

Stop and Smell the Roses: Inostensible Propositional Knowledge and Raising the Standard of Knowing

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*Ilhan Inan's book *The Philosophy of Curiosity* is an exploration of understanding human curiosity and its relation to the use of language. He introduces the notion of inostensible reference (or reference to the unknown) that renders an interesting question possible. He claims that our aptitude for this kind of reference is what enables us to become aware of our ignorance and be curious. For him, there are two ways in which a proposition could be inostensible to a subject: one possibility is when the whole sentence's truth value is unknown to the subject, the other possibility is when the subject knows the proposition to be true but does not know the fact that makes the proposition true, which he later calls inostensible knowledge. The former case requires an awareness of ignorance to generate curiosity, and the latter case requires an awareness of inostensibility of one's knowledge to be conducive to curiosity. In this paper, what I would like to do is mainly to draw attention to the often neglected awareness of inostensible knowledge and explore its relation to curiosity. I also claim that, contrary to Inan's idea that the only way of having inostensible knowledge is when there is at least one inostensible concept in the proposition, there is another possibility of inostensible knowledge, which would correspond to a case in which all the terms are ostensible to the speaker and the proposition is known to be true, but the proposition as a whole is still inostensible. I would like to argue that such an awareness of inostensibility of knowledge is a key step in evaluating one's epistemic contact with reality and accordingly determining the degree of one's knowledge on the epistemic scale. I believe this awareness will implicitly raise the standard of knowledge and hopefully foster curiosity, in its broader meaning of caring to know. I will further suggest that the acquisition of ostensible knowledge, which is a form of objectual knowledge of a fact, could also enable the corresponding proposition to be known better by the subject. This claim of mine might be thought of as an attempt to argue for the gradability of propositional knowledge, which has been a controversial issue in epistemology.*

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Introduction

It is no surprise to hear that curiosity propels discoveries, but one may also reasonably entertain the idea that discoveries could ignite curiosity. That would be a kind of curiosity not about the existence of the discovered phenomenon, nor a curiosity regarding the truth value of the proposition that the discovery spells out. It would be a kind of curiosity about the fact, the piece of reality itself. For instance, “Alpha Centauri A is the star that is closest to our sun” is a piece of knowledge I might learn from a reliable astronomy book. Now, I can claim that I know that Alpha Centauri A is the star that is closest to our sun. Just after uttering this, it might sound peculiar when I say that I am curious to know that Alpha Centauri A is the star that is closest to our sun. Isn’t that sufficient for me to claim that I know the fact of Alpha Centauri A being the closest star to our sun? I already know it, don’t I?¹ I know the fact exists, but there is more to knowledge and it usually takes more to satisfy curiosity. Suppose that it is the first time I hear the name of this star and the only thing I know of it is that it exists somewhere in space and is the closest one to our sun; in other words, I merely have knowledge of the truth of the aforementioned proposition. On the other hand, an astronomer possessing ample knowledge about the fact that makes this proposition true might know the same sentence. It seems there is a big difference between the epistemic state of the astronomer and that of mine concerning the knowledge of the proposition. We both “know that p” expressed by the sentence, yet, the two knowledge claims are not on a par. Propositional knowledge attributions do not discriminate between these two kinds of knowledge. This is the distinction Inan makes between “knowing that p” by merely knowing that there is a fact that makes the proposition true, what he calls inostensible knowledge, and “knowing that p” by knowing the fact, what he calls ostensible knowledge (Inan 2012: 52–53). In a theory of curiosity, this distinction becomes significant as sometimes curiosity is more than a search for certainty. One may know a proposition, be certain that this proposition refers to a fact but one may still be curious to know the fact that makes it true. In such cases, rather than knowing that the sentence expressing it refers to a fact, the subject might be after increasing “the degree of ostensibility”, which is a notion that could be roughly described as how the curious subject is epistemically related to an object under a concept (Inan 2014).

¹ Later, this will be characterized as a case of inostensible knowledge.

1. *Inostensible Knowledge*

In order to make sense of these claims, it is crucial to understand the central concepts of ostensibility and inostensibility, which points to a novel distinction specified by Inan. In spite of the fact that offering a complete account of the centrality of these terms in a theory of curiosity is difficult and it probably demands a rigorous study of Inan's book, here it should suffice to offer a basic understanding of these concepts. Inostensibility is a term that first appeared in Inan's dissertation to single out a kind of reference in philosophy of language. He uses "inostensible reference" almost as interchangeable with reference to the unknown, and in his book he argues that our aptitude for this kind of reference enables us to become aware of our ignorance and be curious. The following quote roughly defines what he has in mind while using this terminology:

The speaker may know what a term may refer to, in the sense that he knows that a certain object as being the referent of the term, and in the second case one may lack such knowledge. Let us call the first kind of term relative to a speaker an "ostensible" term (for that speaker) and the latter an "inostensible" term (for that speaker). (Inan 2012: 33)

To illustrate, suppose I want to inquire into the longest lived of men and since I do not know of any individual as being the longest lived of men, this makes the definite description "the longest lived of men" inostensible to me. Yet, once I learn the referent of this term, it becomes ostensible, even though it could have a very low degree of ostensibility at the onset. By getting more acquainted with the object, the ostensibility will increase. After introducing these concepts, Inan asserts that inostensible terms are always used in asking questions, and argues that every question asked out of curiosity involves the use of an inostensible term.

As one would expect, ostensibility is a relational concept; so, whether a term is ostensible or inostensible for a person depends on that person's epistemic link to the referent of that term. In other words, it is relative to the person and the same term may be ostensible for one and inostensible for another, and even for the same person a term that used to be inostensible in the past may later become ostensible upon gaining the required kind of knowledge. Then, what makes a proposition inostensible to someone? For Inan, there are two ways in which a true proposition can be inostensible for a subject, in the first case the subject does not know whether the proposition is true, and in the other case the subject knows that the proposition is true, i.e., it refers to a fact, but the subject does not know the fact which makes the proposition true. This latter case gives rise to "inostensible knowledge", in which the subject merely knows that there is a fact, but does not have sufficient experience of the fact so as to make it ostensible. On the other hand, one's knowledge could be deemed "ostensible knowledge" if all the terms that are contained in the given proposition are ostensible to

the speaker; that is, if the speaker knows the referent of the terms in the proposition. Conversely, in inostensible knowledge cases, for Inan, there is at least one term in the sentence that is inostensible to the subject. He even claims that “the degree of ostensibility of a whole declarative sentence is also a function of the degree of ostensibility of its constituent terms” (Inan 2014: 13), which comes to mean that if all the terms in a sentence are ostensible to a subject, the sentence is also ostensible. However, I would like to allow for another possible way of having inostensible knowledge, which is perhaps the least noticed one in inostensible knowledge cases. In this second case, one knows that the proposition expressed by the sentence is true, and one has ostensible knowledge of all the terms in a sentence, but the proposition as a whole is still inostensible to the subject. In other words, one knows that “a is F”, and both a and F are ostensible to the subject, but the knowledge of the proposition as a whole is still inostensible.

Interestingly, the inostensibility of knowledge, especially if it is of the latter kind, mostly goes unnoticed. Contrary to the quite recognizable awareness of inostensibility we have while asking a question as in “how many people shared the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize?”, by which we are attempting to transform our inostensible term “the number of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winners” to an ostensible one by uttering this question, the inostensibility of propositional knowledge often escapes our notice. To illustrate, whenever I get the answer “two” to the question “How many people shared the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize?”, I now can claim that I know “the number of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winners is two” even though I may not know anything about the winners. Suppose someone else also utters the same sentence “the number of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winners is two” while publishing an interview she conducted face-to-face with the winners. Here, whereas the first subject merely has inostensible knowledge, the interviewer has ostensible knowledge of this proposition. Semantically, there is nothing to reveal this difference. This was a case of inostensible knowledge due to the inostensibility of the subject term for the speaker. Yet, for the cases in which the lack of ostensibility is regarding the knowledge of the fact the proposition as a whole refers to, it is even harder to recognize. That is to say, if it is a kind of inostensible knowledge in which all the terms are ostensible to the subject, and the subject further knows that the sentence is true, but the proposition as a whole still lacks ostensibility, this often goes unnoticed, and hence, it often fails to generate curiosity. For instance, one may think that the sentence “war is painful” is ostensible to a subject since both the concepts ‘war’ and ‘painful’ are ostensible for the subject and he or she knows the proposition to be true. But it might turn out that the fact the proposition as a unity refers to is not actually ostensible to the subject.

2. *Significance of Awareness of Inostensible Knowledge*

Now, I would like to focus on the significance of the awareness of inostensible propositional knowledge, and try to draw attention to how such an awareness might propel curiosity. I will begin by elaborating more on the neglect of the distinction between ostensible/inostensible knowledge in epistemology and allude to one of the shortcomings in epistemology that Inan draws our attention; namely, the indeterminacy of “to know”. Despite its significant consequences, this important distinction seems to be insufficiently addressed in philosophy literature. Inan says “knowing that a sentence refers to a fact does not imply that one thereby knows that fact; and if not, one may still be curious about it”. He argues that to satisfy our curiosity sometimes we need more than a proposition that we know to be true. Inan discusses this in his book making use of several intuitive examples and makes one wonder how such a significant distinction could be overlooked in epistemology. One would expect it to be emphasized more and even be established as a central distinction; in other words, one would expect that we should be able to distinguish between having merely the knowledge of truth of the proposition versus having knowledge of the fact itself. These two epistemic states, i.e., having inostensible propositional knowledge versus ostensible propositional knowledge, point to an important distinction that reveals significant epistemic intuitions.

Consider the following cases:

- i. S knows that the scent of the rose in the vase is pleasant.
- ii. S knows that the scent of *Cosmos atrosanguineus* is pleasant.

In the first case, the subject smells the rose and knows that the scent of the rose is pleasant. In the second case, given that *cosmos atrosanguineus* is an extinct flower that used to have a lovely fragrance, S can acquire that knowledge from a reliable source and can claim to know this fact. Nonetheless, even though the two subjects both claim the same epistemic standing, i.e., “to know”, there is a striking difference between the two states. In case (i), S knows the fact that makes the proposition true, whereas in case (ii), S merely knows that this proposition is—or used to be—true. This latter case is an instance of inostensible knowledge since the subject term of the sentence “the scent of *Cosmos atrosanguineus*” is inostensible to S. It is important to be aware of what S lacks in (ii), even if S can use the same verb “to know” in both cases. This nuance is generally neglected by epistemology literature and the lack of this awareness might display itself by a loss of curiosity on the part of the knower, as the subject might consider himself as “knowing” the fact the sentence refers to. In this particular case, it is practically impossible for S to know the proposition ostensibly as he cannot know the scent to which it actually refers. In other cases, it could be possible to gain more ostensibility regarding a fact. Yet, I think merely pos-

sessing an *awareness* of the inostensibility of propositional knowledge attributions could be quite significant, and even help us look at the world differently. Knowing that war is painful is true and knowing the fact that makes this proposition true are quite different epistemic standings, and the latter is definitely more profound. Unfortunately, epistemology literature has been mostly insensitive to that subtlety.

Although one of the most original and important contributions of Inan's book is the claim that there is "inostensible propositional knowledge", awareness of inostensibility of propositional knowledge, which is so ubiquitous in the book, is not mentioned at all. I think drawing attention to this awareness is significant and plays quite an important role in a theory of curiosity, since a considerable part of our curiosities linger even if we have propositional knowledge, and knowing the truth or falsity of a proposition may not be what a curious person aims for in the end.

As normative a claim as it might be, this distinction of ostensibility and inostensibility, coupled with the awareness of such a distinction lets us appreciate there is more to knowledge; in a sense, it is an awareness that to know is deeper than knowing the truth of a proposition. This kind of awareness will be related to the value of knowledge that transcends certainty or truth. In a sense, it is about knowledge of "something" other than truth. Knowledge can get deeper, get better or get enriched without necessarily having anything to do with knowing more about its truth or having a stronger justification, this could happen due to experiencing, internalizing the piece of knowledge and making it one's own. Take the proposition "Love is beautiful", one can grasp this proposition and may merely know that this proposition is true, one can understand what this proposition might come to mean through reading a touching romance; one can also further experience love, get acquainted with the fact and come to know that the proposition "love is beautiful" means something much deeper than one originally thought. In the first case, the subject merely knows that this proposition is true but does not really know the fact the it refers to, in the second case, the subject has somewhat better knowledge, yet experiencing the beauty of love can enable one to know the proposition "love is beautiful" even much better. However, this still would not be the last step in the epistemic journey, for one could experience love once more in one's life and might realize that if this experience is love the former was indeed less than love.

Peculiar as it might sound, one suggestion could be to adopt the use of "testify" rather than "know" whenever one merely has inostensible propositional knowledge. In other words, at the entrance of the stairway to knowledge, one should perhaps be aware that one is not entitled to say one "knows" the proposition yet, or else one could at least realize that "to know" is gradable and it is possible to increase the quality of his knowledge. So, the use of "testify" should be seen as an attempt to

raise the standard of knowledge rather than a vain effort to change language. Accordingly, if I were lucky enough to have ostensible knowledge of the beauty of love, this would stipulate me to say “I know that love is beautiful”; however, being lucky enough not to have experienced the painfulness of war in my life so far, I should perhaps say that “I testify that war is painful” rather than “I know that war is painful”.

Restricting the use of “to know” might seem as a fine grained issue that has little significance as long as we can communicate what we mean. But I have worries about the possibility of losing a sense of wonder and curiosity due to the pretense of “knowledge that we do not yet deserve”. In philosophical terms, having *de dicto* satisfaction² of our curiosity sometimes stops us from inquiring further, and inostensible propositional knowledge passes as knowledge, in spite of the fact that it is just the entrance to the stairway to knowledge. Having ostensible knowledge—although it is not always possible practically or metaphysically—should perhaps be the ideal to strive for. This could be achieved through the act of distancing ourselves from the proposition and sincerely asking if we know what it really means—or might come to mean. By fostering the awareness of inostensibility of propositional knowledge, one would also nurture curiosity in one’s life, as this awareness will manifest itself in inquiring more into what we thought we knew, and in a sense what we certainly, yet inostensibly, knew.

3. *A Threefold Awareness Regarding Inostensibility*

An important insight that emerges from recognizing this distinction between ostensible and inostensible knowledge in propositional knowledge attributions is that it makes possible to talk about degrees on a scale of epistemic strength/intensity. On the condition that the epistemic scale is thought like a stairway, inostensible propositional knowledge (IPK) will be taken as *merely the entrance to the stairway to knowledge*, which will open the door for the individual to be aware of the lack of ostensibility of his knowledge and this awareness will pave the way for further curiosity.

At this point, I would like to sketch out three possible cases of awareness of inostensibility regarding a proposition and how they could become conducive to curiosity:

In case (a), S does not know whether the proposition expressed by the sentence is true,

in case (b), S does not ostensibly know one of the terms in a sentence that he thinks he knows,

and in case (c), the proposition expressed by the sentence is inostensible for S even if S knows the proposition to be true and all the terms are ostensible to S.

² See Inan (2012, especially Chapters 5 and 9) for the distinction between *de re* versus *de dicto* satisfaction of curiosity.

In fact, pondering on the status of a proposition with respect to its epistemic link to the knower reveals some interesting intuitions, the most neglected of which is the awareness of inostensibility characterized in (c). Now, I will try to demonstrate what I call a *threefold awareness regarding inostensibility*; to do this, I will make use of three different cases of epistemic connection to propositions and each corresponding sentence will be used to elaborate more on the type of awareness.

Example for the case (a) S: There are extraterrestrial beings in outer space.

Example for the case (b) S: The roses in my friend's garden smell good.

Example for the case (c) S: War is painful.

In the example for case (a), S does not know whether the proposition is true and this is an opportunity to gain *awareness of ignorance*.

This sentence is inostensible to S because the truth value of the whole sentence is unknown to S, as S is not acquainted with the fact that makes this proposition either true or false. In the first sentence, the proposition, whether or not there are extraterrestrial beings in outer space, is so inostensible to S that S does not even know if it refers to a fact, let alone ostensibly know anything about the fact itself, and S is aware that he is still in the dark about it. This darkness often causes one to realize one's lack of epistemic contact with the fact and thereby one demands enlightenment. Since awareness of lacking knowledge, given that we are interested enough in the subject, usually causes curiosity, it is expected that the subject will get curious. Hence, there is a natural and easily detectable link between awareness of ignorance and curiosity.

In the example for the case (b), S knows the sentence to be true, but lacks ostensible knowledge of the subject term in the sentence, this is an opportunity S to gain *awareness of inostensibility of his knowledge due to the inostensibility of the subject term*.

Suppose S talks to a friend about gardening and wants to plant fragrant roses on his front porch. His friend tells him that the roses in his garden smell good and he might consider planting that type, which is called Francis Meilland. S believes his friend and now he can say that he knows the roses in his friend's garden, i.e. Francis Meilland roses, smell good. This is a case of inostensible knowledge because he has not seen the roses in his friend's garden nor has he experienced the smell. He merely knows that this proposition refers to a fact without knowing the fact to which it refers. He must stop and smell the roses to make his knowledge ostensible.

In the example for the case (c), S knows the proposition to be true, both terms are ostensible to him, but S lacks inostensibility of the proposition as a whole, and this is an opportunity to gain *awareness of inostensibility of his knowledge of the proposition as a unity*.

This awareness draws attention to a mostly unrecognized yet important distinction that afflicts many of our knowledge claims. Since all the terms in the sentence “war is painful” are ostensible to S, and the truth value of the proposition is not a mystery, and in a sense is too obvious, S might confidently, yet mistakenly, think that he is already at top of the epistemic scale regarding his knowledge of the given proposition. However, pondering on the ostensible/inostensible distinction will enable S to question the status of the proposition for him as a unity; and this might motivate him to deepen his knowledge. This could be thought as a call for increasing the degree of ostensibility of the proposition as a whole. Let us suppose S is a history professor and he knows a lot about wars in the human history and this concept is ostensible to him, he also knows very well that “war is painful” is true. Further suppose that he is familiar with pain due to his having lost a loved one recently, so he sadly knows what painful refers to. Even though the terms war and painful are ostensible to him, there is a sense in which he does not have ostensible knowledge of the proposition “war is painful”. Conversely, a person who has experienced war and has gone through the painfulness of it would have ostensible knowledge of this fact and would know the proposition better. Yet, this should not be understood as requiring one to experience the painfulness of war, or any such experience, to know the propositions ostensibly. For instance, if one has not experienced humiliation before, it would not be logical to advise that person to be humiliated to understand the proposition “being humiliated is bad”. There are other ways to make one’s knowledge more ostensible, such as through empathy, getting more acquainted with the fact by observing others who experience it, as well as through other possible ways of gaining partial ostensibility. Regardless of the attainability of ostensibility or of possible means to attain it, I would like to make a more philosophically salient point here, which is a call for distancing oneself from the proposition and the concepts involved in the proposition and sincerely ask oneself if he really knows the fact the proposition refers to, and aim to imagine to what the fact might actually refer. Only then, can one determine how ostensible the knowledge at hand is for oneself. This awareness will be vital in acknowledging how deeply/fully/well one knows, or possibly utterly fails to know the proposition. Hopefully, it could also enable one to get curious to know the inostensible propositions more deeply. But, what kind of deeper knowledge would that be? It would not be about the truth of the proposition, as propositional knowledge already provides this to the subject. It has to be about *something other than truth*; it could perhaps be a transformative epistemic leap through experience, which causes one to gain better insight into the fact.

4. *Knowing a Proposition Better Through Having Better Ostensibility of a Fact*

Idiosyncratic though it may seem considering the mainstream epistemology literature, I would like to argue that it is possible to know more about a proposition without having anything more to do with knowing about its truth. In other words, it is possible to know more about a fact regarding *something other than its truth*. It is especially the case whenever the piece of knowledge at hand is of something to be experienced. I agree that it is not intuitive to think I may know the proposition “the age of my physics professor is 43” better or more deeply. This is a simple factual knowledge and when I hear that this proposition is true, it automatically becomes ostensible to me assuming that I am familiar with my physics professor and what it is to be 43, which simply means having lived in this world for 43 years.

However, for propositions that allow for better understanding it is possible to have partial ostensibility, which would be usually the case in experiential knowledge. In fact, it may even be the case that a full ostensibility is sometimes unattainable for some propositions, as “better knowledge” of them always remains possible. In light of this, I will argue that gaining partial ostensibility of the fact in cases of experiential knowledge enables one to know the proposition better. To illustrate, experiencing the beauty of love through watching a well-made romantic movie may give partial ostensibility of the fact of “the beauty of love”, but experiencing it in one’s own life might make one know the fact better and accordingly make one know the proposition that “love is beautiful” better. Similarly, experiencing the joy of being a mother makes one know the proposition that “becoming a mother is joyous” better. Yet, someone might get close to having better knowledge of this proposition by watching the joy of her best friend becoming a mother. Furthermore, I also would like to allow for the possibility of gaining partial ostensibility regarding an experiential knowledge not through direct experience but via other means such as fostering emphatic abilities in general. I may get better knowledge that “war is painful” not because I feel pain (get acquainted with pain) or experience war (get acquainted with war), but because I gain better emphatic abilities (due to becoming a mother/father, or reading about empathy in general) and so know that “war is painful” more fully. Even watching a movie or a documentary might help me make the fact of “war’s being painful” more ostensible to me. So, I might claim that I know the proposition better now since I ostensibly know what it might refer to as a fact.

With reference to all that has been said above, I would like to claim that by gaining ostensible knowledge of the fact, one also gains better knowledge of the *proposition itself*. In other words, knowing the referent—or if I may say, knowing ostensibly—enables one to know the proposition better, in the sense of increasing one’s acquaintance with the proposition. This could be thought as a claim for the possibility of

the gradability of propositional knowledge, and indirectly as a call for raising the standard of knowledge.

Yet, one might oppose this intuition and claim that rather than being a case of having better propositional knowledge, the above example would be better interpreted as a case arising out of increasing one's *objectual knowledge*. In other words, the opponent may claim that the inostensibility of the proposition is due to the lack of objectual knowledge of war and/or painfulness, and the more one attains objectual knowledge of those, the more ostensible the proposition will be. However, my claim is somewhat bolder than that, and extends to knowing better the *proposition as a whole*. I want to claim that what the subject lacks is not an objectual knowledge of war or painfulness, but the ostensible knowledge of the fact of "war's being painful". Since this is a kind of knowledge that can only be fully known through experience, there is something seriously missing in S's knowledge claim, even though S has non-experiential propositional knowledge. To put it slightly differently, one who has experienced the painfulness of war can be said to know "war is painful" better than S does.

Such an understanding of knowledge as something gradable is less controversial in cases of objectual knowledge, but gradability is almost never applied to propositional knowledge cases in mainstream epistemology literature. Yet, I think "knowing better" does not necessarily have to be "of an object", it could as well be "of a proposition". It would be overambitious to try to establish this view here, but I just want to note that this intuitive view is hinted at by a scant number of epistemologists.³ One of the most outspoken proponents, Stephen Hetherington, attacks what he thinks are two "dogmas" of epistemology. One of them he calls "epistemic absolutism" which amounts to the claim that knowledge is absolute: you can be with or without it, but once you have it, it is not possible to have more or less. Sharing perhaps a similar intuition, Bac holds that empirical knowledge is a matter of degree (Bac 1999), and revisiting a similar characterization of knowledge, in a recent article, Bac and Irmak argue that we should rethink about what and how we know in general and whether knowledge is really an on/off switch which has no gradation or nuance (Bac 2011: 319). Some others such as Lawrance BonJour find that without allowing for such gradation, knowledge talk becomes useless and he even resorts to discarding the concept of knowledge: "The concept of knowledge is... a seriously problematic concept... So much so that it is... best avoided as far as possible in sober epistemological discussion." (BonJour 2010).

Related to this, recent epistemological discussions have seen a surge of interest in the notion of understanding as opposed to knowledge, and there have been attempts to shift the epistemological focus from knowl-

³ Stephen Hetherington is one such epistemologist who offers a sophisticated theory of (empirical) knowledge by allowing for fine-grained evaluations of competing knowledge-claims (see Hetherington 2001, 2005).

edge to understanding. This has been mainly due to the problems encountered when searching for an intrinsic or distinctive value that can be attributed to knowledge (see especially Kvanvig 1998, 2003, Depaul 1989, Zagzebski 1996, 2003, Boylu 2010, Jones 2003 and Riggs 2002). Understanding, which is a concept that allows for gradability, has been appealing for virtue epistemologists who has concerns about reflecting the true nature of our knowledge claims. In her article, Boylu reasonably claims that “there is always a minimal understanding required by knowledge but one can understand better what one already knows.” (Boylu 2010: 598). Hence, the idea of gradation is perhaps inevitable in knowledge talk.

For me, increasing the ostensibility of one’s knowledge of a fact through experience makes the knowledge a better one compared to the non-experiential—albeit perhaps certain—knowledge one had before, and it adds further value to the knowledge at hand. Perhaps the idea that the value of experiential knowledge exceeds that of non-experiential knowledge is one of the insights that goes as far back as Plato’s *Meno*. Knowing the way to Larissa is possibly a case of experiential knowledge, and having only factual knowledge rather than having experiential knowledge puts one on a comparatively worse epistemic standing. As Socrates says, “if a man knew the way to Larissa, or any other place you please, and walked there and led others, would he not give right and good guidance?” For Plato, he definitely would. Analogously, one who has experiential knowledge of a proposition would definitely be in a better epistemic standing.

To make sense of this distinctive value of experiential knowledge, it is perhaps useful to reflect on cases which can only be fully known through experience. Let us consider the following propositions:

War is painful.

A day spent in Disneyland is fun.

Assuming that the sentences above are true, I want to claim that it is possible to know these propositions better, more fully or ostensibly by coming to know what facts they actually—or possibly—refer to. In addition, knowing the facts more ostensibly enables one to have better propositional knowledge of such experiential knowledge cases. Thus, this allows me, *contra* Stanley (2005: 40), to argue that the following would be uncontroversial examples involving scales of epistemic strength or depth.

- (a) A Syrian boy knows that war is painful better than a Swiss boy does.
- (b) A Syrian boy knows that war is painful better than he knows that a day spent in Disneyland is fun.

Unlike the common assumption of lack of gradability for propositional knowledge, propositional knowledge cases that require experience to be fully known seems to be gradable. That is, the knowledge of some facts may become more ostensible, hence known better, by gaining

deeper knowledge of the facts they refer to. One might merely grasp the proposition “war is painful” and might know that proposition refers to a fact, which would merely be a case of inostensible knowledge. On the other hand, another person who gains ostensible knowledge of this proposition through experience may be said to know the proposition better. Just as better knowledge could be due to better acquaintance with the objects in the proposition, it is also possible through getting acquainted with the proposition as a whole. That is to say, getting more acquainted with *war* or *pain* or *Disneyland* or *having fun* might help you know the proposition better. This would be an attempt to make sense of this betterment of knowledge by appealing to increasing objectual knowledge of things while keeping propositional knowledge as it is, *sans* gradation. Yet, what I wish to claim is beyond that; I would like to entertain the idea that knowing a proposition more deeply could also be possible, which results from knowing the fact more ostensibly.

My reasoning will possibly become more obvious, once we get rid of the “know that p” formulation. I suppose it would be permissible to form the sentence “I know that war is painful” with this different formulation without losing the meaning: “I know war’s being painful”. This particular sentential form, which is the standard form used in Turkish for propositional knowledge attributions, perhaps reveals more accurate intuitions. To make it more explicit, let us consider Turkish language and the sentential form for propositional knowledge cases. The standard form of propositional knowledge in the Turkish language can be formulated word by word as “war’s painfulness I know”.⁴ It is also possible to use the formulation “I know that war is painful” in Turkish,⁵ but even though grammatically correct, it is rarely used, and when it is used, it usually adds a poetic touch to the statement. That is to say, in Turkish language, instead of the “S knows that x is y” structure, a sentence almost always has the form “S knows x’s being y”. The latter sentential form, which is the way Turkish people say that they know a particular proposition to be true, has a structure similar to that of objectual knowledge attributions. It seems that gradability becomes less problematic when the proposition to be known is formed as such; in other words, just as one could know an object better, it would be less controversial to claim that one could know “war’s being painful” better.

Granted that gradability is possible for propositional knowledge, one may meaningfully say, “I know that war is painful better now” after experiencing the painfulness of war. So, my claim is that by making a *fact* more ostensible, one also comes to know the *proposition* better. Since, as argued above, it seems possible to get acquainted with propositional content just as it is possible to get acquainted with an object, it could be claimed that *better knowledge* is not restricted to things but is also applicable to propositions.

⁴ In Turkish, the sentence would be “Savaşın acı olduğunu biliyorum”.

⁵ In Turkish, the sentence would be “Biliyorum ki savaş acıdır”.

5. *Degrees of Ostensibility and Degrees of Propositional Knowledge*

After making this claim, I want to relate all these insights to my main endeavor, which could be thought of as an attempt to motivate curiosity by fostering an awareness of possible degrees of ostensibility regarding our propositional knowledge claims. Acknowledging the fact that propositional knowledge admits of gradability makes one understand that having inostensible propositional knowledge—knowing the truth of a fact without knowing the fact itself—is not the end but perhaps the beginning of our epistemic journey. The destination would be full ostensibility, which is an ideal a curious mind should strive for. It is an ideal because precious things are as difficult as they are rare:⁶

Inostensible knowledge is abundant, but ostensible knowledge is scarce. This usually gets unnoticed. If knowledge is valuable, then surely ostensible knowledge should be taken to be more valuable than inostensible knowledge. There are many things people claim to know, and perhaps mostly they are right about it; but we forget the fact that in most cases when someone is said to know something that is of some significance, they have very little experience of the subject matter of whatever it is that they know... (Inan, Forthcoming)

The awareness that in most cases our knowledge is in fact inostensible proves to be significant, because whenever we realize that our knowledge attributions fall short of being ostensible, it propels us to strive to deepen our knowledge. This awareness could also enable one to appreciate the value of ostensible knowledge, which far exceeds the value of knowledge of truths. Taking ostensibility out of the picture, there remains almost nothing but knowledge of truths. Furthermore, when this passes as knowledge, this causes knowledge to be underrated, while knowledge of truths become overrated. My hope is that the awareness of inostensibility of propositional knowledge, and the possibility of knowing something more fully, deeply, completely, if I may say, *ostensibly*, would be valued more as a result of such an awareness. Only then can one meaningfully utter sentences like:

I know that love is beautiful but I can know it more deeply.
 I know that love is beautiful but there is more to experience to know it fully.
 I know that love is beautiful but some truths allow for deeper understanding.
 I know that love is beautiful but it is not all that can be known about p.
 I know that love is beautiful, but it is inostensible propositional knowledge, and I can make it more ostensible.

Notice that, the first parts of the sentences above, which could be formulated as “I know that p” are so strong and perhaps possess an un-

⁶ Alluding to Spinoza’s famous saying.

deserved epistemic standing with which we credit ourselves. It easily misleads us into being dogmatic if we are not aware of our fallibility and not attentive to the inostensibility of our knowledge. It is interesting that *knowing the truth of a proposition*, which we express with “I know that p” is like knowing the name of a thing; it gives us the illusion of knowing the fact.

6. *To Name or Not to Name: The Guise of Ostensibility*

Lastly, I would like to elaborate on the guise of knowing associated with giving standard names to things. This is addressed in Inan’s book but while his treatment is mainly about proper names and general terms, I will extend this problem to apply to knowing the name of feeling terms and the truth value of propositions (Inan 2012: 145). Inan thinks that “many proper names we use daily, of great figures, cities, or planets, are in fact inostensible for us, which we tend to forget” (Inan 2012: 63). Then, he goes on to say that:

I know that the closest star to our sun is Alpha Centurie, but that’s about all that I know about this star. If someone were to ask me what the closest star to our sun is, I would normally answer by “Alpha Centurie”; the reason for this is that normally I would take the question to be asking for a name, although the interrogative used does not really ask for a name but a star. If the name “Alpha Centurie” is in fact inostensible for me, given my lack of knowledge of it, then I really should have said that I do not know the answer to the question.

It is evident that knowing the name of a thing (also applicable to knowing the truth of a proposition) gives us the impression that we know the answer. This impression, in turn, causes us to stop inquiring further/deeper into the phenomenon. Perhaps the person in the example above had better replied “it is a star called Alpha Centauri” rather than claiming to know which star it is. In the case of general terms, Inan holds that we also feel a “false sense of acquaintance” even if we do not exactly know what we refer to. In turn, this causes a lack of awareness of our unfamiliarity with these terms.

We use general terms in everyday speech having extremely little knowledge of their referents. We talk about different kinds of animals, herbs, atomic parts, or what have you, not really knowing them. Given that such knowledge is available and in our reach, we feel at home. The more frequently such terms are used, the more a false sense of acquaintance with their referents emerges. Just because someone uses the term “rye” in his everyday affairs regularly, to buy bread for instance, it does not follow that this person knows the kind of cereal it refers to. (Inan 2012: 145)

I would like to extend such a sense of false acquaintance to terms we use in language that we have not experienced as a fact but roughly know what they refer to. If one reflects on his epistemic status regarding his understanding of such terms like painfulness of war, joy of being a mother, losing a loved one, beauty of love, etc. one might come

to the realization that he is not acquainted with them since these are not fully known prior to experience. Furthermore, knowing a proposition that could only be known fully through experience to be true also causes one to misinterpret one's epistemic relation to the given proposition. For instance, knowing that "losing a loved one is bad" to be true might cause one to take this piece of knowledge for granted if one is not reflective enough on the epistemic status of this proposition in relation to oneself.

Now, to appreciate the role of experience in knowledge attributions, let us consider two cases:

The sky is blue. (Mary in the black-and-white room)⁷

War is painful. (Someone who has not experienced war)

Or, assuming that speakers have never experienced war or the color blue, these two sentences would be better formed as:

The sky is said to be blue.

War is said to be painful.

In the first case, Jackson's Mary has no qualms whatsoever about the truth of this piece of knowledge. She in fact knows this—*inostensibly* though—better than many other people as she is taught quite a great deal about color science including how and where they are reflected on earth. Yet, there is a sense in which she lacks knowledge of sky's being blue. She only knows that the sky is said to be blue. She does not know what blue is like. Not getting out of her black and white room all her life, she has not experienced the color blue and there is a lack of ostensibility in her knowledge claim. She does not have all there is to know the fact that "the sky is blue" and whenever she is allowed to leave the room and look up at the sky, can she be said to know the proposition that "the sky is blue" ostensively. Likewise, in the second case, a person who has not experienced war would not know what feeling corresponds to "war's being painful", even if these terms are ostensible to him. Since this wording might arouse a sense of false familiarity, let us come up with a new concept such as 'awefullypainful'⁸ and let us assume it is a concept used only to refer to the feeling one has experiencing war. Let us also suppose that it is an easily graspable concept for speakers of English. Then, I may, without contradicting myself, say that I do not fully know war's being awefullypainful. I just know that "war is awefullypainful" is said to be true. Only if we take knowledge as saying nothing more than knowledge of truth of a proposition, then can I say that I know that war is awefullypainful.⁹ Prior to knowing it ostensively,

⁷ The thought experiment was originally proposed by Jackson (1982, 1986).

⁸ I made up that word from the word pain and 'awe' which etymologically comes from the Greek word 'achos' meaning grief, pain, woe. Also alluding to the connotations of fear, terror, and dread. Notice that it is purposefully written as "awefullypainful", rather than "awfullypainful".

⁹ Perhaps it will be helpful to draw an analogy to Mary uttering the sentence 'I know that the sky is blue' prior to her experience of the blue sky.

if one asks me what feeling is awefullypainful, the only thing I could say is that it is the feeling one experiences in war. Similarly, suppose Mary goes outside and looks up at the blue sky, now she knows sky's being blue. Does she know the proposition better now? If we admit that ostensibly knowing is better, she seems to know the proposition "the sky is blue" better now. Yet, if we think of knowing a proposition as merely expressing a justified true belief of the subject, then nothing has changed for Mary, the proposition is still as true and as justified as it was prior to the experience. But there is a sense in which Mary knows "the sky is blue better after she sees the blue sky. This is a better knowledge of something other than truth, a kind of knowledge which requires experience, and the standard definition of propositional knowledge is inattentive to this.

Similarly, only after I experience war, can I be said to know how awefullypainful war is. A person who has experienced the painfulness of war might say, for instance, "I know how one feels in war, but I forgot what it is called", or perhaps there is no separate word for it in her language—just as the English language has none—and since naming is not knowing, it should not be about what it is called.¹⁰ In the same manner, Mary may forget the name of the color, i.e. blue, after she sees the sky, but then she will still surely know the blueness of the sky itself. And just like Mary can say "I know the color of the sky but I forgot its name" without contradicting herself, another person can say "I know how war feels but I forgot what it is called". It is clear that to know a colour does not require one to know its standard name. Similarly, "awefullypainful" is still ostensible for one, even one she forgets or has never learned that it is called awefullypainful. This could be captured by the distinction between *knowing a concept* versus *knowing the name of a concept*; a similar distinction could be made between *knowing a fact* versus *knowing the truth of a proposition*, that is, whether or not the proposition refers to a fact. Ostensibly knowing that war is awefullypainful and inostensibly knowing that war is awefullypainful would be examples of the latter distinction above, respectively.

One important aspect to consider here would be the role of experience in making these distinctions. In Mary case, it is clear that to know blue and to know the name of the color blue are two different things. One is knowing the color itself, the other is just knowing the correct reference. 'Blue' is a word, but blue is a color, something to experience; 'awefullypainful' is a concept but awefullypainful is the feeling which is not fully knowable prior to experience. It would also be not wrong to claim that if one is satisfied by the name 'blue' when one inquires into the color of the sky, then, instead of "what is the colour of sky?" one actually wants to ask "what is the name of the colour of the sky?"

¹⁰ This point is made in Inan's book to establish the idea that "knowing the standard name of an object is neither necessary nor sufficient to come to know that object" (Inan 2012: 139).

In the same manner, if one is satisfied by the answer “war is awfully-painful”, in other words, by the knowledge of truth of the fact that war is awfully-painful, then, instead of asking what does war feel like, in other words, knowing about the awfully-painfulness of war, one perhaps wants to ask “what is the name of the feeling you get in war?” One is a superficial thing compared to the other. Naming things is a habit that has many pragmatic advantages but it also deceives us into thinking that we have knowledge when we have only the knowledge of the name of a concept or only the knowledge of truth of the proposition. Inan shares his worry as such:

There is nothing in the semantic content of the sentence that reveals this difference though. So the distinction between ostensible and inostensible knowledge cannot be cashed out in terms of the kind of proposition that is known. Contemporary epistemology, which predominantly focuses on propositional knowledge, is unable to mark this important difference. (Inan 2012: 68)

But why should we care about this distinction?

First, it is about raising the standard of knowing. An awareness of the inostensibility of knowledge will allow people to demand more, and aim at ostensibility. Through aiming at ostensible knowledge, one also aims at better knowledge, hence it becomes possible and meaningful to talk about better/deeper knowledge. Then, no one in their right mind would claim that they know things so effortlessly. Of course, they would know the *truth of the fact*, but that would be it. As noted earlier, for cases in which we find ourselves quite far from ostensibility, rather than saying “I know that x is F”, I would rather we said, “I testify that x is F”. For, “to know” is deeper.

We may perhaps liken “naming” to creating an epistemic mental file of things—a mental file that needs to be rich enough for some, while others may be happy with merely naming the file. But whenever people become aware of the scantiness of their files—that is, become aware of the inostensibility of their knowledge—this will make them realize that they do not have the right to claim they know it fully and this awareness will hopefully propel them to demand more and be curious.

It is important to note that, the person longing for ostensibility will not be after complete certainty (as the naming of the file is correct), but perhaps after complete understanding. There is a certain epistemic humility about the fact that he may come to know that “x is F” better through experiencing, internalizing, or reflecting on the proposition at hand. It is a desire for enriching the file through seeing, tasting, smelling, feeling, experiencing, etc. the fact the proposition refers to. Melodramatic as it may sound, it could be summarized as a call for people “to stop and smell the roses” before saying that they know that roses do smell. Put more prosaically, the point is that ostensible knowledge, unlike mere knowledge of truths, grants one internalized knowledge that is not easily lost, and it is this property that accounts for the distinctive value of ostensible knowledge over inostensible knowledge.

Another important question is: no matter how we define knowledge and no matter what our stance is on the gradability of knowledge, does knowledge of truths— that is, having IPK— satisfy curiosity? Should it be enough to satisfy curiosity? I think not. That would be like stopping at the entrance of the stairway to knowledge. That would be a cessation of curiosity way too early.

Secondly, I believe having ostensible knowledge of things might change the world for the better. Ostensibility is like ascending a stairway that is perhaps never-ending, and one had better aim as high as possible. This stairway starts with knowledge of truth (IPK) and it may gradually become less inostensible, but still more knowable. To illustrate with a few examples, romantic though it may seem, if people ostensibly knew or were aware of the lack of ostensibility of their knowledge that war is painful, they would be a lot more concerned about wars, what it really means to commence a war, and perhaps be more cautious to refrain from attitudes and acts that might give rise to war. Likewise, provided that people ostensibly knew what hunger is, then there would probably be less suffering from hunger. Deeper or better knowledge of propositions like “War is painful” or “This family is hungry” could possibly change the world; and even if having better knowledge of those propositions may not be practically possible, at least being aware of the inostensibility of our knowledge is significant. It helps us to empathize with people going through situations we have not experienced yet, and it enables one to care to know deeply. When one hears the sentence “hunger is bad”, that sentence will produce an effect depending on the experience one has had of that fact in one’s life. It is possible that there could be separate names for degrees of hunger; one word for being hungry for eight hours (which we normally take it to be), being hungry for a day, two days, a week, etc., then we would not so hastily claim that we know that “hunger is bad”. We would question and care to know how others experience it. And this is not possible through a search for certainty that “hunger is bad”, but is possibly attained by trying to increase the degree of ostensibility about the knowledge that “hunger is bad”. One might state that “I know that hunger is bad”, but it could be just knowledge of its truth, that is, inostensible knowledge, supposing that one is medically not allowed to feel hunger and is instructed to eat every two hours due to a case of severe hypoglycemia. Another could know it more ostensibly, but to a lesser degree compared to someone who stays hungry for a day. So, it is possible to know better what a person means when one hears another utter the sentence “My family is hungry”.

I knew of an author once who never sated her hunger fully and did not turn on the heater in winter just to understand her fictional characters better. Perhaps, we could do better to understand non-fictional characters, and perhaps, at least hope to recognize that ostensible knowledge requires one to move further along in the transformational epistemic journey. And no matter where one finds oneself situated on

the stairway to knowledge, I believe wisdom resides somewhere in the vicinity of awareness of inostensibility.

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