Resistance to Evidence
Book Proposal

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1. Statement of Aims

Normative work in epistemology is, for the most part,[1] negative, in that it concerns itself with restricting what we are permitted to e.g. believe, assert, or use as a premise in reasoning. '*Resistance to Evidence*' is concerned with positive epistemology: it argues that resistance to easily available evidence constitutess a breach of one's epistemic obligations.

The notion of resistance to evidence, while subject to thorough investigation in social psychology, is acutely under-theorised in the philosophical literature. As a result, we are still to understand the normativity of the resistance phenomenon: what is (epistemically) wrong with resistance to evidence? what are its triggers? how does the normativity of resistance to evidence interact with norms for inquiry and the epistemic justification of belief?

The book develops and defends a full account of the nature and normativity of resistance to evidence, according to which resistance to evidence is an instance of input-level epistemic malfunctioning. The account is naturalistically friendly, and enjoys high normative prior plausibility, in that in construes resistance to evidence as an instance of a more general type of malfunction often encountered in biological traits the proper function of which is input-dependent. The account is developed in conjunction with novel knowledge-first views of evidence, defeat, permissible suspension, and disinformation. At the core of this epistemic normative picture lies the notion of knowledge indicators, as facts that increase the probability of knowing conditional on proper basing; resistance to evidence is construed as a failure to uptake knowledge indicators.

The book will consist of 70% new material and it builds on an account put forth in my article '**Resistance to Evidence and the Duty to Believe**' (Winner of the Young Epistemology Prize 2021, forthcoming in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*).

2. Detailed Synopsis

PART I: The Epistemology and Psychology of Resistance to Evidence

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[1] See Fricker (2007), Chrisman (2008), Feldman (2008), Goldberg (2016, 2017), Jenkins-Ichikawa (2020), Kornblith (2001), Lackey (2019), (Simion Forthcoming) for exceptions. In putting this distinction in terms of positive vs. negative epistemology, I follow (Jenkins-Ichikawa 2020).

CHAPTER I
Resistance to Evidence: Triggers and Epistemic Status

This chapter dwells at the intersection of the social psychology of knowledge resistance and epistemic normativity to offer the first full taxonomy of resistance to evidence. It first individuates the phenomenon via paradigmatic instances, and then it taxonomizes it according to two parameters: (1) paradigmatic triggering conditions, and (2) epistemic normative status. I argue that the phenomenon of resistance to evidence is epistemologically narrower but psychologically broader than assumed in extant literature in social psychology (Kahan 2013, Klintman 2019). In the rest of this part of book, I examine extant literature on evidence, justification, and defeat, in search for the normative resources required to fully accommodate the psychological breadth and epistemic normative status of the phenomenon of resistance.

CHAPTER II:
Evidence You Should Have Had

This chapter considers one popular way to account for cases of resistance as cases of evidence one *should have had*, where the normative failure at stake is taken to be either a (1) breach of social normativity (Goldberg 2018), or (2) breach of moral normativity (Feldman 2004). I argue that the social normative option is too weak in that it allows problematic social norms to encroach on epistemic normativity, and that the appeal to moral oughts fails on both theoretical grounds – in that it cannot accommodate widely accepted epistemic conditions on moral blame – and on extensional adequacy.

CHAPTER III
Internalism and Resistance to Evidence

This chapter looks into ways for the epistemic internalist to explain epistemic impermissibility in resistance cases. I first look at the phenomenal account of evidence and defeat (Huemer 2007, Silins 2005) and argue the view faces a normative distinctiveness problem, sourced in its insensitivity to seemings' etiology. Second, I move on to examining internalist responses to the etiology problem (Siegel 2012, McGrath 2013). I argue that both accounts face normative difficulties in (1) distinguishing bad etiologies from good etiologies, and (2) explaining why the former are bad, while the latter are good, in purely internalistic terms.

CHAPTER IV
Externalism and Resistance to Evidence

While externalism is in principle capable to accommodate the phenomenon of resistance in virtue of countenancing external sources of

epistemic normative pressure, I argue that the main extant views lack the resources to account for all cases of resistance. I first examine factive externalism – i.e. Williamson's (2000) E=K - and argue that, since resistant cognizers don't take up the relevant facts in the world to begin with, the view fails to predict epistemic impermissibility in resistance cases. I also look at and dismiss several ways in which the champion of E=K might attempt to account for what's going wrong in resistance cases – i.e. via employing notions such as epistemic dispositions one should have had, and epistemic blameworthiness – and argue that the view faces insurmountable difficulties. Finally, I move on to less radical, non-factive externalisms and investigate the potential of prominent reliabilist views – indicator reliabilism (Comesaña 2020), process reliabilism (Goldman 1979), and virtue reliabilism (Sosa 2021, Sylvan & Sosa 2018, Turri 2010) - to account for the phenomenon of resistance. I argue that these views are either to agent centric, or too agent neutral to successfully account for resistance cases.

Part II
Resistance to Evidence and Epistemic Proper Function

CHAPTER V
Epistemic Oughts

This chapter does two main things: first, it surveys the literature on epistemic oughts (Chrisman 2008, Feldman 2004, Kornblyth 2001, Ryan 2003), in search for a satisfactory way to accommodate the phenomenon of resistance to evidence within a normative framework for epistemic obligations. Second, it identifies a set of desiderata for a satisfactory account of the normative breach present in cases of resistance to evidence. I argue that the view we are after should be naturalistic, should exhibit prior normative plausibility and be generalisable to other normative domains, but also, at the same time, have enough 'normative oomph' to explain the intuitive categoricity of epistemic normative constraints.

CHAPTER VI
Resistance to Evidence as Epistemic Malfunction

This chapter argues that resistance to evidence is an instance of epistemic malfunction. It first puts forth a normative picture according to which the epistemic function of our cognitive systems is generating knowledge, and epistemic norms drop right out of this function. Second, it shows how this picture accommodates epistemic obligations, which, in turn, explain the normative failure instantiated in cases of resistance to evidence. According to this view, cognitive systems that fail to take up easily available evidence and defeat instantiate input-level malfunctioning. Input-level malfunctioning is a common phenomenon in traits the proper functioning of which is input dependent, such as e.g. our

respiratory systems. Since our cognitive systems, I argue, are systems the proper functioning of which is input dependent, we should expect the failure at stake in resistance cases.

CHAPTER VII
Resistance and Knowledge Indicators

This chapter puts forth an integrated view of evidence, defeat, and proper suspension in terms of knowledge and ignorance indicators, and it shows that it is superior to its competition in that it can account for the epistemic impermissibility of resistance cases, as well as for the effect resistance to evidence has on doxastic justification. Very roughly, knowledge indicators are facts that enhance closeness to knowledge: A fact F is evidence for S that p is the case iff S is in a position F and F increases the evidential probability that p for S. Conversely, defeaters are ignorance indicators, in that one is in a position to know them, and they reduce one's evidential probability that p. Permissible suspension, in turn, is instantiated when the evidential probability that p for S is .5 – in effect, when S has equally weighty knowledge and ignorance indicators for p.

Part 3
Theoretical upshots

CHAPTER VIII
Epistemic Oughts and Epistemic Dilemmas

The following chapters examine theoretical upshots of the view proposed. The account developed so far delivers the result that epistemic justifiers constitute epistemic oughts. In this chapter I discuss the worry that such accounts threaten to give rise to widely spread epistemic dilemmas between paradigmatic epistemic norms. I argue for a modest scepticism about epistemic dilemmas. In order to do that, I first point out that not all normative conflicts constitute dilemmas: more needs to be the case. Second, I look into the moral dilemmas literature and identify a set of conditions that need to be at work for a mere normative conflict to be a genuine normative dilemma. Last, I argue that, while our epistemic life is peppered with epistemic normative conflict, epistemic dilemmas are much harder to find than we thought.

CHAPTER IX
Scepticism as Resistance to Evidence

The view of evidence, defeat, and suspension put forth here delivers the result that paradigmatic scepticism about knowledge and justification is an instance of resistance to evidence. This chapter argues that this result is correct. In order to do that, I look at extant neo-Moorean responses to purported instances of failure of knowledge closure (Pryor 2004, Williamson 2007) and warrant transmission and argue that they are either to weak – in that they concede too much to the sceptic – or too

strong – in that they cannot accommodate the intuition of reasonableness surrounding sceptical arguments. I propose a novel neo-Moorean explanation of the data, relying on my preferred account of defeat and permissible suspension, on which the sceptic is in impermissible suspension, but in fulfilment of their contrary to duty epistemic obligations.

CHAPTER X
Knowledge and Disinformation

Ideally, we want to resist mis/disinformation, but not evidence. If this is so, we need accounts of misinformation and disinformation to match the epistemic normative picture developed so far. The main account of mis/disinformation on the market (Fallis 2015) has three main features: it is hearer-oriented, in that it accounts for the nature of mis/disinformation in terms of its effects on hearers, it is functionalist, in that it takes mis/disinformation to admit of a functional but not a dismantling analysis, and it is truth-first. This chapter argues that the first two features are desirable, but they require us to rethink the third: mis/disinformation can occur in the absence of false belief generation, via other varieties of ignorance generation – like justification or belief defeat. The right view of mis/disinformation is knowledge-first, not truth first: misinformation and disinformation consist of knowledge underminers. This, in turn, nicely coheres with the knowledge-centric picture of resistance to evidence developed by this book: we should resist knowledge underminers and take up knowledge indicators.

3. Market

As explained above under 'Statement of Aims', the book promises to make a novel and timely contribution to the literature. The audience for this volume would primarily be academics and research students working in philosophy, but also social psychologists working in knowledge resistance, as well as media and communication theorists. It would also serve as a valuable research resource for students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels who work on related areas within philosophy (e.g., epistemology, general normativity theory). Given the centrality of epistemic normativity, justified belief, evidence and defeat to contemporary philosophical debate, and its importance for a number of areas of analytic philosophy, it is anticipated that this monograph will prove very popular anywhere where analytic philosophy is prominent – i.e., particularly in the North American, European, and Australasian markets.

4. The Competition

Stricto sensu, there is no competition for this book: this is the first full treatment of resistance to evidence in the philosophical literature. If we conceive the topic more broadly, though, as having to do the normative strength of epistemic norms, knowledge, evidence, and defeat, the main competition for this book is:

Brown, J. (2018). *Fallibilism: Evidence and Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Brown, J. & Simion, M. (eds) (2021). *Reasons, justification, and Defeat*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Chrisman, M. (In Press). *Belief, Agency, And Knowledge: Essays on Epistemic Normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Comesana, J. (2020). *Being Rational and Being Right*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Goldberg, S. (2018) *To the Best of Our Knowledge: Social Expectations and Epistemic Normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Sosa, E. (In Press). *Epistemic Explanations: A Theory of Telic Normativity, and What it Explains*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Williamson, T. (2000). *Knowledge and Its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

5. Format and Timeline

The final version of the manuscript will be delivered no later than June 2023. The manuscript is expected to be around 90000 words including notes and references. It is not expected to contain any diagrams, illustrations or tables.