

Epistemic Levels

by
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Abstract

In this dissertation I defend some controversial “level-bridging” principles in epistemology. In the first chapter, I defend the KK principle—the principle that if one knows that P , then one knows that one knows that P . I argue that saying plausible things about higher-order *interpersonal* knowledge requires rejecting some popular arguments against KK, and that many apparent counterexamples to KK can be explained away by appeal to contextualism about knowledge. In the second chapter, I take up the topic of epistemic akrasia—the state of believing some proposition P , while believing that one oughtn’t believe that P . While many take for granted that epistemic akrasia is always irrational (and least implicitly endorse a level-bridging principle in the process), there are some apparently powerful arguments for holding that epistemic akrasia must sometimes be rational. I argue that once we get clearer on the descriptive/psychological question of what sort of state epistemic akrasia *is*, we can resolve this puzzle in favor of the intuitive view that epistemic akrasia is a species of irrationality. In the third chapter, I appeal to level-bridging principles to respond to some recent arguments to the effect that certain epistemological debates are somehow non-substantive, or merely verbal. If my argument succeeds, this constitutes a kind of indirect support for level-bridging principles—if we think that epistemological debates typically *are* substantive, we face some pressure to adopt level-bridging principles to explain this.

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