

## WHAT IS IGNORANCE?

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This article offers an analysis of ignorance. After a couple of preliminary remarks (§ 1), I endeavor to show that, contrary to what one might expect and to what nearly all philosophers assume, being ignorant is not equivalent to failing to know, at least not on one of the stronger senses of knowledge (§ 2). Subsequently, I offer two definitions of ignorance and argue that one's definition of ignorance crucially depends on one's account of belief (§ 3). Finally, I illustrate the relevance of my analysis by paying attention to four philosophical problems in which ignorance plays a crucial role (§ 4).

### 1. Preliminary Distinctions

Before embarking on our exploration, let me make two preliminary remarks, one on knowledge and one on doxastic attitudes.

For long the epistemological focus has been on *propositional knowledge*, i.e. knowledge of facts, knowledge that something is so, knowledge that some proposition is true. Some have argued, however, that in addition to propositional knowledge, there is such a thing as *practical knowledge* or *knowledge-how* (knowledge how to do something, how to perform some task), and *knowledge by acquaintance* or *experiential knowledge* (acquaintance with some object). Examples of these kinds of knowledge are respectively knowing how to play the piccolo and knowing the taste of pomegranates.<sup>1</sup> Others have argued that knowledge-how and knowledge by acquaintance can somehow be reduced to propositional knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Now, those who believe that practical knowledge and experiential knowledge cannot (entirely) be reduced to propositional knowledge might also think that, in addition to propositional ignorance, there is such a thing as practical ignorance and experiential ignorance. Some people are ignorant in math (they do not know how to do math) and most children of the age of five are ignorant of both the discouraging hardness and the challenging possibilities of life (that is, they are ignorant of these things). In this article I will keep aloof from the practical and experiential varieties of knowledge and ignorance, whether they are different from propositional

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<sup>1</sup> For a highly influential account of the distinction between propositional and practical knowledge, see Ryle 1945, 4-16, and Ryle 1969, 27-32, 40-41. One of the first to make a distinction between propositional knowledge and knowledge by acquaintance is Bertrand Russell in Russell 1910-11, and Russell 1980, 23, 25-32.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent discussion of this issue, see Stanley and Williamson 2001, Snowdon 2003, and Rumfitt 2003.

knowledge and ignorance or not. Henceforth, I use ‘knowledge’ and ‘ignorance’ as shorthand for ‘propositional knowledge’ and ‘propositional ignorance’.<sup>3</sup>

The second thing I should like to point out concerns our doxastic attitudes. It is something of a *communis opinio* among epistemologists that there are just three of them: belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment. Let me briefly clarify how I use these terms. By ‘belief’ I mean belief that some proposition *p* is true. By ‘disbelief’ I mean belief that *p* is false. By ‘suspension of judgment’ I mean neither belief nor disbelief that *p*, whether one has ever considered *p* or not. Each of these doxastic attitudes may be occurrent or dispositional. If some cognitive subject *S* at some time *t* *occurrently* believes that *p*, then at *t* *S* is considering *p* or thinking about *p* or reflecting on *p*, and believing *p*. If at *t* *S* *latently* believes *p*, then at *t* *S* is not considering *p* or thinking about *p* or reflecting on *p*, but still believes *p*.

Now, dispositional and non-dispositional accounts of belief (and disbelief and suspension of judgment) provide us with different views on what it is for someone to latently believe a proposition. This is because they provide us with different views as to what it is for someone to believe something. According to Jonathan Cohen’s dispositional account of belief, for instance, “belief that *p* is a disposition, when one is attending to issues raised, or items referred to, by the proposition that *p*, normally to feel it true that *p* and false that not-*p* (...).”<sup>4</sup> This means that one need not have considered a proposition in order to believe it. It also means that for any person *S* and proposition *p*, *S* believes, disbelieves, or suspends judgment on *p* (assuming that belief and disbelief are mutually exclusive). Non-dispositional accounts (or most of them), however, have it that, in order for *S* at some time *t* to believe, disbelieve, or suspend judgment on *p*, *S* ought to have considered or entertained *p* at *t* or at some time *t*\* prior to *t*.<sup>5</sup> On such accounts, for any

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<sup>3</sup> One might want to suggest that, next to propositional, practical, and experiential ignorance, there is ignorance of the right answer to a question. As it seems to me, however, this kind of ignorance is reducible to propositional ignorance. Imagine that Sam has put a piece of paper in a box and asks me what is in the box. If I am ignorant of the right answer to his question, I am ignorant of the (truth of the) proposition that there is piece of paper in the box, although I might simultaneously be ignorant of the proposition that there is not a hammer in the box, that there is not a shirt in it, etc., and know that there is not an elephant in the box (the box being far too small for that), etc. Thus, ignorance of the right answer to a question seems to consist of ignorance of two or more propositions, whether one disbelieves them, suspends judgment on them, or has never considered them. This is not to say, however, that it might not be useful in certain contexts, such as philosophy of science, to phrase ignorance in terms of one’s doxastic attitude toward the right answer to certain questions (see, for instance, Bromberger 1992, 115, 128 who defines a scientific theory’s acceptability partly in terms of ignorance of the right answer to specific questions).

<sup>4</sup> Cohen 1992, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Non-dispositional accounts tend to be fairly complex. According to Robert Audi, for instance, perceptual experience can sometimes leave some sort of doxastic trace that can count as a latent belief, even if one has not explicitly considered the proposition in question. Yet, he clearly distinguishes latent beliefs from dispositions to believe (see Audi 1994, 420ff.). I believe that the above, rough definition will do for present purposes.

proposition p, S believes p, disbelieves p, suspends judgment on p, or has never considered p.

I will argue that ignorance can be defined in terms of the three doxastic attitudes. As we will see below, however, whether one's account of belief is dispositional or non-dispositional makes an important difference to one's definition of ignorance.

## 2. Ignorance and Lack of Knowledge

The word 'ignorant' is derived from the Latin *in* (not) and *gnarus* (knowledgeable, acquainted with). This suggests that 'to be ignorant' means 'to lack knowledge'. Thus, to say that Marion was ignorant of the fact that her uncle promised her mother to pick her up at St. George Street at 11.00 a.m., so it seems, is just another way of saying that she did not know that the proposition that her uncle promised her mother to pick her up at St. George Street at 11.00 a.m. is true. That ignorance is equivalent to lack of knowledge is also widely assumed among philosophers.<sup>6</sup>

But is ignorance really equivalent to lack of knowledge? In other words, are ignorance and knowledge each other's complements? There seem to be just five ways for some person S to fail to know that some proposition p is true:

- (a) p is false;
- (b) S disbelieves p, while p is true;
- (c) S suspends judgment on p, while p is true;
- (d) S does not have any doxastic attitude toward p, while p is true;<sup>7</sup>
- (e) S believes p, while p is true, but S's belief that p lacks the warrant necessary for knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

I do not assert that these candidate categories of ignorance are hard in the sense that they cannot be split up into subcategories. For example, (a), as it stands, does not tell us anything about S's attitude toward p, that is, it does not tell us whether S believes p, disbelieves p, suspends judgment on p, or has never even considered p. One might also think that there are several ways in which some person S can believe a true proposition p without knowing that p, for instance, by believing that p without having any good reasons for p, or by S's true belief's being incoherent with the rest of her doxastic evidence base. That is, perhaps there are different ways in which (e) can be instantiated. The list *does* seem to be exhaustive, though, in the sense that there is no way in which a

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Driver 1989, 373ff, and Flanagan 1990, 420ff, in their discussion of whether ignorance is necessary for certain moral virtues. For similar understandings of ignorance as lack of knowledge, see, for instance, Unger 1975, 93, and Zimmerman 1988, 75.

<sup>7</sup> Remember that many dispositional accounts of belief will reject option (d) as a genuine possibility of failing to know, given the fact that for any proposition p, one either believes, disbelieves, or suspends judgment on p. On such accounts, only (a), (b), (c), and (e) will count as instances of failing to know.

<sup>8</sup> Where I take 'warrant' to be that (enough of) which turns true belief into knowledge.

cognitive subject might fail to know some proposition that is not an instance of one of these categories. For, how could S lack knowledge of p without the occurrence of one of (a) – (e)?

Obviously, instances of (b) and (c) will count as instances of ignorance. If someone believes that Darwin did *not* publish his *Origin of Species* in 1859, he is ignorant of the fact that he did and if someone suspends judgment on the proposition that Phnom Penh is the capital of Cambodia, then he is ignorant of this truth. One might think, however, that the other three categories in this short list can be used to show that ignorance of p is *not* equivalent to lack of knowledge that p.

First, we would not say that someone who believes a false proposition p and, thereby, lacks knowledge of p, is ignorant of p. One can only be ignorant of truth, so it seems. It does not make sense to say that someone is ignorant of p if p is false.<sup>9</sup> Hence, instances of (a) show that someone can lack knowledge without being ignorant.

Second, not all instances of (d) seem to be cases of ignorance. For one, most people have never considered the proposition q that Hillary Clinton is not identical to the autobiography she wrote. On certain non-dispositional accounts of belief, this means that most people do not have any doxastic attitude toward q: they do not believe q, disbelieve q, or suspend judgment on p. Nevertheless, we would not say that such people are ignorant of q: as soon as they were to consider q, people would occurrently believe q. Everyone knows that people are not identical to books. With other propositions things are different. Most people in this world have never considered the proposition r that the core of helium contains two protons and two neutrons. Upon considering this proposition they would most probably suspend judgment on r. Knowing that r is true, we would describe these people as ignorant of r's truth. Hence, on a non-dispositional account of belief, one might be willing to attach the label 'ignorance' to *some*, but certainly not to *all* instances of (d).

Third and finally, we would not say that someone who believes a true proposition p without knowing that p for some reason or other is ignorant of p.<sup>10</sup> If I truly but accidentally believe that I will get the job, we would not say that I am ignorant of the fact that I will get the job. Hence, instances of (e), although instances of some person's lacking knowledge that p, are not instances of that person's being ignorant of p.

As it seems to me, however, only the third argument is promising. First, one might easily revise the view at hand in the following way: not knowing the truth value of some proposition p or not knowing whether p is equivalent to being ignorant of the truth

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<sup>9</sup> Therefore, Goldman's repeated parenthetical remark that ignorance is the absence of true belief seems closer to the truth (cf. Goldman 1986, 36, Goldman 1999, 5).

<sup>10</sup> In an interesting article, Talisse contends that we use the term 'ignorance' to denote (1) someone's believing what is false, (2) someone's having an unjustified belief, or (3) someone's holding a belief at which she arrived in an epistemically irresponsible way (cf. Talisse 2006, 456). It is not clear, or at least not *to me*, what the difference between the second and third types of ignorance is supposed to be, but both of them seem to consist of cases in which a person has a belief that, even if true, does not amount to knowledge. This seems implausible: if the proposition p which the person in question believes is true, then we would not say that she is ignorant of p, although she might be ignorant of many other things, such as the existence of good evidence in favor of p.

value of p or to being ignorant as to whether p. By wording one's position in this way one can meet the objection that one cannot be ignorant of a false proposition.

The second argument is only convincing if one adheres to a non-dispositional account of belief. And even if one adheres to a non-dispositional account of belief, there seem to be several ways out. Let me mention just two of them. First, one could argue that, although we would say people *know* that Hillary Clinton is not identical to her autobiography, we would not say they *believe* this proposition. On this view, belief is not a necessary condition for knowledge. Second, one could argue that people not only believe propositions that they have considered, but also all those propositions that are obviously entailed (on their own criteria, if you like) by propositions they believe. People believe that Hillary Clinton is a human being and given the obvious fact that no human being is or could be a book, we can properly say that all people believe that Hillary Clinton is not identical to her autobiography. The second option seems most promising to me.

The third argument seems to be the strongest. One could take at least three different routes in response to it, the first route embracing the argument, the second route refining it, and the third one trying to rebut it. First, one could claim that knowledge never has the meaning of mere true belief and that, therefore, lack of knowledge is indeed not equivalent to ignorance. If this (in some sense of the word traditional) view is correct, all instances of (e) count as instances of failing to know, but not as instances of ignorance. Second, one could argue that 'knowledge' has many senses and that one of these senses – a weak sense – is having a true belief.<sup>11</sup> Ignorance, one could say, is equivalent to lack of knowledge on this weak understanding of knowledge, whereas it is not on a stronger understanding of knowledge, a sense which requires more than true belief.<sup>12</sup> On this line of reasoning, (e) cannot count as a category of failing to know in a weak sense. Third, one could contend that knowledge simply *is* mere true belief.<sup>13</sup> If the two former arguments against the thesis that ignorance is not equivalent to lack of knowledge are somehow wanting, as I believe they are, this third view is compatible with the idea that lack of knowledge is equivalent to ignorance. On this line of reasoning, (e) simply cannot count as a category of failing to know. The problem with this third view is that it has hardly convinced anyone.

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<sup>11</sup> For a defense of the intriguing idea that 'knowledge' is polysemous and that there is a sense of 'knowledge' in which it is identical to true belief, see Van Woudenberg 2005 and Van Woudenberg, "Which Value for What Knowledge?", *unpublished manuscript*. I take this second route to include those contextualist accounts of 'knowledge' that have it that in some, but not all contexts a person S who has a mere true belief that p can properly be described as 'knowing that p'.

<sup>12</sup> For a statement of the idea that on a weak sense of 'knowledge' – where 'knowing that p' is synonymous with 'being cognizant of p', 'being aware of p', and 'possesses the information that p' – 'lack of knowledge' is identical to 'ignorance' whereas it is not on a stronger sense of 'knowledge', see Goldman and Olsson, "Reliabilism and the Value of Knowledge," *forthcoming*.

<sup>13</sup> That knowledge is equivalent to mere true belief has most famously been championed by Crispin Sartwell (1991, 1992).

For the remainder of this paper I will assume without further argument that either the first or the second position is correct. If knowledge is not equivalent to mere true belief, we can conclude that ignorance is not equivalent to lack of knowledge—at least not on one of the stronger senses of ‘knowledge’.

### 3. A Definition of Ignorance

We have seen that there are different kinds of ignorance: (1) S disbelieves the true proposition p, (2) S suspends judgment on the true proposition p after having considered p, (3) S has never considered the true proposition p, but would disbelieve p upon considering p, and (4) S has never considered the true proposition p, but would suspend judgment on p upon considering p.<sup>14</sup> Let us dub these varieties of ignorance respectively *disbelieving ignorance*, *suspending ignorance*, *conditional disbelieving ignorance*, and *conditional suspending ignorance*. One might even want to make more distinctions. Each of the first and second kinds of ignorance can be *occurrent* or *latent*. And is there not a difference between suspending judgment on – neither believing nor disbelieving – a proposition p because one has insufficient evidence to either believe or disbelieve p on the one hand (call it *evidential ignorance*), and because one lacks the cognitive capacities or the relevant knowledge necessary to grasp p on the other (call it *deep ignorance*)?<sup>15</sup>

Assuming for the moment that if S disbelieves p, S would disbelieve p upon considering p and that if S suspends judgment on p, S upon entertaining p would suspend judgment on p, it seems that, on both dispositional and non-dispositional accounts of belief, ignorance can be defined as follows:

1. Some cognitive subject S is ignorant of some proposition p iff (i) p is true and (ii) if S were to consider p, S would disbelieve p or suspend judgment on p.

or:

- 1\*. Some cognitive subject S is ignorant of the truth value of some proposition p iff (i) p is true and if S were to consider p, S would either disbelieve p or suspend judgment on p, or (ii) p is false and if S were to consider p, S would either believe p or suspend judgment on p.

One might wonder, though, whether it is indeed true that if S disbelieves p, S would disbelieve p upon considering p, and that if S suspends judgment on p, S upon entertaining p would suspend judgment on p. On a dispositional account of the doxastic attitudes, according to which one has some doxastic attitude A toward some proposition p iff one has a disposition to normally<sup>16</sup> have A toward p upon considering p, this seem true

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<sup>14</sup> On dispositional accounts of belief the subjunctive conditionals (3) and (4) will be understood as instances of (1) and (2).

<sup>15</sup> Here I assume that one can only believe or disbelieve a proposition if one can grasp it.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen 1992, 8, has argued that in *abnormal* circumstances – when one’s life seems to depend on concentrating on some other issue or when one is accidentally distracted by,

by definition. To believe *p*, on such accounts, just *is* having a disposition to, say, feel *p* to be true upon entertaining *p*. But what about non-dispositional accounts of belief, such as the view that one believes some proposition *p* at some time *t* iff at *t* one occurrently believes *p* or at some time *t\**, prior to *t*, one has occurrently believed *p* and since not occurrently disbelieved *p* or suspended judgment on *p*?

Imagine that some person *S* at some time *t* occurrently disbelieves the true proposition *p*. Imagine also that *S* does not consider *p* again for the next fifteen years. Imagine, finally, that *S* at *t\**, nine years after *t*, acquires some strong piece of evidence *e* in favor of *p* and that if *S* were to consider *p* at *t\** – which she does *not* – she would realize that *e* heavily counts in favor of *p* and that as a result of that she would come to believe *p*. On a non-dispositional account of belief *S* at *t\** is ignorant of *p*, whereas on a dispositional account of belief she is *not*. Therefore, adherents of non-dispositional accounts of belief might prefer the following definition of ignorance:

2. Some cognitive subject *S* is ignorant of some proposition *p* iff (i) *p* is true and (ii) *S* disbelieves *p*, *S* suspends judgment on *p*, or *S* has never considered *p*, but would disbelieve *p* or suspend judgment on *p* upon considering *p*.

or:

2\*. Some cognitive subject *S* is ignorant of the truth value of some proposition *p* iff (i) *p* is true and *S* disbelieves *p*, *S* suspends judgment on *p*, or *S* has never considered *p*, but would disbelieve *p* or suspend judgment on *p* upon considering *p*, or (ii) *p* is false and *S* believes *p*, *S* suspends judgment on *p*, or *S* has never considered *p*, but would believe *p* or suspend judgment on *p* upon considering *p*.

1, 1\*, 2, and 2\* define someone's ignorance concerning a single proposition. In daily life, however, we ascribe to people not only ignorance of some *fact* (supposedly, a true proposition), but also ignorance about some *subject matter*. We say people are ignorant about Buddhism, about transnational crime, about economic issues, or about HIV.

What does it mean for someone to be ignorant about, say, transnational crime? Obviously, that person is ignorant of the truth of each or most members of a certain set of propositions. But how large should this set be and which propositions should it include? Well, it all depends. It depends on who the person in question is and on which circumstances she is in. We can ascribe ignorance about transnational crime to the minister of foreign affairs, while not ascribing it to some high-school biology teacher, even if the former is ignorant of just half of the propositions the latter is ignorant of. A student can be said not to be ignorant about Buddhism at the beginning of a class on Eastern religions and properly be said to be ignorant about it at the end of the same class, even if at both times she is ignorant of exactly the same propositions.

Of course, this is not to deny that there is a set of propositions such that in these cases the minister of foreign affairs is *less* ignorant about the truth of each of them than the biology teacher is, and that there is a set of propositions such that the student is

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say, a nearby thunderbolt – one might fail to form *A* toward *p*, even though one can be said to have *A* toward *p*.

*equally* ignorant of the truth of each of them at the end of the class as he was when it started. What I want to say is that whether some person S is ignorant about X, where X is some subject matter rather than a specific set of propositions, is person-dependent and context-dependent. This means that precise definitions of ignorance about subject matters rather than some true proposition cannot be given.

#### 4. Relevance

The above analysis of ignorance, as it seems to me, will turn out to be helpful in thinking about several philosophical issues in which ignorance takes centre stage. Let me mention and briefly discuss four of them.

1. *Ignorance as excuse condition for moral responsibility.* Ignorance is one of the so-called Aristotelian excuse conditions for bringing about a morally bad state of affairs.<sup>17</sup> In other words, a person's performing an action that has harmful consequences may be excused by her ignorance of certain facts. For instance, assume that Cindy knows that she has some dangerous disease D. Imagine also that she has some other relatively innocent disease E for which her doctor prescribes medicine M, a medicine that turns out to be fatal in combination with D. Assume, finally, that her doctor knows that M is deadly if prescribed to someone having D. Now, it seems that the doctor's ignorance of Cindy's having D can count as an excuse condition for prescribing M only if his ignorance itself is not reprehensible. That is, only if the doctor's ignorance as to whether Cindy has D is itself in some sense of the word responsible, justified, rational, or reasonable, will he be excused for prescribing M.

This has been widely acknowledged in the literature. Holly Smith, for example, distinguishes three reasons for why a particular instance of ignorance may be culpable (she calls them deficient investigation, preventing subsequent discovery, and deficient inference<sup>18</sup>) and she discusses in depth three views on the relation between a person's culpable ignorance and a morally bad action of that person ensuing from her ignorance (she dubs them the conservative, moderate, and liberal views<sup>19</sup>). What she and others<sup>20</sup> have failed to notice, though, is that which kind of ignorance is exemplified can make a crucial difference to our moral evaluation of the person's action. Thus, the doctor's ignorance of Cindy's having D will count as an excuse condition for prescribing M to her only if his ignorance is a case of *disbelieving ignorance*. If his ignorance is a case of *suspending ignorance*, *conditional suspending ignorance* or *conditional disbelieving ignorance*, he seems culpable for her death: if he suspended judgment on her having D, he should not have prescribed the medicine and it is his professional duty to find out – and hence, consider – whether she has D.

2. *Ignorance as excuse condition for doxastic responsibility.* Perhaps ignorance can be an excuse condition not only for performing a morally bad action, but also for

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<sup>17</sup> See Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1,5, V.8.

<sup>18</sup> See Smith 1983, 544-45.

<sup>19</sup> See Smith 1983, 548ff.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, Fields 1994 and Zimmermann 1997.



acquiring or having a bad or wrong belief.<sup>21</sup> But what is it to have a bad or wrong belief? Here, one might think primarily of false beliefs. We may not hold John responsible for falsely believing that it was a good thing for senator McGrath to finance some non-profit company if John was ignorant of the fact that McGrath was deeply involved in a large-scale fraud perpetrated by the company's employees, unless of course John should have known about it. But under normal circumstances John's ignorance counts as an excuse condition only if it is *disbelieving ignorance* or *conditional disbelieving ignorance* rather than *suspending ignorance* or *conditional suspending ignorance*. (Notice that his ignorance is a necessary, not a sufficient condition for his being non-culpable for his belief; his ignorance itself needs to be non-culpable). In mathematical contexts we might not hold someone responsible for weakly believing a false theorem A if her ignorance of the fact that theorem B, which she strongly believes, entails  $\sim A$  is a case of *disbelieving ignorance*, but we might hold her responsible for believing A if she suspends judgment on whether B entails  $\sim A$ .

Obviously, the topics of ignorance as excuse condition for respectively moral responsibility (or, more precisely, responsibility for actions) and doxastic responsibility are closely related to each other. In both cases, whether one's ignorance functions as an excuse condition will depend at least partly on whether one's ignorance itself is culpable or not and on whether some specific relation between one's ignorance and the ensuing act or belief holds (one might argue, for instance, that one should have had good reason to think that being ignorant concerning p would (probably) result in a morally bad action or a false belief). But there may also be important differences. Whereas our actions are typically oriented toward what is good or what is beneficial, our beliefs are widely thought to aim at truth. In other words, actions are usually evaluated from a moral or prudential point of view, whereas beliefs are often evaluated from an epistemic point of view. Closely connected to this is the fact that, according to many philosophers, usually we have voluntary control over our actions, whereas usually we do not have voluntary control over our beliefs. Normally, we can reflect upon our beliefs and desires and then freely decide what to do, whereas most beliefs are automatically formed. This might lead one to think that, whereas culpable ignorance *may* be an excuse condition for morally wrong actions, culpable ignorance is *always* an excuse conditions for ensuing false beliefs. Whether this is indeed the case is a question that I will not attempt to answer here.

3. *Justified ignorance.* We find many different concepts of justification in the philosophical literature. Above, we saw that one can be culpable or non-culpable for a certain case of ignorance. If, as many in the ethics of belief debate would agree, there is such a thing as doxastic responsibility, one might wonder what it is for ignorance rather than belief to be justified in this sense. This is an interesting question on its own, whether or not ignorance can count as an excuse condition for bringing about morally bad states of affairs or for having a false belief. This topic has only briefly been touched on by Wolterstorff and Foley.<sup>22</sup> But whether someone's ignorance is, say, an instance of evidential ignorance or deep ignorance will make an important difference as to whether the attitude is responsible. E.g., if Max's ignorance of the Cantor-Bernstein-Schroeder

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<sup>21</sup> This is argued by Van Woudenberg 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Wolterstorff 2005, 335, and Foley 2005, 338-339.

theorem in set theory results from his violation of evidence gathering obligations (which would be a case of *evidential ignorance*), we may consider his ignorance as culpable, while we may not be willing to hold him responsible for his ignorance of this theorem if it results from his cognitive inability to understand the theorem (which would count as a case of *deep ignorance*).

The same seems true for at least some other notions of justification. If a belief is justified if it is the epistemically appropriate response to one's evidence (whether or not the person is responsible for that), as certain evidentialists have argued, then whether some person's ignorance is an instance of, say, disbelieving ignorance or suspending ignorance will often make a crucial difference as to whether we would describe that person's ignorance as justified or not. If several experts (wrongly) tell Max that the Cantor-Bernstein-Schroeder theorem has been decisively refuted, Max ought to disbelieve this theorem rather than suspend judgment on it. That is, his ignorance will count as justified in the evidentialist sense mentioned above only if it is a case of *disbelieving* rather than *suspending ignorance*.

4. *Ignorance as a necessary condition for certain moral virtues*. According to Julia Driver, some kind of ignorance is necessary for one's exemplification of certain moral virtues.<sup>23</sup> She fails, however, to clearly spell out what she means by 'ignorance', which renders her account of virtues such as modesty systematically ambiguous. Whether or not ignorance is indeed a necessary condition for certain moral virtues, it should be clear that not just any kind of ignorance will be necessary for virtues such as modesty. Deep ignorance cannot count as a necessary condition for knowledge. If a young child is deeply ignorant about the fact that she excels in learning a language, since she lacks the required knowledge of what it is to excel in learning a language, we should describe her as modest. More generally, any kind of conditional ignorance cannot count as a necessary condition for modesty. If that were the case, my having once thought about my own talents in a certain area would all by itself exclude my being modest. Perhaps the idea is that one is modest only if one exemplifies any of the kinds of ignorance that I distinguished above. As long as it is not clear what Driver means by 'ignorance', it will be difficult, if not impossible to provide a full assessment of her account of moral virtues such as modesty.

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<sup>23</sup> See Driver 1989 and Flanagan's response in Flanagan 1990.

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