Revisiting knowledge from Falsehood

Revisitando o Conhecimento a partir de Falsidade

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ABSTRACT: The knowledge from falsehood (KFF) advocates present us with putative examples of inferential knowledge in which a subject S apparently acquires knowledge by competently inferring it from a falsehood. If they are right, then we will have to face some major problems for the epistemology of reasoning. However, in this paper, I will argue that there is no knowledge from falsehood (KFF), that the cases presented by KFF advocates are not cases of genuine inferential knowledge at all, and that the intuitive reaction to attribute knowledge to the subject in such cases has no relation with the falsehood. My opposition to KFF will be directed to the KFF account put forward by Peter Klein in his paper "*Useful False Beliefs*" (2008). In particular, I show that Klein's account fails because (i) it is unable to describe how the falsehood can inferentially provide a positive epistemic status to the inferred belief in order to upgrade it to knowledge; and (ii) it is incompatible with a tacit and widespread notion of inference.

Keywords: Knowledge. Reasoning. Falsehood. Inference.

RESUMO: Os defensores da teoria do *Conhecimento a partir de Falsidade* (KFF) nos apresentam exemplos putativos de conhecimento inferencial nos quais um sujeito S, supostamente, adquire conhecimento através de uma inferência competente realizada a partir de uma falsidade. Se eles estiverem certos, teremos que enfrentar alguns problemas importantes para a epistemologia do raciocínio. No entanto, neste artigo, argumentarei que não há conhecimento a partir de falsidades (KFF), os casos apresentados pelos defensores de KFF não constituem casos de conhecimento inferencial genuíno e a reação intuitiva de atribuir conhecimento ao sujeito em tais casos não tem nenhuma relação com a falsidade. Eu irei direcionar a minha oposição à KFF através de duas objeções que ofereço à explicação apresentada por Peter Klein em seu artigo "Useful False Beliefs" (2008). Em particular, mostro que a explicação de Klein falha porque ela (i) é incapaz de demonstrar como uma falsidade pode fornecer um status epistêmico positivo à crença inferida para torná-la conhecimento; e (ii) ela é incompatível com uma noção tácita e amplamente aceita de inferência.

Palavras-chave: Conhecimento. Raciocínio. Falsidade. Inferência.

Introduction

The platitude received throughout the epistemic tradition – that knowledge cannot be the product of reasoning in which a false belief is

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essential to the conclusion – is not gratuitous, from Aristotle to Russell, and until the present day, this claim has prevailed. Nonetheless, recently, we are witnessing the raise up of some notorious dissidents who attempt to free us from this allegedly mistaken inheritance.[2] The view that one can acquire inferential knowledge by competently deducing it from a falsehood has now considerably grown in popularity. Authors have defended that there are putative cases of knowledge from falsehood (KFF), cases in which false beliefs are supposed to *play an essential role*, both causally and epistemically, in producing knowledge.[3] However, this view comes with a very high cost and brings major implications for some central epistemological debates such as the Gettier problem, the closure debate, the defeasibility theories of knowledge, whether evidence can be false, whether entailment preserves bad-making features, counter-closure etc.[4]

In this paper, contrary to the emerging view I argue that KFF is false, that the cases presented by KFF advocates are not cases of inferential knowledge after all, and that the intuitive reaction we have to attribute knowledge to the subject in such cases has nothing to do with any falsehood involved in the reasoning process. My opposition to KFF consists in two objections to the account put forward by Peter Klein in his paper "*Useful False Beliefs*" (2008). Particularly, I show that Klein's account fails because (i) it is unable to describe how the falsehood can inferentially provide a positive epistemic status to the inferred belief in order to upgrade it to knowledge, and (ii) that it is incompatible with a tacit and widespread notion of inference. Finally, I conclude that such putative KFF cases are not genuine cases of inferential knowledge, because either the positive epistemic status for the knowledge of the inferred belief comes from something other than the falsehood, or the subject simply lacks knowledge in such cases.

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[2] John Turk Saunders & Narayan Champawat (1964) and Risto Hilpinen (1988) have been identified as the first voices to advocate for KFF, they haven't actually given any explanation for the phenomenon they've pointed out in order to account for their purported counter-examples.

[3] cf. Hilpnen (1988), Klein (1996), Warfield (2005), Klein (2008), Fitelson (2010), Luzzi (2010), Rizzieri (2011), Arnold (2013), de Almeida (Forthcoming).

[4] One cost of accepting KFF is that it raises problems for the very intuitive view that inferential knowledge requires *known relevant premises*, which underlies the counter-closure principle: If *S* comes to believe *q solely* based on competent deduction from *p* and *S* knows that *q*, then *S* knows that *p* (Luzzi, 2010).

Here is the outline. In Section *I*, I present four standard examples that different authors have offered to support KFF. In Section *II*, I elucidate some important features that are central to an appropriate assessment of the KFF cases, and that can help me to set the stage for my objections to come. In Section *III*, I present some of the main features of the Kleinian account of knowledge from falsehood. In Section *IV*, I present some objections against the Klenian explanation, but some are general objections that would cover any account presented in defense of KFF. Finally, in Section *V*, I argue for the falsity of KFF and explain away the phenomenon that motivates it, that is, the intuitive reaction of attributing inferential knowledge to the subject in the relevant cases.

I. The KFF Cases

Consider the following examples.[5]

Appointment: Based on my apparent memory, I believe that my secretary told me on Friday that I have an appointment on Monday with a student. From that belief, I infer that I do have an appointment on Monday. Suppose, further, that I do have an appointment on Monday, and that my secretary told me so. However, she told me that on Thursday, not on Friday. I know that I have such an appointment even though I inferred my belief from the false proposition that my secretary told me on Friday that I have an appointment on Monday.

Handout: Before Smith's talk, He carefully counts the number of people in the audience, then he comes to believe that 'There are 53 people at his talk'; therefore, 'his 100 handout copies are sufficient'. Smith's premise is false. There are 52 people in the audience— He double counted one person who changed seats during the count. Yet Smith knows the inferred conclusion.

Christmas: Both Mom and Dad tell little Virginia that Q: *Santa will put gifts under the tree on Christmas' Eve.* Little Virginia believes that Q on her parents' say-so, and, on that basis, infers that P: *There will be gifts under the tree on Christmas morning.* Does little Virginia know that P, if there will be gifts under the tree on Christmas morning?

Bed Time: John needs to sleep 8 hours every day due to his health problem. John is a huge fan of tennis and intends to wake up tomorrow at 6 am to watch the final match of Rolland Garros between Federer and Nadal. John looks at his very reliable watch, which reads 10 pm, and he infers, considering that it is exactly 10 pm, that it is time to go to bed. It is not exactly 10 pm, it is 10:02 pm; his watch was slow by two minutes.

These four examples, originally presented by KFF advocates, in different situations, display a very interesting phenomenon: situations where a subject has performed an episode of inferential reasoning in which a false belief is apparently both casually and epistemically essential to make the inferred belief an instance of inferential knowledge. This initially might be a shocking claim, since we have been led to believe throughout the history of philosophy in the established view that knowledge cannot be produced by episodes of reasoning in which false beliefs are essential to the conclusion.

In *Appointment* S knows that p, that he has an appointment, even though there is an error, namely, it was inferred from S's belief in the false proposition that his secretary told him on Friday he had an appointment on Monday. In this case, we are presented with a case where the subject displays some degree of faulty memory, which ended up generating an error in the process by which the inferred belief was produced. In Handout, Smith knows that his 100 copies are sufficient, despite the fact that he inferred it from the false belief that there are 53 people at his talk. This case seems to be a general case of failure in the subject's perception. In Christmas, Little Virginia knows that there will be gifts under the tree on Christmas morning, despite the fact it was inferred from a falsity, namely, Santa will put gifts under the tree. In this case, the failure is clearly due to a case of a deceitful testimony. In Bed Time, John Knows it is time to go to bed because he inferred from his false belief that it is exactly 10 pm. This case seems to be an instance where the subject clearly receives help by some kind of epistemic luck.

Although these examples, and other situations alike, can differ in the aforementioned aspects, KFF advocates claim that they all seem to share important features: in such cases, there is always a subject performing an inference from the belief in a false proposition, and the subject allegedly has inferential knowledge of the inferred proposition.

II. Some Clarifications

In order to have an adequate assessment of the KFF cases (and give a proper explanation to the phenomenon exhibited by them) I would like to elucidate two notions I take to be fundamental: the first one concerns the twofold role that evidence can play in supporting a belief; the second one, relates to an account of inference, given that KFF debate is mainly about inferential knowledge.[6] Let´s start by considering the following case.

Sister's Dog: Josh believes he is looking through the kitchen window of his sister's house and sees outside something that looks like a dog in front of the tree, then, he forms the belief that there is a dog in front of the tree. An instant later, his sister tells him she bought a dog that lives outside. From his beliefs that there is a dog in front of the tree and that his sister bought a dog, Josh appropriately infers (and comes to know) that there is a dog in the backyard. In fact, what Josh saw through the window was his nephew's toy that looks exactly like a dog; however, Beethoven, the real dog that his sister bought, was in the backyard inside the kennel.

In *Sister's Dog*, Josh has reflected upon two distinct pieces of evidence (premises) in order to perform his reasoning: he used, P, there is a dog in front of the tree (which is false), and, P*, my sister bought a dog that lives outside (which is true). Does Josh know that there is a dog in the backyard based exclusively on P and P*? I believe there is enough agreement among epistemologists about Josh's situation that allow me to say that he in fact knows the inferred proposition.[7] However, if that is the case, then one could ask the following question: from where the epistemic status of Josh's belief is coming? Apparently, Josh is justified in believing both P and P*, and his inference (which is based on these two beliefs) also

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[6] There is a minor, but not less relevant consideration to be made regarding the metaphysical status of the evidence held by the subjects in the considered cases. I am assuming a generally neutral understanding regarding such metaphysical states; I will speak of propositions (as factive entities) as the subject's evidence or reasons. Nonetheless, I do not exclude the possibility that some of the points I will make could easily be altered to consider mental states whose contents are propositions. Moreover, I keep my allegation that KFF is false whether evidence is to be regarded as propositions, mental state, facts, properties, or anything else we could think of. In fact, considering evidence as something else can also deliver a good case for the implausibility of KFF.

[7] Maybe, one who is sympathetic to Clark's (1963) 'no false lemma' theory (or some version of it) would not agree that Josh has knowledge in Sister's Case. Nonetheless, as Lehrer (1990) already pointed out the falsehood in this case is (as Klein calls it) *harmless* (as opposed to his 'useful'), it could be excluded from Josh's inferential process without compromising her (justification or) knowledge.

seems to be a valid one; so, one way to answer that question is to say that the epistemic status of Josh's inferred belief comes from both P and P*. Nevertheless, I suppose this answer is not quite right.

One way to get it right is to split josh's evidence, removing one piece of Josh's evidence at a time, and see whether we can get the same result. First, consider the case where we remove P (which is false) from Josh's reasoning, so that the only remaining evidence available for him is P* (which is true). In this situation, Josh would reason in the following way: my sister bought a dog that lives outside; therefore, there is a dog in the backyard.[8] Within this scenario we still would be willing to attribute knowledge to Josh, his reasoning seems to be valid after all, and as it looks he is justified (by his sister's testimony) in believing P*. Second, imagine the situation where P* (which is true) is removed from Josh's reasoning, so that the only remaining evidence available for him is P (which is false). In this case, Josh would reason in the following way: there is a dog in front of the tree; therefore, there is a dog in the backyard. In this set-up, we are clearly reluctant to attribute knowledge to Josh despite his reasoning being visibly valid. Even granting that Josh is perceptually justified in believing P, P clearly is not enough to enable Josh's knowledge of the inferred belief.

The answer to the question about where the positive epistemic status of Josh's belief is coming from (in Sister's Case) should be clear by now. Thus, the epistemic status of Josh's belief (that there is a dog in the backyard) is coming from his belief that P*, that his sister bought a dog that lives outside (which is a true belief). However, how to explain our reluctance to attribute knowledge to Josh in the scenario where P (the false belief) is basing his conclusion? The answer to this question should also be clear by now: the falsehood simply cannot provide the positive epistemic status required for enabling his knowledge. In such scenario, Josh is in a significant way disconnected from the truth of the inferred belief.

If this is a correct way of analyzing the subject's situation in *Sister's Case*, then we have enough basis to make an important distinction regarding the diverse roles that a piece of evidence can play in an episode of reasoning, in particular, an episode of reasoning which produces

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[8] Of course, suppose additionally that there is a suppressed conditional linking the premise (P*) to the conclusion via simple modus ponens.

knowledge. On the one hand, we can understand evidence according to its causal role, which is, regarding its function as a belief-producer, or just as general piece of evidence used in some reasoning episode, call it *C-evidence*. On the other hand, we can understand evidence according to its epistemic role of providing an epistemic basis/support for the subject's knowledge – the grounds on which someone could be said to have inferential knowledge, call it *K-evidence*.[9] If we consider the vast majority of cases (the typical cases), then we will see that one proposition can play both roles, that is, it can be both C-evidence (in the sense that it produces the subject's belief) and K-evidence (in the sense that it also epistemizes the subject's belief, upgrading it to knowledge). However, C-evidence and K-evidence are not conceptually or analytically guarantee to overlap.[10]

If we go back to Sister's Case and apply this distinction it would be right to say that both P and P* are pieces of C-evidence for Josh (both are causally responsible for producing his belief that there is a dog in the backyard). But only P* would count as K-evidence, since it is the only piece of evidence capable of grounding Josh's knowledge, that is, P* is the only evidence josh has which is capable of yielding the positive epistemic status required for Josh to have Knowledge of the inferred belief. Therefore, in this case, Josh actually has knowledge via an episode of inferential reasoning that uses a falsehood, and yet, such falsehood is *not essential* to the subject's knowledge: as we have shown, simply removing the false belief from the subject's actual inferential chain that resulted in knowledge would not prevent the subject from knowing. In the following passage Klein claims that a false belief is only important for producing knowledge if it

Plays an essential role in producing knowledge [...] that is, if the false belief were simply removed from the actual causal chain that resulted in knowledge, no causal chain resulting in the cognition would remain. This fact is crucial to understand what I take to be the central issue [...] if we simply drop the false belief in the [KFF] cases of useful falsehoods, there might not be a true belief that S already has (either occurrently or

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[9] There is still another distinction; I will call it *false evidence*. F-evidence is a subset of C-evidence: it concedes justification but is not Knowledge enabling, that is, it has epistemizing properties but falls short in rendering knowledge to the subject. For instance, in Gettier cases one can say that the subject has F-evidence, however, he is lacking knowledge. For my purpose here, I will only refer to B-evidence.

[10] This is a known distinction. You can find a similar point in Klein (2008) and Schnee (2014).

dispositionally) that is *capable of causing and Justifying* [emphasis added] S's cognition." (Klein 2008, 41-53)

So, as clearly stated by Klein, the KFF advocates are not claiming that some pieces of C-evidence can be false where there is still enough (true) K-evidence available for enabling the subject's knowledge, this would make their claim fairly uninteresting and trivial.[11] The relevance of KFF stems from the fact that its advocates are actually going for a much stronger claim, namely, that K-evidence can be false.

Another clarification that seems in order concerns the notion of 'inference', for we are discussing cases of inferential knowledge, knowledge that is acquired via an inferential process. The way I understand it KFF advocates are subscribing to something like the following general *inference account* (IA) – however, I was unable to find a single KFF advocate, Klein included, which explicitly argue for any particular account of inference:

(IA) S's inferring from p to q is for S to judge q because S *takes* the (presumed) truth of p to provide support for q.

This notion is mainly inspired by Frege's account that inferring something is "to make a judgment because we are *cognisant* [emphasis added] of other truths as providing a justification for it" (Frege, 1979).[12] Contrary to Frege's account, which seems to be too strong, the normally assumed account of inference embodied in (IA) is less demanding. It has loosened the requirement that the thinker should *know* the beliefs he is taking to support his conclusion, only to demand the thinker to take his conclusion as being supported by the *presumed* truth of those other beliefs, that is, the thinker does not need to know such beliefs. It seems correct to loosen up such condition, since we also want to consider genuine episodes of inferential reasoning those in which the subject only has false beliefs.[13]

Despite whatever difficulties that a proper account of inference can have, the aspect I am interested about (IA) is the *taking condition* (TC):

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[11] Lehrer (1990) and Goldman (1967) already pointed this out.

[12] Probably, KFF advocates would also accept a 'weaker' notion of inference in the sense that the transition from some beliefs to a conclusion can count as inference only if the thinker takes his conclusion to be supported by the presumed truth of those other beliefs, but the problem would remain.

[13] For a detailed discussion of an adequate account of inference, see Boghossian (2012) and Neta (2013). I will not be discussing it here because it would diverge us from our purpose in this paper.

Inferring a conclusion necessarily involves the subject´s *taking* his premises to support his conclusion, and drawing his conclusion because of that fact.[14] If 'taking' is to be understood as requiring the subject to be consciously aware of the premises in play in the inferential process, then it will be hard for the KFF advocates to maintain that the subject has knowledge of the inferred proposition, since false beliefs do not seem to yield the positive epistemic status required for knowledge.[15] In *Sister's Case* Josh is clearly taking the (presumed) truth of both P and P* to support the inferred belief that there is a dog in the backyard, however, only P* is in fact true and is responsible for enabling the subject's knowledge. In the situation where P* is removed, the only belief available for the subject is P (the false belief), and it is the only belief he is taking to support his belief that there is a dog in the backyard. In this case, there is no inferential knowledge; nonetheless, the inference is a valid one.

III.   A Defense of KFF: The Kleinian Approach

As examined in the previous Section it is possible for a piece of evidence to be an instance of C-evidence without being K-evidence, that is, to cause a belief without epistemizing it. Additionally, as already noticed, it is highly implausible to hold that a falsehood can yield knowledge, since it seems to lack the positive epistemic status required for knowledge. So the only and promising way to explain what is happening in the KFF cases is to find an alternative evidential path which can epistemically upgrade the inferred belief into knowledge.[16] This strategy is available for both KFF advocates and its objectors, nevertheless, while the former support a positive role for the falsehood the latter deny it. Of course, these options are available only to those who think that (in the KFF cases) the inferred belief is actually an instance of knowledge.[17] Those who think that the inferred belief is not a case of knowledge will have to explain the allegedly

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[14] I am following the formulation presented in Boghossian (2012).

[15] I, particularly, think that it is possible that at least part of the inferential process doesn´t need to be explicitly taken, but that is for another discussion.

[16] As an evidential path, I mean a sequence or a chain of propositions, each of which bears some evidential support to the next. I understand evidential paths in the same way Klein (2003, 2008) have described it.

[17] Fitelson (2010) makes some refinements to standard KFF cases, he generates examples in which the knowledge counterfactually depends on the falsity of the premise (which Fitelson calls KFF*), but as we will see in the next section, this account also fails my condition (b).

intuitive reaction of attributing knowledge to the subject in such cases. Now, I will introduce and object to one of the most refined attempts of a KFF defense.

In his "*Useful False Beliefs*" (2008), Peter Klein has proposed a very detailed and refined account about how a falsehood can be essential to produce knowledge via inference. Klein has followed Hilpinen's proposal that "a person can know things not only on the basis of (valid) inferences from what he or she knows, but in some cases even on the basis of what is not known (or even not true) provided that the latter (evidential) propositions are *sufficiently close to the truth* [emphasis added]".[18] Part of Klein's explanation consists of providing a definition of *useful falsehoods*:[19] the belief that *uf* is a *useful falsehood* to S (for acquiring knowledge that *h*) by producing a doxastically justified belief that *h* iff:

1. *uf* is false.
2. The belief that *uf* is doxastically justified for S.
3. The belief that *uf* is essential in the causal production of the belief that *h*.
4. *uf* propositionally justifies *h*. [...]
5. *uf* entails a true proposition, *t*. [...]
6. *t* propositionally justifies *h*.
7. Whatever doxastically justifies the *uf* for S also propositionally justifies *t* for S. [20]

According to him, this "definition is intended to explicate only the conditions under which a false belief can produce a belief that is 'held for the right reasons' – reasons that, in some cases, are sufficient to bring about knowledge."[21] The other part of Klein's account consists of a revision of his defeasibility condition;[22] it also serves to hold the alternative

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[18] Klein (2008).

[19] Essential for Klein's proposal is his very well placed distinction between *propositional* and *doxastic* justification, the former concerning the relation of justification between propositions, the latter concerning the relation of justification concerning beliefs – doxastic justification being parasitic on propositional justification.

[20] Klein (2008: 48).

[21] Klein (2008: 49)

[22] Klein proposes the following fourth defeasibility condition to a JTB+ analysis of knowledge.

propositional path, which is 'close' related to the falsehood and has the potential of not being defeated.[23] The alternative path proposed by Klein branches from the belief *x*, that doxastically justifies *uf,* and *uf (itself)*, and it continues to *h*. He represented this in the following way:

$$x \begin{cases} t \ldots h \\ \underline{uf} \ldots h \end{cases}$$
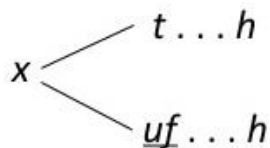
In this case, there would be a genuine defeater of the path *x–uf– h* at the *uf*-step, however, there would not be a genuine defeater at any step on the path *x–t–h*. Klein recognizes that this path, *x–t–h*, is a path that actually hasn't been taken by the subject, but its mere existence makes it possible for the subject to obtain knowledge by having taken the defeasible path. Klein gives the following example to illustrate what he has in mind:[24]

Suppose I believe that I am witnessing Mr. Butterfingers on the top of the Empire State Building apparently dropping a glass toward the empty sidewalk below. Based on the belief he is doing that, I come to believe, and thereby know, that a glass will soon break on the sidewalk below. Suppose, further, that he did not *drop* the glass, but, rather, it *slipped* out of his fingers.

Just as the KFF examples presented in Section *I*, this case intends to display a situation of a falsehood being essential in the production of knowledge. In this case, at one hand, there is a defeasible path that contains the falsehood: (x) "I am witnessing Mr. Butterfingers on the top of the Empire State Building apparently dropping a glass toward the empty sidewalk below"; (uf) "Mr. Butterfingers dropped a glass toward

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[Revised (iv):] If [a justifier] *e* is true, then there is no genuine defeater of the propositional justification of any of the propositions in the evidential path up to and including *e* and there is no genuine defeater of the propositional justification of any proposition between *e* and *h*; if *e* is false, then there is no genuine defeater of the propositional justification of any of the propositions in the evidential path up to and including *t* and there is no genuine defeater of the propositional justification of any proposition between *t* and *h*, where *t* is defined by Conditions 1-7. (Klein 2008: 49-50)

[23] I won't be discussing here the problems that can arise for Klein's account that are directly related to his revised defeasibility condition because it would considerably diverge me from my purpose here; moreover, my objection to his account of useful falsehood is independent from his general account of defeasible knowledge. For a detailed discussion of these aspects see Klein (2008), de Almeida 2011, and (forthcoming).

[24] Klein (2008: 51)

the empty sidewalk below"; (*h*), "a glass will soon break on the sidewalk below." But, at the other hand, there is another non-defeasible path available for S, which contains a true proposition, and that is subjunctively implied (but not entailed) by the false proposition that "Mr. Butterfingers dropped a glass toward the empty sidewalk below": (*x*) "I am witnessing Mr. Butterfingers on the top of the Empire State Building apparently dropping a glass toward the empty sidewalk below"; (*t*) "the glass in Mr. Butterfingers' hand will drop rapidly to the ground"; (*h*) "a glass will soon break on the sidewalk below".[25] With this account Klein believes he is encompassing Hilpnen's intuition of *being sufficiently close to the truth*, since he is taking the *t-path* (the non-taken one), which contains the true proposition, to contribute something to the acquisition of the knowledge that *h* via the *uf-path* (the actually taken one).

Applying the kleinian approach to the KFF examples, we have the following explanation. In *Appointment*, S inferentially believes that she has an appointment on Monday, even though there is a mistake, namely, it was inferred from her belief in the false proposition that her secretary told her on Friday she had an appointment on Monday (in fact, she was told about it on Thursday). Although S takes the the *uf*-path (where *uf* stands for the false proposition that 'her secretary told her on Friday she had an appointment on Monday'), *uf* entails a true proposition *t* (let's say, that 'her secretary told her some days ago that she had an appointment on Monday), which is able to propositionally justify *h* (that she has an appointment on Monday). This is all that is required for S to know *h* via an inference from the *uf*'s belief. The same analysis extends for the other cases.

IV.   Objections to the Kleinian Approach

Although the Kleinian account is very meticulous and sophisticated there are some critical problems that even with substantial revision it cannot surpass, so I claim. I believe that Klein's account fails, and my objection to his view is twofold: the first part of the objection

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[25] Klein assumes that, since in some cases the relationship between the false proposition and the given truth is only weakly, employing entailment seems adequate, with the proviso that some weaker relationship might be sufficient.

concerns the '*close to the truth*' allegory; the second part is about the evidential *t*-path and its actual role in S's inferential process.

Let us begin with the first part of the objection. As already mentioned Klein is trying to capture Hilpnen's idea of '*being sufficiently close to the truth*'.[26] However, it is far from obvious that this is the intuitive reaction we actually have when we confront the putative KFF examples. For instance, in *Appointment,* the intuitive reaction to attribute knowledge to the subject for the proposition that she has an appointment on Monday seems to be completely unrelated to the falsehood being close to the truth, and there are different ways to show that.

One could argue that it is more plausible to think that our intuitive reaction is because the subject has sufficient relevant information, and such information is actually, what enables S's knowledge.[27] The subject`s cognitive position, when she believes the false proposition that 'her secretary told her on Friday she had an appointment on Monday', contains a lot of relevant information (data) that apparently could be used to account for S's knowledge that 'she has an appointment on Monday'. For instance, the information that 'she was told by her secretary about an appointment'; the fact that she makes a mistake about the day she was told about the appointment does not seem to invalidate or falsify the information (the *data*) in her possession. It would not make any relevant difference if she mistakenly believed that she was told about the appointment on Friday or Saturday (even supposing that the world she was told on Friday is closer to the actual Thursday-world than the Saturday-world). The relevant information available for the subject – which is enabling her knowledge – would not change at all. The question here would be to argue that the relevant information available for the subject is either propositional or even believed by the subject in order to enable her knowledge of the inferred belief. In any case, it is just a plausible way to explain our intuitive reaction to such cases, as intuitive as Klein's allegory of 'closeness to truth'.

In Christmas, Little Virginia believes that *Santa will put gifts under the tree on Christmas Eve'* based on her parents' say-so, and, on that basis, infers that There *will be gifts under the tree on Christmas morning.*

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[26] The idea of 'closeness to truth' is apparently being used to capture the metaphysical idea of distance between the actual world and other possible worlds.

[27] For a detailed discussion of what it means to be informed see Floridi (2006).

Our intuitive reaction also seems to be unrelated to any closeness to a possible world analysis. This is because a world where Santa puts gifts under the Christmas tree is a very distant one. Therefore, in this case, the *close to the truth* allegory seems to be of no help at all. The intuition that she has knowledge because of her background information seems to be much more appealing. It seems reasonable to assume that Little Virginia's belief that '*Santa will put gifts under the tree on Christmas Eve*' contains a lot more relevant information (data) that her knowledge that *'there will be gifts under the tree on Christmas morning'* can account for. For example, the information that *someone will put gifts under the Christmas thre*e (of course, by now she must have been able to realize certain general rules – e.g., if Santa will put the gifts, then someone will put the gifts – and this also seems plausible even if she is not able to describe it properly, or to describe it poorly). Additionally, it is no difficult to conceive the other cases in a way to make them compatible with our background assumptions about the actual world but making the falsehood to look overly distant from the truth.[28]

Klein claims that for a falsehood to be essential in the production of knowledge it has to play both roles, causal and epistemic, but the way he explains things just make it hard to understand the proper role of doxastic and proposition justification. In principle, *uf* is doxastically justifying S's belief in *h*, but *uf* (for being a falsehood) has no positive epistemic status to provide.[29] So, initially, *uf* is just a piece of C-evidence for *h*, that is, it is causally accountable for producing S's belief in *h*; however, *uf* is not a piece of K-evidence, because it cannot provide the positive epistemic status to upgrade *h* to knowledge. However, since *uf* implies a true proposition *t*, and the mere existence of *t* is sufficient to get *uf closer to the truth*, somehow *t* is providing a positive epistemic status for *uf*. This is a very odd explanation and it is inconsistent with Klein's initial proposal in which *uf* (alone) should be essential (causally and epistemically) for S's cognition, because, now, both *uf* and *t* are essential to the subject's cognition. This way of explaining things is actually acting

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[28] A similar point is made in de Almeida (Forthcoming) regarding the metaphysical proximity, he offers more examples to the implausibility of the 'close to the truth' allegory, in his examples he also explores some problems with Klein's defeasibility analysis. As I already noticed in a previous note, my main objection to Klein's account is independent of the difficulties that can arise for his defeasibility account; this is why I will not be discussing it here.

[29] This is the reason for bringing up the alternative dispositional t-path in the first place. Another reason is his attempt to overcome some problems related to the defeasibility condition.

against Klein's own claims about doxastic justification, given that *uf* and *t* would now be sharing the attribution of supporting the subject's cognition, despite the fact that *t* only propositionally justifies *h* for S. Nonetheless, he is simply silent about how this is supposed to work.[30]

To put it differently, Klein suggests that the mere existence of an alternative evidential path implied by *uf* – which is true and propositionally justifies the target-belief *h* – is enough to make *uf* sufficiently close to the truth, that is, the doxastic justification for the target-belief is somehow dependent on there being such *t* truth. The problem is that there is no good reason to consider the necessity for S to have such *t*-truth dispositionally believed, either *occurrently* believed, or even as a *disposition to believe*.[31] According to his proposal, *S clearly does not believe t* (dispositionally or occurrently), because *t* is not part of her doxastic system. This actually is a good thing, if S occurrently or dispositionally had believed that *t*, and *t* were causally or epistemically sufficient for the belief that *h*, then *uf* would end up being just one of those inessential, *harmless* falsehoods. Nevertheless, to understand *t* only as a disposition to believe is also problematic because it is hard to argue that in having the opportunity S would actually form such belief. There is an infinite number of propositions that are implied by the things we currently believe, but it is hard to argue that even having the chance we would form such believes. Even more, because some of those beliefs could be inconsistent with the beliefs we already have and which are already part of our doxastic system, and because we could (given its complexity) fail in realizing such entailments.

Consider *Handout*. S falsely believes that there are 53 people at his talk, after carefully counting the seated people, and then he infers that

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his 100 handout copies are sufficient. According to Klein's explanation, in this case, the false proposition entails a true proposition (let us say, there are less than 60 people in the audience) that is able to propositionally justify the inferred belief that that his 100 handout copies are sufficient. However, it is hard to see that S needs to form the belief in the true proposition even if she had the chance to do it, but if she did form the belief in the true implied proposition, that would reinstate the difficulty already suggested, that *uf* would end up being just one of those inessential, *harmless* falsehoods. It is hard to see how Klein could make this whole thing to work.

Although these problems regarding the 'close to the truth' allegory and the doxastic/ propositional justification (combined with the way S hold such beliefs – occurrently or dispositionally) alone cannot refute Klein's account they certainly reduce its plausibility. However, my second objection presents a much bigger problem to Klein's account, one I believe he cannot overcome without a substantial revision: it concerns the account of inference that is at play in play.

Remember that in the last section I've introduced what seemed to be the most intuitive account of inference (IA) that appears to be governing our general approach to inferential knowledge (Klein's approach included). According to (IA) S's inferring from p to q is for S to judge q because S *takes* the (presumed) truth of p to provide the support for q. Therefore, in this account of inference, the subject must take the premises to be supporting the inferred conclusion, but it is hard to argue that S is taking t to support h. The only premise S seems to be taking is *uf*, and it is because S takes the (presumed) truth of *uf* to provide the support for h that S believes in h.

Consider Handout again. Before carefully (mis) counting the number of people in the audience Smith falsely believes that 'There are 53 people at his talk'; and from that he infers that 'his 100 handout copies are sufficient'. In this case, it is clear that the only premise Smith is taking is the false belief. Even granting that the false belief can entail a true belief (in the dispositional sense) capable of supporting his conclusion (e.g., 'there are less than 60 people at the talk'), it is hard to argue that such true proposition could be seen as taking any part in S's actual inferential reasoning episode. So, even if we grant that the postulation of t would be enough to enable S's knowledge of the inferred belief, it is highly

implausible to hold that the knowledge of the inferred proposition is genuinely inferential, that is, acquired exclusively via the inferential reasoning episode.

Klein explanation seems to be no different or even better than some process reliabilist approach to such cases.[32] One simply could say that, in *Appointment*, S Knows that her secretary told her on Friday that she has an appointment on Monday because this belief was formed by a reliable process. So, the falsehood would be causally relevant (a piece of C-evidence) for the production of the inferred belief, but it would not be providing any positive epistemic status required for its knowledge, such epistemic status is being provided by the reliability of the process (which is actually doing the K-evidence job).

How, then, according to the kleinian approach, can we say that the subject has knowledge via a genuine inferential reasoning episode? Well, we simply cannot, so I claim. If the subject actually has knowledge of the inferred proposition in the putative KFF cases, then it simply is not due to the inferential reasoning episode: *uf* can only be said to be causally essential to the production of the inferred belief, but that is not enough to make the case for genuine inferential knowledge.

V.   Concluding Remarks: KFF Explained

In reviewing some of the aspects of Klein's account, we definitely get the feeling that it faces some insuperable problems. However, such problems raise difficulties that any KFF advocate will have to deal, in order to positively account for the phenomenon presented by the putative KFF cases: (a) to explain how the falsehood can be both causally and epistemically essential in grounding the inferred belief; and (b) to be compatible with a standard account of inference (IA) – where both C-evidence and K-evidence are suppose to be taken to support the inferred

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[32] I am not saying that the same phenomenon we get in the KFF cases cannot be construed to a reliabilist approach, I am just claiming that the way Klein explains thing is incompatible with a genuine case of inferential knowledge. I am also not sure that a process reliabilist approach, in this sense, could make the case for a genuine instance of inferential knowledge. Klein (2008) gives some thought about it.

belief.[33] Unfortunately, there is no available account in the market that can meet these requirements, and I do not think that anyone will ever do.

Even for someone, like me, who claims that there is no KFF – that there are no genuine cases of inferential knowledge from a falsehood – there is still the burden of explaining the allegedly intuitive reaction to attribute knowledge to the subject in the putative KFF cases. I must confess that I never felt this intuitive compulsion to attribute knowledge to S in such cases, because it always seemed clear to me that a falsehood is never able to generate the epistemic status required for knowledge, and that if somehow the subject in fact did have knowledge, it was due to something else. However, given that some authors appears to be having that intuitive reaction, it is wise to explain where this intuitive reaction can be coming from.

There are at least two main explanations for such intuitive reaction. First, one way to explain the phenomena concerns cases where the inferred belief is actually a case of knowledge but not a *genuine* case of *inferential Knowledge.* That happens when, despite the fact that the falsehood being causally important for the production of the inferred belief, it is not responsible for yielding the epistemic status required for upgrading the belief into knowledge, the *truth-connection* feature is coming from somewhere else.[34] For instance, in the *Appointment* case, when S falsely believes that her secretary told her on Friday she has an appointment on Monday, and based on that, she infers that she has an appointment on Monday because she takes the (presumed truth of the) false belief to support her conclusion. The intuitive reaction to attribute knowledge to S rests on an externalist intuition we have: if the process she uses to form the inferred belief is a reliable one, then it seems appropriate to attribute knowledge to S of the inferred belief, based on the reliability of the process – the falsehood plays no role other than causing the inferred belief. If that is correct, then it is hard to see that this would be a case of Knowledge due to a genuine inferential reasoning episode, since the belief

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[33] In fact, those who think that the subject has Knowledge in the KFF cases, that it is a genuine case of inferential knowledge, but propose that the knowledge is due to an alternative evidential path which contains a true belief, will have to adequately account for the (b) condition.

[34] I am taking the following principle of the Truth Connection (TC): A belief has what it takes to be upgraded to knowledge just in case it is connected to truth in an *appropriate manner*. The 'appropriate manner' in (PC) is spelled out in several different ways according to one's preferred theory of knowledge.

that is actually being taking is only causally (and not epistemically) essential to the production of the inferred belief.

Second, it is also possible to explain such intuitive reaction via an internalist approach, in particular, one that takes the role that information play in our cognition. For instance, it seems that if the subject knows (believes, or is informed) that there are eight planets on the solar system, then she also knows (believes, or is informed) that "there are seven planets on the solar system", and that "there is less than eleven planets in the solar system" etc. In the same way, it seems natural to say that if the subject believes (Knows, or is informed) that 'the secretary told her on Friday she has an appointment on Monday', then she also believes (Knows, or is informed) that 'someone told her that she has an appointment on Monday' or that 'someone told her a few days ago that she has an appointment on Monday'. Thus, our initial compulsion to consider the subject as having inferential knowledge (in the KFF cases) is due to the misleading consideration that the subject is taking such pieces of information (*data*) as part of her inferential reasoning episode, when in fact she is not.[35]

In any case, even accounting for both internalist and externalist intuitive reactions, it is hard to see how, in such KFF scenarios, the inferred belief is properly a genuine instance of inferential Knowledge, which is exclusively due to the inferential reasoning episode. I am not claiming that in such cases there are no genuine episodes of inferential reasoning, rather, I am claiming that such reasoning episodes fail to be cases of genuine inferential knowledge, because the only thing we can attribute to the inference is the causal production of a belief, not its epistemization. So, our general tendency to attribute inferential knowledge to the subject due to a mistake.

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[35] Ian Schnee (2015) argues against KFF in the sense that the subject has knowledge in such cases but it is not due to any falsehood. He claims that there actually is another evidential path containing a truth belief that is responsible for enabling the subject's knowledge. He assumes a notion of dispositionally or tacitly belief in order to explain where the epistemic property required for the knowledge of the target belief is coming from. However, he also fails to explain how these beliefs are able to take any part in the subject's inferential reasoning episode in order to support knowledge – the (b) condition I have mentioned.

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