

Review of: "Either you know or you've gotta believe"

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Review of **Either you know or you've gotta believe**, <https://www.qeios.com/read/IMUAZJ>

This is a typical and good draft that is very useful for the author and, without irony, very useful to commenting, namely, to thinking about the ideas proposed in the work. It is a draft form because it proposes some aims – here, the relationships between knowledge and belief, the entailment thesis, and the role of action in distinguishing knowledge from belief – and gives some arguments as they are provided by the literature, but it does not expose the viewpoints of the author synthetically. It is a preliminary form also because – the topic being complicated – it seems to be a little disordered, shredded: it throws the references of different standpoints without being preceded by a clear display of the ideas at stake. This is because the paper only familiarises the author and readers with the above problems. Dryly, there are no conclusions of the author regarding synthetically the problems because there is no theoretical introduction / analysis, but nevertheless there are suggestions.

Just these suggestions are important and valuable. Starting from the title: it spells “let’s be careful to the confusion of both we, epistemologists, and people make between knowing and believing”. The humoristic aspect of the title is not a signal of a fashionable informal way of discourse and behaviour, but an allusion to the present strong authoritative tendency to declare any critical evaluation of information as “disinformation”, people being allowed only to believe it. At least this is my reading.

Even the topic of the work is challenging nowadays. The official premise is that knowledge is (only) information – the knowing process being reduced to the ability of assuming information, as if the scrutiny of information would be only an obscure internal affair of mind or would not anymore be important. Or, in order to understand this premise (and its consequences) the epistemological analysis is capital.

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The reviews of the article are benevolent and useful to the author, irrespective of their standpoints. So, I do not repeat their remarks, but I have to make other ones.

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First, since it is about an epistemological survey, one ought to understand the content and limits of epistemology: the more so the article focuses on a clear and specific epistemological problem, the relationships (as distinction, or overlapping) of knowledge and belief. Epistemology inquires the *cognitive modes*, and the *states of thinking* related to the cognitive modes, and not the states of consciousness: knowledge, opinions, suppositions, guessing, judging are cognitive modes;

beliefs are states of thinking; and decisions and will, for instance, are (only) states of consciousness, irrespective of their strong connections with the former, and of their thinking and cognitive basis. And even though we know that the ultimate explanation of a system is outside the system, we cannot explain the cognitive modes by extra cognitive causes. (If we want to explain beliefs, the will to have or popularity of such or such belief do not explain the peculiarity of belief towards cognitive modes). We need to discover the *structural-functional* features of a cognitive mode towards other cognitive modes (for instance, knowledge as *epistémê*, and opinion): so, within the system of cognitive modes, not within the system of states of consciousness. As we need to discover the structural-functional features of states of thinking towards the cognitive modes. If this “identity principle” would not exist, the defining process and the definitions would fall apart. (Concretely, the will to act is related not only to beliefs, but also to knowledge).

Accordingly, and still from a methodological standpoint, I think it is necessary to not equate the discussion of structural-functional features of cognitive modes – thus, in any historical occurrence and genetical manifestation – with this occurrence and manifestation. The fact that one may know X after he believed it does not put knowing X tantamount to believe it.

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Secondly, the objects of cognitive modes are *cognisance*, and I think this aspect is missing from the approach that mixes the cognitive states and the states of thinking and of consciousness. The peculiarity of cognisance towards states of thinking and consciousness is that they are positing *around the truth-false end and criterion*. Thus, on the one hand, there is a big difference between cognisance and wills, images etc.; while on the other hand, there is a big difference between knowledge and belief: only knowledge has as core the truth-false end, while the belief as such *moves this end to the margins of knowledge*, because it rarefies its correspondent or possible knowledge. (Actually, not the truth-value is important in beliefs, but their own state of thinking as labelling). The role of truth-false end in the cognitive modes is a main criterion to differentiate knowledge from belief.

However, and rather this is the main distinctive criterion and feature, knowledge means to have been *scrutinized the logic* (causes, antecedents and posteriors, succession) *of a cognizance and, before, of data and information* which were received also as beliefs. A new-born has before him data, which become information in their mental processing, but which do not transform into beliefs. The new-born does not believe anything: he tries to understand the data and information in order to cope and to maximize his pleasure to live. Consequently, he tries to know, he judges etc. Only after, so based on knowledge, begins he to trust his mother etc. (because he knows that she cares of him, caress him, with a word learned late, loves him).

This difference of the *logical analysis* gives knowledge the priority in cognitive modes and towards the states of thinking. Letting aside the above genetic example, “knowledge is first” because it is “reproducible”, i.e., it can be assumed *on logical basis* by other individuals, and obviously “repeatable” by the same subject in different contexts. These attributes borrowed from science suggest not only the fact that science is a model for knowledge but also that it’s always on the basis of logical analysis of *proving* that we can delimit knowledge from opinions and from beliefs. Both opinions and beliefs

are “replicable”, able to be copied, but outside the process of logical scrutiny. Knowledge means that the thinker beings always can explain in their mind the proven logic of cognition. Even when they use a cognizance in a mechanical manner: in the last instance, they can explain in their mind why do they use it. So, they do not believe it: they know it positively.

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Accordingly and *thirdly*, by speaking about cognizance, we must not forget that they are the result of *data* processing in the mind, so of creating *information*. Cognizance is information that is also treated *in mente* logically and thus that receives an overall meaning: thus, a truth-value. But since it's about data and information, we understand both theirs and cognizance's *context dependence* and that their relativity *does not dissolve the logical criteria of knowledge*

In its turn, belief – which is also context dependent – does not imply the analysis of the believed cognizance, thus neither its meanings, they are taken for granted. In this respect, belief is either *assumption* of cognizance (belief as *credere*, to rely on, but not as faith, obviously) or its *confirmation* (belief as *convincere*, to win by proving): thus, a “measure” of cognizance, their quantitative evaluation, namely in proportions augmenting or minimizing till annulling them. So, if we must not confuse the two meanings of belief, in both forms, beliefs are a *cover*, an *envelope* of cognizance. This is the *strict* sense, putting beliefs as a mode of thinking. They are feelings involving an attitude towards cognizance. Thus, strictly structurally, the belief is exterior to cognizance, while only in a *larger* sense is it a cognitive mode.

However, if “knowledge is first”, knowledge and belief are not mutually exclusive. As Williamson pointed out, knowledge is not definable in terms of beliefs. But: one can know and believe *at the same time*, in both forms of beliefs (I know theory X and I'm convinced about it; I believe – in the sense of *credere* – rather theory Y that I also know). I either believe or disbelieve, and I can feel both by knowing the objects of my feelings. As well as in a larger sense, we can consider that we start from beliefs which we then try to understand/scrutiny.

These *dialectical* situations of cognitive and thinking modes – they can be united but they can also diverge from each other, apparently taking over the priority, taking part of each other etc. – neither annul the core, knowledge around which all states of mind spin, and impose to rethink their existing definitions. We need the discipline to construct structural-functional definitions – thus relative only to cognitive aspects of cognition – and, for instance, distinguish the process of knowing (as only as an epistemic one) from the concept of knowledge. Anyway, we have to be both disciplined and, actually just from this aim, open to discuss the dialectic: the dynamic of modes and their intertwining, their contradictions, the criteria of analysis and also the criteria of the context dependent subjects, the awareness of cognitive and thinking modes, what the critical spirit in knowledge does mean.

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The dialogue of standpoints sketched by the paper was very useful: it threw light on the historical endeavour of postwar Anglophone philosophers to cope to both the dialectical situations of cognitive and extra cognitive modes as such, and the strong tendency to overlap this dialectic with a theory that sometimes confuses the strict meaning of cognition, that separates it from other states of thinking, and larger senses of the meanings of cognition. And this endeavour is very interesting – thus necessary to be known – just in order to better understand the methodological and theoretical problems

of cognition. And the historical, context dependent models of thinking, whose reason is just their exceeding: in this respect, Antognazza's study is significant.

The text was instructive and challenging for me.

This draft as such, a moment in the scientific research, is challenging: to go forward, and I know that the author will proceed. I already congratulate her.

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