1. Dreaming and Knowledge

2. Knowledge and Rationality

3. An Argument for the Non-Dreaming Condition
Let me remind you of the Duke of Devonshire: he dreamt that he was speaking at the House of Lords and woke up to find that he was speaking at the House of Lords.
Why is Dreaming Incompatible with Knowledge?

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I’m not, in fact, all that sure what is the basis of this incompatibility, but let’s consider two additional features of the concept of knowledge that might be helpful here.
A Story about Karl

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What if Karl replies, “I just know it.” What would you think?
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▶ If you’re like me, and don’t follow politics all that closely, you might say, “Really, why do you say that?”
▶ What if Karl replies, “I just know it.” What would you think?
▶ Wouldn’t you ask, “What do you mean, you just know? Did you read it in the Times? Did someone tell you?”
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- But Karl is adamant, he replies, “No, I just know, I don’t have any reasons for thinking that it’s true, but I know.”
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- But Karl is adamant, he replies, “No, I just know, I don’t have any reasons for thinking that it’s true, but I know.”
- Does Karl really know that Capito is ahead of Tennant in the polls in West Virginia?
A Story about Karl

Or is he only guessing?
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- Suppose you then go online and find that it’s true, would you then think that Karl knew?
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- Or is he only guessing?
- Suppose you then go online and find that it’s true, would you then think that Karl knew?
- Wouldn’t you think, what a lucky guess?
This story shows that in order to know something, you have to have *some reason* for believing it.
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But not just *any* reason.
What if Karl says, when I ask him why he thinks Capito is ahead of Tennant, “Because I read it in the *National Enquirer*”? 
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Or, “Because my astrologer told me?”  
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Or, “Because Capito actually wanted to be endorsed by Michael Palin, not Sarah Palin?”
Knowledge Requires Justification

- So, knowing something requires having some *good* reason for thinking it to be true.
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- The standard term in philosophy for having good reasons for a belief is having a *justified* belief.
Knowledge is Justified True Belief

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Would you think that he knows?

So, perhaps the reason why dreaming is incompatible with knowledge is that beliefs formed on the basis of dreams are not adequately justified.
Is Dreaming an Adequate Form of Justification?

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▶ What if Karl’s reply is, “Because last night I dreamt that I was reading an article in the *Times* that said Capito is ahead in West Virginia?”
▶ Would you think that he knows?
▶ So, perhaps the reason why dreaming is incompatible with knowledge is that beliefs formed on the basis of dreams are not adequately justified.
▶ But why not?
I think one of the main reasons is this.
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- Let’s recall Stroud’s example of dreaming something that is actually true, the shutters dream.
- What’s the difference between dreaming this and seeing the shutters?
- Well, one difference is that although this particular dream is caused by something that’s actually happening, one could, it seems, have exactly this dream while there are no shutters in the house at all.
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- Let’s recall Stroud’s example of dreaming something that is actually true, the shutters dream.
- What’s the difference between dreaming this and seeing the shutters?
- Well, one difference is that although this particular dream is caused by something that’s actually happening, one could, it seems, have exactly this dream while there are no shutters in the house at all.
- Similarly, that the wind has blown open the shutters while you’re asleep does not preclude your dreaming something else altogether.
In contrast, in an ordinary case where we’re looking at the shutters, one wouldn’t see exactly the same thing if we’re looking at something else, say, closed shutters.
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- We can sum up these points by saying that dreaming is not a reliable source of information, while seeing is.
- A source of information is reliable just in case beliefs coming from that source are sensitive to the way the world is.
Dreaming is not Reliable

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Dreaming and Knowledge

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- This would then be a reason for taking (2)\(-Dp \supset -Kp\) to be true.
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- This would then be a reason for taking \( Dp \supset -Kp \) to be true.
- But we still don’t have an argument from (2) to (3); i.e., suppose we accept that dreaming is incompatible with knowledge, how, if at all, can we deduce the Non-Dreaming Condition?
Let me begin by emphasizing that the Non-Dreaming Condition is \textit{not the same thing} as the incompatibility of dreaming with knowledge.
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That is, I can know something only if I didn’t dream it.
(2) is not the Non-Dreaming Condition

But the Non-Dreaming Condition is

\[ Kp \supset K(\neg Dp) \]
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▶ But the Non-Dreaming Condition is

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▶ which says that I can know something only if I know I didn’t dream it.
The Difference between (2) and (3)

Why are these different? Well, consider the following two claims:

- My car will start only if the tank is not empty
- My car will start only if I know that the tank is not empty

Surely whether my car will start has nothing to do with whether I know anything about the condition of its gas tank. I could have been in Patagonia, incommunicado, for the last year, and loaned my car to a friend, so I certainly don’t know that the gas is not empty. And yet my car will start, because, unbeknownst to me, there is gas in the tank.
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And yet my car will start, because, unbeknownst to me, there is gas in the tank.
What I have just argued is that something—the tank’s not being empty—can be a necessary condition for my car to start,
Necessary Condition vs Knowledge of Necessary Condition

- What I have just argued is that something—the tank’s not being empty—can be a necessary condition for my car to start,
- But my knowing that this condition is fulfilled is not necessary for my car to start.
Are Necessary Conditions for Knowing Different?

In order for Descartes’s skeptical argument to work, knowledge must be different.
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- If something is a necessary condition for me to have knowledge,
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- If something is a necessary condition for me to have knowledge,
- Then I have to know that that condition is fulfilled to have knowledge.
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- That is, knowledge of necessary conditions for knowledge are also necessary conditions for knowledge.
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- Why would knowledge be like this?
Knowledge of *Known* Necessary Conditions of Knowledge

- We’ve just seen that (2), the incompatibility of dreaming and knowledge, is not the Non-Dreaming Condition.
Knowledge of *Known* Necessary Conditions of Knowledge

- We’ve just seen that (2), the incompatibility of dreaming and knowledge, is not the Non-Dreaming Condition.
- But, we can get to the Non-Dreaming Condition from (2), provided that we accept two additional assumptions, both of which derive from the fact the knowledge is a rational achievement.
I will in fact argue for something more general.
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I’ll start with the premise that I know that \(-q\) is a necessary condition for knowing \(p\):

\[(a) \quad K(Kp \supset -q)\]
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I’ll start with the premise that I know that $-q$ is a necessary condition for knowing $p$:

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Using the two additional assumptions, I will establish that:

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▶ I will in fact argue for something more general.
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I have to know that \( -q \) in order to know that \( p \): that condition is fulfilled also has to be necessary for me to have that knowledge.

\[ (b) \quad Kp \supset K(-q) \]
Additional Premise: Principle $K$

The first additional assumption is called Principle $K$: knowledge distributes over the conditional:

$$(K(p \supset q).Kp) \supset Kq$$

which is equivalent to

(c) 

$$K(p \supset q) \supset (Kp \supset Kq)$$

Why should we accept this Principle?
Suppose I know that $A \supset B$, and I also know that $A$ is the case.
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Now if I’m minimally rational, I can surely reason from these two things I know to the conclusion that \( B \).
An Argument for Principle $K$

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- Now if I’m minimally rational, I can surely reason from these two things I know to the conclusion that $B$.
- That is, if I’m minimally rational, then I am in a position to know $B$. 
Suppose I know that $A \supset B$, and I also know that $A$ is the case. Now if I’m minimally rational, I can surely reason from these two things I know to the conclusion that $B$. That is, if I’m minimally rational, then I am in a position to know $B$. I may not in fact infer that $B$, due to a lapse in attention, but if someone were to point out what I know, I should be able to reach the conclusion that $B$ and so know it.
All this is on the hypothesis that I’m minimally rational.
An Argument for Principle \( K \)

- All this is on the hypothesis that I’m minimally rational.
- But we’re also assuming that I have knowledge of \( A \supset B \) and of \( A \).
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So I must be minimally rational, since otherwise how could I come up with any good reasons for my beliefs?
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Note that the operator ‘$K(\ldots)$’ has to be read now as “I know, or am in a position to know that . . .”
Additional Premise: The Transparency Principle

The other additional assumption is called the Transparency Principle: if we know something, then we are at least in a position to know that we know it.

\[(d) \quad Kp \supset K(Kp)\]

Again, why is this true?
The Ground of Transparency

There is in fact an argument for Transparency, but it’s complicated, so let me just hint at why it is plausible.

The reason, ultimately, is that knowledge is a rational achievement; to know something, we have to have reasons for believing it to be true.

Now, could anyone have reasons for a belief, and yet not be able to articulate them? How’s that different from someone who merely guesses?

So it seems that to have a belief that amounts to knowledge, one would have to be able to become conscious of having reasons for that belief.

That puts one in a position to have good reasons for believing that one has reasons for that belief.

That is, to know that one knows.
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That is, to know that one knows.
From (a) and (c), i.e., our initial assumption and Principle $K$, we get:

(e) \[ K(Kp) \supset K(\neg q) \]
The Argument from (2) to (3)

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- Then, from this conclusion, (e) and the Transparency Principle, (d), we reach the conclusion we were aiming for:

\[
(b) \quad Kp \supset K(\neg q)
\]
Here’s a deduction that makes this reasoning explicit:

\[
\begin{align*}
[1] & \quad (1) \quad K(Kp \supset \neg q) \\
[2] & \quad (2) \quad K(Kp \supset \neg q) \supset [K(Kp) \supset K(-q)] \quad \text{Principle } K \\
[1, 2] & \quad (3) \quad K(Kp) \supset K(-q) \quad (1)(2) \text{MP} \\
[4] & \quad (4) \quad Kp \supset K(Kp) \quad \text{Transparency} \\
[5] & \quad (5) \quad Kp \quad P \\
[4, 5] & \quad (6) \quad K(Kp) \quad (4)(5) \text{MP} \\
[1, 2, 4, 5] & \quad (7) \quad K(-q) \quad (3)(6) \text{MP} \\
[1, 2, 4] & \quad (8) \quad Kp \supset K(-q) \quad [5](7) \text{D}
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- So don’t we, as a result, know that not dreaming is a necessary condition of knowledge?
The Argument from (2) to (3)

▶ This argument does depend on the assumption that we know that not-\(q\) is a necessary condition of knowing \(p\).
▶ But haven’t we just argued that dreaming is incompatible with knowledge?
▶ So don’t we, as a result, know that not dreaming is a necessary condition of knowledge?
▶ If so, then the argument I have just given establishes the Non-Dreaming Condition, if we let not-\(q\) be: “I am not dreaming that \(p\)"
The Premises of the Dreaming Argument

1. Knowledge requires at least justified true beliefs.
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An Argument for the Non-Dreaming Condition

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5. We know 1-3, and so are at least capable of knowing that not dreaming is a necessary condition of knowledge.
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6. Principle $K$: if we know a conditional and its antecedent to be true, then we are at least in a position to know that its consequent is true.
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7. Transparency: if we know something, then we’re capable of knowing that we know it.
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So the skeptical argument leads us to reconsider the natures of these concepts.
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So we at least hope that our discussion enables us to come to know, for instance, that knowledge is incompatible with dreaming.

But knowledge of this incompatibility is one of the key premises in the skeptical argument.
So it seems that it is through philosophizing about knowledge that Descartes’s skeptical argument comes to apply to us. As Descartes puts it,
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As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep.
One Final Twist

- So it seems that it is through philosophizing about knowledge that Descartes’s skeptical argument comes to apply to us. As Descartes puts it,

  As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep.

- Ignorance perhaps sometimes is not only bliss, but prevents more ignorance.