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Introduction

We have increasingly sophisticated ways of acquiring and communicating knowledge, but efforts to spread this knowledge often encounter resistance to evidence. Evidence resistance has dire practical consequences; recent examples include climate change denial and vaccine scepticism. The phenomenon 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 this phenomenon: what is epistemically wrong with resistance to evidence? What are its triggers? How does resistance to evidence interact with norms of inquiry and the epistemic justification of belief? What are the best strategies for efficaciously addressing the phenomenon of resistance to evidence in policy and practice?

Traditionally, normative work in epistemology is, for the most part,[1] negative, in that it concerns itself with permissions: it deals with restricting what we are permitted to, for example, believe, assert, or use as a premise in reasoning. This book is concerned with positive epistemology: it argues that resistance to easily available evidence constitutes a breach of one's epistemic obligations. One useful way to think about this project is as the counterpart of the Cliffordian project. Whereas Clifford proposes that it is wrong everywhere for anyone to believe on the basis of insufficient evidence, this book investigates the other side of the evidentialist project: whether it wrong everywhere and for anyone to not believe when they have sufficient and undefeated evidence.

I develop and defend 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

[1] See Kornblith (2001), Fricker (2007), Chrisman (2008), Feldman (2008), Goldberg (2016, 2017), Jenkins-Ichikawa (2020), Lackey (2020), and Simion (2023a) for exceptions. In putting this distinction in terms of positive versus negative epistemology, I follow Jenkins-Ichikawa (2020).

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naturalistically friendly and enjoys high normative prior plausibility in that it 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 views of evidence, defeat, permissible suspension, scepticism, epistemic dilemmas, and disinformation. At the core of this epistemic normative picture lies the notion of *p*-knowledge indicators as facts that one is in a position to know and that increase one's evidential probability that something is the case. Resistance to evidence is construed as a failure to uptake knowledge indicators.

0.1 Game Plan

0.1.1 Part I The Epistemology and Psychology of Resistance to Evidence

Chapter 1 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 taxonomises 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 is assumed in the extant literature in social psychology. This, in turn, gives us reason to believe that addressing this phenomenon in policy and practice will be a much more complex endeavour than is currently assumed. In the remainder of the book, I examine the extant literature on evidence, justification, defeat, permissible suspension, and epistemic responsibility in search of the normative resources required to fully accommodate the psychological breadth and epistemic normative status of the phenomenon of resistance to evidence.

Chapter 2 Evidence One Has and the Impermissibility of Resistance
This chapter argues that the main extant views on the nature of evidence one has lack the resources to account for the impermissibility of cases of resistance to evidence. I first examine classic internalist, seemings-based evidentialism and argue that it fails to account for evidence resistance. This, I argue, is an in-principle problem: internalist evidentialism cannot recover from this *because* it is internalist. I move on to externalist views of evidence, starting with factive externalism (i.e. Williamson's (2000) E = K), and I argue that, since resistant cognisers don't take up the relevant

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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 I 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) and virtue reliabilism (Turri 2010, Sylvan and Sosa 2018, Sosa 2021) – to account for the phenomenon of resistance. I argue that these views are too agent-centric to successfully account for resistance cases.

Chapter 3 Evidence You Should Have Had and Resistance
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 (1) a breach of social normativity (Goldberg 2018) or (2) a 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 both on theoretical grounds – in that it cannot accommodate widely accepted epistemic conditions on moral blame – and on extensional adequacy.

Chapter 4 Permissible Suspension and Evidence Resistance
This chapter surveys recent accounts of the epistemic permissibility of suspended judgement in an attempt to thereby identify the normative resources required for explaining the epistemically problematic nature of evidence resistance. Since paradigmatic cases of evidence resistance involve belief suspension on propositions that are well supported by evidence, such as vaccine safety and climate change, the literature on permissible suspension seems to be a straightforward starting point for my investigation: after all, any plausible view of permissible suspension will have to predict epistemic impermissibility in these paradigmatic resistance cases. I look at three extant accounts of permissible suspension – a simple knowledge-based account, a virtue-based account, and a respect-based account – and argue that they fail to provide the needed resources for this project. Further on, the chapter identifies the source of the said difficulties and gestures towards a better way forward.

Chapter 5 Resistance to Evidence, Epistemic Responsibility, and Epistemic Vice
Available accounts of possessed evidence, evidence one should have possessed, and permissible suspension of judgement struggle to accommodate

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the phenomenon of evidence resistance. Along the way, we have, in particular, seen that virtue reliabilist accounts of reasons to believe, permissible suspension, and propositional warrant don't do the needed work. At that point, some readers would have already thought that one straightforward explanation of the resistance data is afforded by the competing, virtue responsibilist camp: roughly, on this view, evidence resistance could be conceptualised as a failure to manifest epistemic responsibility in inquiry and/or as a manifestation/indication of epistemic vice. This chapter looks into the credentials of this move. I argue that once we distinguish epistemic virtues and vices proper from mere moral virtues and vices with epistemic content, it transpires that accounting for resistance cases, as well as accounting for epistemic virtue and vice, requires epistemic value-first unpacking.

0.1.2 Part II Resistance to Evidence and Epistemic Proper Function

Chapter 6 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 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 7 Evidence as Knowledge Indicators
This chapter puts forth a novel view of evidence in terms of knowledge 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 that resistance to evidence has on doxastic justification. Very roughly, knowledge indicators are facts that enhance closeness to knowledge: a fact e is evidence for S that p is the case if and only if S is in a position to know e and e increases the evidential probability that p for S.

Chapter 8 Defeaters as Ignorance Indicators
This chapter puts forth and defends a novel view of defeat, and it shows that it is superior to its competition in that it can account for the epistemic

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impermissibility of defeat resistance cases and normative defeat cases, as well as for the effect ignored defeat has on doxastic justification. On this account, defeaters are ignorance indicators: facts that one is in a position to know and that reduce one's evidential probability that *p*. Furthermore, I also put forth a novel account of the normativity at work in cases of normative defeat and negligent inquiry and evidence gathering.

Chapter 9 Inquiry and Permissible Suspension
This chapter develops an account of permissible suspension that builds on the views of justification, evidence, and defeat defended in the previous chapters. The view is superior to extant competitors in that it successfully predicts epistemic normative failure in cases of suspension generated by evidence and defeat resistance. On this view, doxastically justified suspension is suspension generated by properly functioning knowledge-generating processes. In turn, properly functioning knowledge-generating processes uptake knowledge and ignorance indicators.

0.1.3 Part III Theoretical Upshots

Chapter 10 Epistemic Oughts and Epistemic Dilemmas
The following chapters examine the 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 11 Scepticism as Resistance to Evidence
The view of evidence, defeat, and suspension put forth here delivers the result that 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 too weak – in that they concede too much to the sceptic – or too strong – in that they cannot

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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 12 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. This chapter develops a full account of the nature of disinformation. The view, if correct, carries high-stakes upshots, both theoretically and practically. First, it challenges several widely spread theoretical assumptions about disinformation – such as that it is a species of information, a species of misinformation, essentially false or misleading, or essentially intended/aimed/having the function of generating false beliefs in/misleading hearers. Second, it shows that the challenges faced by disinformation tracking in practice go well beyond mere fact checking. I begin with an interdisciplinary scoping of the literature in information science, communication studies, computer science, and philosophy of information to identify several claims constituting disinformation orthodoxy. I then present counterexamples to these claims and motivate my alternative account. Finally, I put forth and develop my account: disinformation as ignorance-generating content.

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PART I

The Epistemology and Psychology of Resistance to Evidence

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CHAPTER 1

Resistance to Evidence
Triggers and Epistemic Status

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1.1 Resistance to Evidence

The notion of resistance to evidence, while subject to thorough investigation in social psychology,[1] 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 of inquiry and the epistemic justification of belief?

Consider the following cases:

Case #1. **Testimonial Injustice:** Anna is an extremely reliable testifier and an expert in the geography of Glasgow. She tells George

[1] See, e.g., Kahan 2013, Klintman 2019. See also the 'Knowledge Resistance' multidisciplinary research project at Stockholm University: https://knowledge-resistance.com.

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that Glasgow Central is to the right. George believes women are not to be trusted; therefore, he fails to form the corresponding belief.

Case #2. **Political Negligence:** Bill is a stubborn supporter of President Dump. In spite of all evidence that is readily available to him (via mainstream media, Dump's own actions and public statements, etc.) suggesting that Dump is a bad president, Bill stubbornly refuses to believe that Dump is a bad president.

Case #3. **Science Scepticism:** Neda is an anxious cogniser; in particular, she is very careful when it comes to accepting science communication: whenever well-recognised, reliable experts assert that anthropogenic climate change is occurring or that vaccines are safe, Neda suspends belief thinking, 'Well, scientists sometimes get it wrong! I'll do my own research.'

Case #4. **Perceptual Non-responsiveness:** Alice is looking straight at the table in front of her and fails to form the belief that there's a table in front of her.

Case #5. **Unwarranted Optimism:** Mary is an optimist. When her partner Dan spends more and more evening hours at the office, she's happy that his career is going so well. When he comes home smelling like floral perfume, she thinks to herself: 'Wow, excellent taste in fragrance!' Finally, when she repeatedly sees him having coffee in town with his colleague Alice, she is glad he's making new friends.

Case #6. **Misdirected Attention:** Professor Racist is teaching college-level maths. He believes people of colour are less intelligent than white people. As a result, whenever he asks a question, his attention automatically goes to the white students, such that he doesn't even notice the Black students who raise their hands. As a result, he believes Black students are not very active in class.

Case #7. **Friendly Detective:** Detective Dave is investigating a crime scene. Dave is extremely thorough but, at the same time, a close friend of the butler. Dave finds conclusive evidence that the butler did it – the butler's gloves covered in blood, his fingerprints on the murder weapon, a letter written by the butler confessing to the crime – but he fails to form the corresponding belief: Dave just can't get himself to believe that his friend would do such a thing.

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What is going on in these cases? Note that they involve very different sources of knowledge (e.g. testimony, perception, inductive inference) and that the failures at stake come about for very different reasons (e.g. prejudice, motivated reasoning, epistemic anxiety, lack of attention, partisanship, bias, wishful thinking). All of these are bad things, epistemically, in their own right. At the same time, the cases also have one important feature in common: for all these subjects, there is excellent evidence easily available to them, which they fail to take up.

Several philosophers have offered source-bound diagnoses of particular incarnations of this phenomenon (in terms of, e.g., epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007), disregard for the nature and/or normativity of telling (Moran 2006, Hazlett 2017), breach of norms of attention (Siegel 2017)), but very few have tried to offer an overarching explanation of what they all have in common. However, once we look at these cases together, it becomes clear that, on top of the case-specific problems, they plausibly exhibit a common variety of epistemic failure: resistance to easily available evidence.

1.2 The Social Psychology of Evidence Resistance

1.2.1 Evidence Resistance and Motivated Reasoning

A predominant hypothesis in social psychology (e.g. Lord et al. 1979, Taber and Lodge 2006, Molden and Higgins 2012, Kahan 2013, Kahan et al. 2016) that seeks to explain 'knowledge resistance' (i.e. resistance to acquiring easily available knowledge) principally does so with reference to politically motivated reasoning. Under the banner of this wider hypothesis, we find various research results that have been taken, in various ways, to support the view that a thinker's prior political convictions (including politically directed desires and attitudes about political group membership) best explain why they are inclined to reject expert consensus when they do (Kahan et al. 2011, Kahan 2013).

Early studies in the psychological literature that set the groundwork for this explanatory thesis focused initially on how political ideology influences the evaluation of evidence. For example, Lord et al. (1979) report a study in which subjects were provided with the same set of arguments for and against capital punishment and were asked to assess the strength of these arguments. Subjects' assessment of the strength of the arguments then strongly correlated with their existing views about the rights and

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