. *Nous*, 48(4): 718-744.

Horovitz, S. and Sliwa, P. (2015). Respecting *all* the evidence. *Philosophical Studies*. DOI: 10. 1007/s11098-015-0446-9.

Kelly, T. (2005). The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement. In J. Hawthorne & T. S. Gendler(eds.), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology* Vol. 1 (167-196) Oxford University Press.

Kelly, T. (2010). Peer Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence. In R. Feldman & T. A. Warfield (eds.), *Disagreement.* Oxford University Press: 111-174.

Kornblith, H. (2015). The Role of Reasons in Epistemology. *Episteme* 12 (2): 225-239.

Lackey, J. (1999). Testimonial Knowledge and Transmission. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 49: 471-490

Lackey, J. (2008). *Learning from Words*. Oxford University Press.

Lasonen-Aarnio, M. (2010). Unreasonable knowledge. *Philosophical Perspectives* 24: 1–21.

Lasonen-Aarnio, M. (2012). Higher-order evidence and the limits of defeat. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXXXVIII: 314–45.

Lasonen-Aarnio, M. (2014). The dogmatism puzzle. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 92, 3: 417–32.

Lasonen-Aarnio, M. (Forthcoming). Enkrasia or evidentialism. *Philosophical Studies*.

Lyons, J. (2009). *Perception and Basic Beliefs: Zombies, Modules, and the Problem of the External World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pappas, G. (2017). Internalist vs. Externalist Conceptions of Epistemic Justification, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/justep-intext/>.

Plantinga, A. (2000). *Warranted Christian Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Pollock, J. (1986). *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*. Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Pryor. 2013. “Problems for credulism”. In Tucker (ed.), *Seemings and Justification*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 89–131.

Kelp, C. and Simion, M. (2017) Criticism and Blame in Action and Assertion (with C. Kelp). *Journal of Philosophy,*114(2): 76-93.

Simion, M. (2019). *Epistemic Norms and Epistemic Functions*. Manuscript.

Silva, P. (2016). Etiological Information and Diminishing Justification. *Inquiry*, 55: 1-25.

Sturgeon, S. (2014). Pollock on defeasible reasons. *Philosophical Studies*, 169(1), 105-118.

Sudduth, M. (2018). Defeaters in Epistemology. Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/ep-defea/#SH1b>

Swinburne, R. (2001). *Epistemic Justification*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Titelbaum, M. (2015). Rationality’s fixed point (or: in defence of right reason). In Gendler S. T. & J. Hawthorne (eds), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology* Vol. 5 (pp. 253-294). Oxford University Press.

Weatherson, B. (Forthcoming). *Normative Externalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weisberg, J. (2009). Commutativity or holism? A dilemma for conditionalizers. *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 60: 793–812.

Wedgwood, R. (2011). Justified inference. *Synthese* 189, 2: 1–23.

Williamson, T. (2009). Replies” In Greenough and Pritchard, eds. *Williamson on Knowledge*. Oxford University Press: 279–384.