

## **On Ignorance: A Reply to Peels**

**Abstract:** Rik Peels has ingeniously argued that ignorance is not equivalent to the lack or absence of knowledge. In this response, I defend the “Standard View of Ignorance” according to which they are equivalent. In the course of doing so, some important lessons will emerge concerning the nature of ignorance and its relationship to knowledge.

**Keywords:** Ignorance, Knowledge, Belief

In his recent “What is Ignorance?” (*Philosophia* (2010) 38:57–67), Rik Peels addresses an important and neglected topic. He claims to show that “contrary to what one might expect and to what nearly all philosophers assume, being ignorant is not equivalent to failing to know, at least not on one of the stronger senses of knowledge.” (57) He then offers two definitions of ignorance and argues that one’s definition thereof crucially depends on one’s account of belief. Finally, he illustrates the relevance of his analysis by addressing some philosophical problems in which ignorance plays a crucial role.

I shall grant Peels that, on what one may call the “Standard View of Ignorance,” it is equivalent to a lack or absence of knowledge. My aim in this response is to defend the Standard View from the ingenious and probing critique Peels has offered. In the course of doing so, some important lessons will emerge concerning the nature of ignorance and its relationship to knowledge.

## The Standard View of Ignorance

On the Standard View, to put matters a little more precisely than does Peels, knowledge and ignorance are complements in the sense of being mutually exclusive and exhaustive: either S knows that p or is ignorant that p.<sup>1</sup> So conceived, ignorance amounts to a lack or absence of knowledge: S is ignorant that p if and only if it is not the case that S knows that p. We may call the thesis that knowledge and ignorance are opposites the “Complement Thesis.” This thesis Goldman and Olsson (2009) have encapsulated as follows:

$$\text{(COMPL)} \quad \sim (\text{KSp}) = \text{IGNSp}$$

Here ‘KSp’ means that S knows that p and ‘IGNSp’ means that S is ignorant that p.<sup>2</sup> A corollary of (COMPL) is that  $\text{KSp} = \sim (\text{INGSp})$ .

## Some Clarifications

Like Peels, I shall focus on knowledge and ignorance that something is the case (in other words, knowledge and ignorance that p). To avoid terminological confusion, I shall adopt his usage of ‘belief’ to mean belief that some proposition is true, of ‘disbelief’ to mean belief that p is false,

---

<sup>1</sup> A reviewer of this journal questioned whether it’s good English to say ‘S is ignorant that p’ rather than ‘S is ignorant of the fact that p’. I take the former to count as good English. Here is why. According to the online *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition 1c of ‘ignorant’, it can be used in sentences with a dependent clause. The OED gives the following example: “I am ignorant that till now I ever made you this offer.” The construction has also been used by numerous philosophers. Here are two representative examples: (1) Carl Ginet 1975, 16 writes: “it is conceivable that S should have been in doubt or ignorant that p”; (2) John Hyman 2006, 900 writes: “For a verb-phrase of the form ‘is ignorant that p’ consists of a psychological verb followed by a ‘that’ clause.” I thus think that a strong case can be made for regarding ‘S is ignorant that p’ as good English.

<sup>2</sup> According to Goldman and Olsson 2009, 20, (COMPL) applies only where p is true. As I will later argue, however, it’s important to distinguish between factive and propositional ignorance (and knowledge), a distinction Goldman and Olsson fail to draw. In light of this distinction, it is more accurate to say that, in the case of factive ignorance and knowledge, (COMPL) applies only where p is true; in the case of propositional ignorance and knowledge, (COMPL) applies whether or not p is true.

and of ‘suspension of judgment’ to mean neither belief nor disbelief that p.<sup>3</sup> (58) I shall grant, as Peels notes, that each

of these doxastic attitudes may be occurrent or dispositional. If some cognitive subject S at some time t occurrently believes that p, then at t S is considering p or thinking about p or reflecting on p, and believing p. If at t S latently believes p, then at t S is not considering p or thinking about p or reflecting on p, but still believes p. (58)

Note that Peels also distinguishes between what he calls “dispositional” and “non-dispositional” accounts of belief (and disbelief and suspension of judgment). On a dispositional account, (i) “one need not have considered a proposition in order to believe it,” and (ii) “for any person S and proposition p, S believes, disbelieves, or suspends judgment on p (assuming that belief and disbelief are mutually exclusive).” (58-59) On a non-dispositional account (or at least he thinks on most versions of them), (i) “in order for S at some time t to believe, disbelieve, or suspend judgment on p, S ought to have considered or entertained p at t or at some time t\* prior to t,” and (ii) “for any proposition p, S believes p, disbelieves p, suspends judgment on p, or has never considered p.” (59)

Before proceeding further, several matters need to be cleared up:

---

<sup>3</sup> Regarding his usage of ‘suspension of judgment’ Peels adds the qualifier “whether one has ever considered p or not.” (58) I think adding this qualifier is not well-conceived for reasons I shall give shortly.

First, Peels's choice of the terms 'dispositional' and 'non-dispositional' to characterize such accounts is infelicitous and has the potential to confuse, for he sometimes uses 'dispositional' to mean latent or non-occurrent. Both such accounts, however, allow for there to be dispositional beliefs *in the sense of latent or non-occurrent beliefs*.<sup>4</sup>

Second, he characterizes what he calls a "non-dispositional account" as holding that "in order for S at some time t to believe, disbelieve, or suspend judgment on p, S *ought to have* (italicization mine) considered or entertained p at t or at some time t\* prior to t." (59) The insertion of 'ought' has the potential to mislead as 'ought' is typically understood normatively or prescriptively, and the thesis in question is a descriptive (not normative) account of the nature of belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment.<sup>5</sup> It is more accurate (and simpler) to say rather: "S at some time t believes, disbelieves, or suspends judgment on p only if S considered or entertained p at t or at some time t\* prior to t."

Third, there are two noteworthy problems with how he characterizes what he calls a "dispositional account":

(a) Though he attributes it to Jonathan Cohen (and to him alone), it is far from clear that Cohen (or anyone else) holds the view in question as Peels has characterized it. Peels quotes Cohen 1995 as writing that "belief that p is a disposition, when one is attending to issues raised,

---

<sup>4</sup> For instance, prior to drawing his putative distinction between what he calls "dispositional" and "non-dispositional" accounts of belief, and in the context of discussing belief, disbelief, and suspension of judgment, Peels writes that "[e]ach of these doxastic attitudes may be occurrent or dispositional. If some cognitive subject S at some time t occurrently believes that p, then at t S is considering p or thinking about p or reflecting on p, and believing p. If at t S *latently* believes p, then at t S is not considering p or thinking about p or reflecting on p, but still believes p." (58)

<sup>5</sup> A reviewer of this journal has pointed out that Peels's use of 'ought' seems to be merely conceptual rather than normative.

or items referred to, by the proposition that p, normally to feel it true that p and false that not-p”;

Peels then immediately infers that this means that (i) “one need not have considered a proposition in order to believe it” (58), and (ii) “for any person S and proposition p, S believes, disbelieves, or suspends judgment on p (assuming that belief and disbelief are mutually exclusive.” (58-59) But (ii) does not follow from what Peels quotes from Cohen and Peels provides no textual evidence that Cohen (or anyone) makes such an inference.<sup>6</sup>

(b) Even putting aside exegetical questions, this so-called “dispositional account” as described by Peels is quite strange and it’s far from clear that anyone (let alone adherents of the Standard View of Ignorance) should want to hold it. For consider how odd it is to suppose that one can have beliefs about propositions *one has never even considered*, and that *any person has a doxastic attitude of belief, disbelief, or suspension of judgment toward any proposition whatever*.<sup>7</sup> The former supposition multiplies beliefs *beyond belief* (excuse the pun) and the latter supposition entails all sorts of implausibilities. Consider just two: Let S be Confucius and let p

---

<sup>6</sup>In fairness to Peels, Cohen 1995 does seem to hold something akin to (i). For instance, Cohen writes: “though many beliefs only commence at the time of their first being felt, there are many others that apparently antedate this, just as by being dried in the sun a lump of clay may become brittle long before pressure is applied and it breaks. Thus, if you have believed that Oxford is larger than St Andrews, then you probably (...) have long believed that London is larger than St Andrews, even if your belief has never explicitly occurred to you until you were asked. Indeed, even if you have never consciously believed anything implying that London is larger than St Andrews, your answer to the question ‘Do you believe that London is larger than St Andrews?’ would most probably be ‘Yes’. That is to say, a present feeling that London is larger than St Andrews would be taken to display a pre-existing disposition to feel this.” (5) Even if Cohen does hold something akin to (i), I can find no textual evidence that he also subscribes to the much stronger and more implausible claim (ii), and Peels has not provided any such evidence. Given the implausibility of (ii), Peels may have unintentionally made Cohen’s position seem more untenable than it is.

<sup>7</sup> As Goldman 1986, 202, pointed out: “If a person has never thought whether New York is in Venezuela, then he does not believe that New York is in Venezuela. If he has never asked himself whether zebras wear codpieces in the wild, then he does not already believe that zebras don’t wear codpieces in the wild. He may be disposed to assent to these propositions unhesitatingly, the moment they are queried. But this just shows he has beliefs from which these conclusions would readily be *inferred*. It does not show that he already believes each conclusion, prior to the question being raised.”

be the proposition that Spain won the FIFA world cup in 2010, or let S be my four year son and let p be the proposition that vanadium is the element with atomic number 23. Is it really the case in such examples that the S in question had a doxastic attitude of belief, disbelief, or suspension of judgment to the p in question? It seems much more sensible to allow that there are plenty of propositions to which one has no doxastic attitude at all, especially those one has never considered.<sup>8</sup> Of course, there may be propositions that one *would* believe whether occurrently or dispositionally (or disbelieve or suspend judgment on) if one *were* to consider them, but these are more accurately described as potential beliefs rather than as actual beliefs as on this supposed “dispositional account” of belief that Peels attributes to Cohen.<sup>9</sup>

In light of these considerations, the putative distinction Peels draws between “dispositional” and “non-dispositional” accounts of belief (and disbelief and suspension of judgment) seems ill-grounded. Though we shall be forced in the ensuing discussion to invoke it since Peels repeatedly does so, on the alternative account that I myself prefer the following two conditions are correct concerning the nature of belief: (i) S at some time t believes, disbelieves, or suspends judgment on p only if S considered or entertained p at t or at some time t\* prior to t, and (ii) for any proposition p, S has either not considered p or believes p, disbelieves p, or suspends judgment on p. This account allows that beliefs may be held occurrently or

---

<sup>8</sup> A reviewer of this journal suggested that perhaps what Peels should have said is that it follows from Cohen's view that for each proposition one is able to grasp, one has some doxastic attitude or other toward that proposition. I'm inclined to agree with the reviewer that this is perhaps what Peels should have said follows from Cohen's view; it makes for a more defensible view than the one Peels actually attributed to Cohen. Nonetheless, instead of multiplying actual doxastic attitudes in this way, we can hold instead that for each proposition one is able to grasp, one has a potential doxastic attitude toward that proposition. This alternative has the advantage of not multiplying actual doxastic attitudes without necessity.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Dennett 1988, 45.

dispositionally (i.e., non-occurrently or latently), and that one may have potential beliefs that are nonetheless not actual beliefs (whether held occurrently or dispositionally).<sup>10</sup> It is an account, moreover, that it is fully consistent with the Standard View of Ignorance.

With these clarifications in mind, let's now proceed to Peels's case against the Standard View of Ignorance.

### **Peels's Case and Why it Fails**

As part of his case, Peels points out (correctly I think) that there seem to be only five ways in which some person *S* may fail to know that some proposition *p* is true. (58) They are the following:

- (a) *p* is false;
- (b) *S* disbelieves *p*, while *p* is true;
- (c) *S* suspends judgment on *p*, while *p* is true;
- (d) *S* does not have any doxastic attitude toward *p*, while *p* is true;
- (e) *S* believes *p*, while *p* is true, but *S*'s belief that *p* lacks the warrant necessary for knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> While a belief that *p* held dispositionally is potentially occurrent, this should not be confused with supposing that a potential belief that *p* (a belief that one would have upon consideration of *p*) is an actual belief that *p* which one holds dispositionally.

<sup>11</sup> Peels quite reasonably allows that these categories of ignorance can be split into subcategories. For instance, he points out that (a), "as it stands, does not tell us anything about *S*'s attitude toward *p*, that is, it does not tell us whether *S* believes *p*, disbelieves *p*, suspends judgment on *p*, or has never even considered *p*." While Peels is generally right, note that to disbelieve *p* where *p* is false is, given how he uses 'disbelieve', equivalent to believing (correctly) that *p* is false. Peels also points out that there are different ways in which (e) could be instantiated, "for instance, by believing that *p* without having any good reasons for *p*, or by *S*'s true belief's being incoherent with the rest of her doxastic evidence base." (60) In any case, he thinks that the list seems to be exhaustive "in the sense that

In arguing against the Standard View, Peels goes through (a) – (e) trying to show that not every case of a lack of knowledge amounts to a case of ignorance.

Adherents of the Standard View need not worry about what Peels says about (b) and (c), for he concedes that (all) instances of (b) and (c) are instances of ignorance. (60) For example, to disbelieve that cats are mammals counts as being ignorant of a truth, as does suspending judgment on The Netherlands being north of Italy. This leaves him (a), (d), and (e). We will consider his argumentation concerning each of these.

As for (a), Peels contends on the one hand that “we would not say that someone who believes a false proposition *p* and, thereby, lacks knowledge of *p*, is ignorant of *p*.” (60) He adds that one “can only be ignorant of truth, so it seems. It does not make sense to say that someone is ignorant of *p* if *p* is false.” (60) On the basis of these reasons, he concludes that “instances of (a) show that someone can lack knowledge without being ignorant.” (60) On the other hand, Peels later concedes that his objection can be met by qualifying what I am calling the Standard View of Ignorance such that “not knowing the truth value of some proposition *p* or not knowing whether *p* is equivalent to being ignorant of the truth value of *p* or to being ignorant as to whether *p*.” (60-61) His case against (a) is thus, by Peels’s own admission, not promising.

It is even less promising, however, than he realizes, for he conflates two kinds of ignorance: propositional and factive.<sup>12</sup> Let me explain this distinction. Propositional ignorance is ignorance of a proposition, and is incompatible with having any belief that expresses that

---

there is no way in which a cognitive subject might fail to know some proposition that is not an instance of one of these categories.” (60) I shan’t quarrel with him here.

<sup>12</sup> This conflation is unfortunately abetted by a widespread failure amongst epistemologists to distinguish between factive and propositional knowledge. In fact, epistemologists often use ‘propositional knowledge’ and ‘factive knowledge’ interchangeably.

proposition. For instance, suppose that *p* is the proposition that Sam was robbed by a Canadian, and suppose this proposition is false. Sam could not have the belief that *p* in the first place if he were ignorant of the proposition in question, for one cannot presumably have a belief while being ignorant of its content. Having a belief that *p* thus implies that one is not ignorant of its content, the proposition it expresses. Factive ignorance, by contrast, is ignorance that a proposition is true (if you will: that the state of affairs in virtue of which a proposition is true obtains). To believe that *p* implies that one is not propositionally ignorant that *p*, but it does not follow that one is not factively ignorant that *p* just because one is not propositionally ignorant that *p*. For instance, if Sam believes that he was robbed by a Canadian, he is not propositionally ignorant that he was robbed by a Canadian, but it does not follow from this alone that he is not factively ignorant that he was robbed by a Canadian.<sup>13</sup>

In light of this distinction, let's reconsider Peels's claim that "we would not say that someone who believes a false proposition *p* and thereby, lacks knowledge of *p*, is ignorant of *p*." (60) In order to believe a proposition in the first place, whether it is true or false, one cannot presumably be ignorant of that proposition, one must have (or have had) some cognizance or awareness of the proposition in question in order to have considered it.<sup>14</sup> Non-ignorance of

---

<sup>13</sup> Even if *p* were true, propositional non-ignorance does not entail factive non-ignorance. For instance, suppose Sam believed *p* solely on the basis of a deep seated anti-Canadian prejudice and on no other ground at all. Unless one supposed (quite implausibly I think) that mere true belief suffices for factive knowledge, it seems much more plausible to hold that Sam is factively ignorant that *p* even if he is not propositionally ignorant that *p*.

<sup>14</sup> Adherents (if any) of what Peels calls a "dispositional" account of belief may disagree, but I think for the reasons given earlier that this view is untenable. In any case, my defense of the Standard View of Ignorance is certainly not predicated on accepting that putative account of belief, and adherents of the Standard View of Ignorance need not hold it. In fact, Peels's argumentation can provide them with a reason why they ought not hold such an account of belief.

proposition  $p$  is a necessary but not sufficient condition for believing  $p$ . But ignorance of propositions should be distinguished from ignorance of facts (namely, whether propositions are true). So while on the one hand “we would not say” (to use Peels’s expression) that someone who believes a false proposition  $p$  is ignorant that  $p$ , this is because the ignorance in question is propositional ignorance which is incompatible with holding the belief in the first place; on the other hand, one could (and I think should) very well say that someone who believes the false proposition  $p$  suffers from factive ignorance. Accordingly, Peels’s assertions that “one can only be ignorant of truth, so it seems” and that it “does not make sense to say that someone is ignorant of  $p$  if  $p$  is false” (60) are not true and based on a conflation between propositional and factive ignorance.

Let’s turn now to what Peels has to say about (d) – namely,  $S$  does not have any doxastic attitude toward  $p$ , while  $p$  is true. On the one hand, Peels contends that not all instances of (d) seem to be cases of ignorance if one adopts what he calls a “non-dispositional” account of belief. (60) For instance, most of us have never considered proposition  $q$  that Hillary Clinton is not identical to her autobiography. Peels contends that such a proposition, however, is obvious and everyone knows that persons are not identical to books. Most people do not have any doxastic attitude toward  $q$ ; having never entertained it, they neither believe it, disbelieve it, nor have suspended judgment on it. But we wouldn’t say, thinks Peels, that such people are ignorant of  $q$ , for everyone knows that persons are not books. (60) With other non-obvious propositions, by contrast, Peels thinks matters are different. For instance, take a non-obvious proposition such as  $r$  that the core of helium contains two protons and two neutrons. (60) Upon considering  $r$ , most people would probably suspend judgment on it, and so be ignorant of this truth. According to

Peels, the upshot of this reasoning is that, if one accepted a non-dispositional account of belief, one would accept some but not all instances of (d) as counting as instances of ignorance. (60)

On the other hand, Peels concedes that this objection requires adhering to a non-dispositional account of belief, and that one might reject such an account. (61) And even if one adheres to a non-dispositional account of belief, Peels thinks there are several ways out including the following two. First, one could deny that belief is a necessary condition for knowledge and hold that people know that Hillary Clinton is not identical to her autobiography even though they don't believe it. (61) More promising, thinks Peels is the second option of holding that people believe not just propositions they have considered, but also all those propositions obviously entailed by them. Thus we "can properly say that all people believe that Hillary Clinton is not identical to her autobiography." (61)

While I agree with Peels that his objection concerning (d) can be met, his suggestions for doing so seem rather non-promising. First, if rejecting what he calls a "non-dispositional account of belief" requires adopting what he calls a "dispositional" one, this option is a non-starter for the reasons I have given earlier. Second, denying that belief is a necessary condition for knowledge comes at the very high cost of denying a widely held standard condition for knowledge. Third, holding that people "believe not just propositions they have considered, but also all those propositions obviously entailed (on their own criteria, if you like) by propositions they believe" (61) runs afoul of the distinction between potential and actual beliefs and results in a very implausible proliferation of beliefs. A much more promising response to Peels's objection is to deny as false his claim that not all instances of (d) are instances of ignorance. In the case, for

example, of proposition *q* that Hillary Clinton is not identical to her autobiography, someone who has never considered *q* and who therefore has no doxastic attitude toward *q* is both propositionally and factively ignorant with respect to *q*.<sup>15</sup> Peels give us no good reason to suppose that “we would say” otherwise. Perhaps *he* would, but adherents of the Standard View could (and I think should) balk at being included under this ‘we’. Let’s keep in mind that even if one has no actual doxastic attitude toward *q* having never considered it, it does not follow that one has no potential doxastic attitude toward *q* if one were to consider it. Even if everyone *would* believe and even know that *q* *were* they to consider it, it does not follow that they do believe and even know that *q* having never considered it and hence are not ignorant that *q*.

Since Peels has conceded that (all) instances of (b) and (c) are instances of ignorance, since by his own admission his objections to (a) and (d) can be met by defenders of the Standard View of Ignorance, and since as we have seen there are even other ways in which his objections to (a) and (d) can be met, we are left with (e) – namely, *S* believes *p*, while *p* is true, but *S*’s belief that *p* lacks the warrant necessary for knowledge. It is here that Peels thinks he has finally attained solid ground for rejecting the Standard View. He rejects it on the basis of this line of reasoning:

---

<sup>15</sup> A reviewer of this journal has asked if I really want to say that that most people are ignorant of the fact that Hillary Clinton is not identical to her autobiography, just because they have never considered this proposition, for saying this seems blatantly false to the reviewer. I understand the reviewer’s intuition that this seems blatantly false; in fact, I too had it before reconsidering the matter. The intuition can be explained (or explained away if you will) as follows. It does seem quite obvious, as soon as we consider the proposition, that Hillary Clinton is not identical to her autobiography. Hence we are liable to conclude that we actually knew it all along, and so were never ignorant of this fact. This though may very well be akin to what psychologists call “hind-sight bias” or the “I knew it all along phenomenon” by which we tend to overestimate with hind-sight how much we actually knew. See Myers 1994, 15-19. Instead of regarding people as actually knowing that Hillary Clinton is not identical to her autobiography, I think it more prudent to claim that people potentially know that she is not identical to her autobiography, a potentiality that readily converts to an actuality upon consideration of the proposition in question.

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

(60)

Peels then considers three lines of response. This first involves embracing his argument, and supposing not only that knowledge is more than true belief but also that while all instances of (e) count as instances of failing to know, they do not count as instances of ignorance. (61) The second involves positing that 'knowledge' has more than one sense, one of which is a weak sense in which it amounts to true belief. Ignorance amounts to lack of knowledge on a weak sense, but not on a stronger sense, and (e) does not count as failing to know in this weak sense. (61) The third involves contending that knowledge is simply true belief, a view Peels thinks that hardly anyone believes. (61)

Has Peels then defeated the Standard View of Ignorance? No. Before we consider the responses he himself proffers, let's go back to his key and only argument concerning (e). It may be put as follows:

*First Premise:* "[W]e would not say that someone who believes a true proposition  $p$  without knowing that  $p$  for some reason or other is ignorant of  $p$ ";

(60)

*Second Premise:* “If I truly but accidentally believe that I will get the job, we would not say that I am ignorant of the fact that I will get the job”; (60)

*Conclusion:* “[I]nstances of (e), although instances of some person’s lacking knowledge that p, are not instances of that person’s being ignorant of p.” (60)

What are we to make of this argument? Even if we suppose for the sake of reasoning that this argument is valid, its two premises are both problematic.<sup>16</sup> The first betrays a conflation between propositional and factive ignorance: of course, someone who believes a true proposition p without knowing that p is not ignorant of p in one sense (namely, in the sense of propositional ignorance), for s/he could not believe that p in the first place if s/he were ignorant of the proposition in question. It does not follow from this, however, that s/he is not ignorant in another sense, namely by being factively ignorant that p. As for the second premise, it is flagrantly question-begging, for it assumes the falsehood of the very view Peels is attempting to refute via this argument: adherents of the Standard View of Ignorance would certainly not want to be covered by the ‘we’ Peels invokes. Moreover, even Peels’s conclusion does not clearly differentiate between propositional and factive ignorance. Given these problems, I conclude that the (only) argument that Peels himself thinks ultimately succeeds against the Standard View of Ignorance fails to provide a good reason for rejecting it.

Since his argument fails, Peels has given adherents of the Standard View no good reason to think that they must accept any of his proffered responses. They neither have to capitulate and

---

<sup>16</sup> The argument is strictly speaking invalid, for a conclusion about what is the case does not follow from premises concerning what “we would say.”

abandon their view, nor accept that there is a weak sense of ‘knowledge’ according to which it amounts to mere true belief, nor accept that knowledge itself is merely true belief.

### **Some Lessons**

Thinking he has adequately disposed of what I have called here the “Standard View of Ignorance,” Peels goes on in his article to develop an alternative account of ignorance and to argue for its relevance to some interesting philosophical issues. Peels makes a number of interesting and insightful points in doing so. While it is beyond the scope of the present paper to consider his alternative and its applications, insofar as the putative inadequacy of the Standard View serves as a ground for accepting his alternative, we have found that his failure to refute the former undercuts a major ground for adopting the latter.

Despite the failure of Peels’s case against the Standard View of Ignorance, considering it has helped bring to light some important lessons concerning the nature of ignorance and its relationship to knowledge. These include the following:

- (1) Propositional ignorance needs to be distinguished from factive ignorance;
- (2) While factive ignorance that *p* is compatible with believing that *p*, propositional ignorance is not;
- (3) Factive and propositional ignorance that *p* are both incompatible with knowing that *p*;
- (4) Until someone comes up with a better critique, the Standard View that ignorance that *p* is the absence or lack of knowledge that *p* stands unrefuted.

**References**

Cohen, L. J. (1995). *An essay on belief and acceptance*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Dennett, D. (1988). *Brainstorms*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ginet, C. (1975). *Knowledge, perception, and memory*. Boston: D. Reidel.

Goldman, A., & Olsson, E. J. (2009). Reliabilism and the value of knowledge. In D. Pritchard, A. Millar & A. Haddock (Eds.), pp. 19-41. *Epistemic value*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hyman, J. (2006). Knowledge and evidence. *Mind* 115: 891-916.

Myers, D. (1994). *Exploring social psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Peels, R. (2010). What is ignorance? *Philosophia* 38: 57–67.