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**A Note on Missed Clues Cases:  
Reassessing the Relevance of the Subject's Context**

**Franck Lihoreau**

*Abstract*

In 'Elusive Knowledge', David Lewis develops his well-known contextualist account of knowledge in terms of relevant alternatives. In 'Knowledge, Relevant Alternatives and Missed Clues', Jonathan Schaffer argues that Lewis's account is unable to deal with missed clues cases, in which the subject fails to appreciate the conclusiveness of his evidence. In 'The Relevant Alternatives Theory and Missed Clues', Tim Black replies that Lewis's account *does* have the resources to handle the cases in question. I argue, however, that a more promising way out of Schaffer's missed clues objection is to depart from Lewis's original account of knowledge by reassessing the epistemic relevance of the subject's context.

In 'Elusive Knowledge', David Lewis develops his well-known contextualist account of knowledge in terms of relevant alternatives, according to which a knowledge ascription cannot be true unless the subject's evidence eliminates every possibility of error that is not properly being ignored by the ascriber. In 'Knowledge, Relevant Alternatives and Missed Clues', Jonathan Schaffer argues that Lewis's account is unable to deal with missed clues cases, that is, cases in which the subject fails to appreciate the conclusiveness of his evidence, and that there is no way to render such an account more efficacious in this regard. In 'The

Relevant Alternatives Theory and Missed Clues', Tim Black replies to Schaffer that there is no need to amend Lewis's account since it already has the resources to handle the cases in question. In this paper, I hold that a more promising way out of the missed clues problem raised by Schaffer is to depart from Lewis's original account of knowledge by reassessing the epistemic relevance of the subject's context.

### *I. Relevant alternatives contextualism and missed clues*

According to '*knowledge*' contextualism, the truth-conditions of knowledge claims depend on certain features of the context in which they are made, and thus vary from one such context to another. According to the *relevant alternatives theory* of knowledge, knowledge requires that all relevant possibilities of error be excluded, according to some criterion of relevance. By combining the two, we get *relevant alternatives contextualism*, the view that the relevance criterion must be one of contextual relevance: the contextual variation in the truth-conditions of knowledge claims is to be traced to a contextual variation in what counts as a relevant alternative<sup>1</sup>. According to David Lewis's own version of relevant alternatives contextualism, given a context of (possible) knowledge ascription, a relevant alternative is a possibility of error that is not properly being ignored by the (possible) ascriber(s):

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<sup>1</sup> Early proponents of relevant alternatives accounts of knowledge are Dretske (1970; 1981), Goldman (1976), and Stine (1976). Among leading proponents of contextualism are Cohen (1988; 1999), DeRose (1995; 1999), Heller (1999a; 1999b), Lewis (1979; 1996), Neta (2002; 2003a; 2003b), Rieber (1998), Stine (1976), Unger (1986; 1995). Among them, Cohen (1988), Heller (1999a; 1999b), Lewis (1996), and Stine (1976), are well-known proponents of relevant alternatives contextualism.

[Subject] *S* knows that *P* iff *S*'s evidence eliminates every possibility in which not-*P* – Psst! – except for those possibilities that we [ascribers possibly distinct from *S*] are properly ignoring (Lewis, 1996, 425).

where *S*'s evidence mainly consists of the totality of his perceptual experience and memory, and where a possibility is *eliminated* when the evidence *S* has in it differs even slightly from the evidence he actually has<sup>2</sup>.

In order to determine the range of possibilities that may not properly be ignored, Lewis puts forward the following set of *relevance rules*<sup>3</sup>:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| (Actuality) | The possibility that consists in the subject's actuality may not properly be ignored,                |
| (Belief)    | Any possibility that the subject believes or ought to believe to obtain may not properly be ignored, |

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis opts for the convention of saying 'S knows that *P* in such and such a context' where one should say "'S knows that *P*' is true in such and such a context'. I will avoid relying on this conflation between object- and meta-language.

<sup>3</sup> The rules about to be mentioned are what Lewis calls 'prohibitive rules', telling us what possibilities *may not* properly be ignored. But Lewis also puts forward a set of 'permissive rules', telling us what possibilities *may* properly be ignored. By the Rules of Conservatism, Reliability, and Method, we may properly ignore (even though defeasibly), respectively: (1) all possibilities normally ignored by people around us, (2) the possibility of a deficiency in our normally reliable processes of knowledge acquisition (perceptual experience, memories, other people's testimony, etc.), and (3) the possibility (a) that samples on which we base our inductive generalizations might be biased or (b) that the best explanation for our evidential data might not be the right one. But only prohibitive rules shall matter for the purpose at hand.

- (Attention) Any possibility that is not being ignored *simpliciter* may not properly be ignored,
- (Resemblance) Given two possibilities resembling each other in a salient way, if one is not properly being ignored (in virtue of the previous three rules), neither is the other.

Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism thus states that it is true in a context that one *knows* only if one has evidence against those possibilities of error that may not properly be ignored, in virtue of the four relevance rules just mentioned, by the (possible) speaker(s) of the context.

In his paper 'Knowledge, relevant alternatives and missed clues', Jonathan Schaffer offers a rather convincing argument against Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism. His argument exploits missed clues cases, in which the subject fails to appreciate the conclusive character of the evidence at his disposal. The main missed clues case that Schaffer considers is the following:

Professor A is testing student S on ornithology. A shows S a goldfinch and asks, 'Goldfinch or canary?' A thought this would be an easy first question: goldfinches have black wings while canaries have yellow wings. S sees that the wings are black (this is the clue) but does not appreciate that black wings indicate a goldfinch. So S answers, 'I don't know' (Schaffer, 2001, 203).

As Schaffer points out, we would intuitively be inclined to say that student S does not know the bird is a goldfinch. For after all, although he has all needed evidence at hand, student S is unable to advisedly put it to use because, say, he is unaware that his evidence speaks for the

goldfinch option and against the canary one. Now, given how strong our pretheoretical inclination to deny knowledge to student S is, it constitutes a crucial datum which any account of knowledge must be able to deal with satisfactorily enough.

But this is something Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism is unable to do, since student S's evidence *does* eliminate every relevant possibility in which the bird is not a goldfinch. Indeed, only two possibilities may not be properly ignored: in virtue of the Actuality Rule, the possibility that actually obtains, in which the bird is a goldfinch; and in virtue of the Attention Rule, the possibility mentioned by Professor A of the bird being a canary. As it is the only one in which the bird is not a goldfinch, the second possibility is the only one that needs be ruled out by student S's (mainly visual) evidence. And his evidence does rule the canary possibility out, for it is not exactly the same with respect to one's evidence to have a goldfinch and to have a canary before one's eyes: goldfinches have black wings, canaries have yellow ones. So student S's evidence eliminates the only one relevant possibility, and *a fortiori* every single relevant possibility in which the bird is not a goldfinch. Hence according to Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism, it must be true that S knows the bird is a goldfinch. This consequence goes against the intuitively expected result, not even mentioning that in the depicted case student S himself admits his own ignorance. Thus we seem to have a counterexample to Lewis's account.

As Schaffer notices:

Missed clues cases are everywhere. Perhaps Sherlock Holmes can follow every clue but we lesser mortals miss clues all the time. The detective may find the fingerprints but fail to match them to the criminal; I may see the landmark but fail to recognize where I am; you may hear the melody but fail to identify the song. The missed clue is like a hieroglyph – one knows its shape but not its meaning (Schaffer 2001, 203).

Missed clues cases being everywhere, relevant alternatives contextualism seems to be in considerable trouble.

## *II. Missed clues and the Belief Rule*

Tim Black is not of the same opinion as Schaffer's. In his paper 'The relevant alternatives theory and missed clues', he intends to defend Lewis's analysis of knowledge against Schaffer's 'Goldfinch or canary?' case, as well as other missed clues cases, by appealing to the Belief Rule. Black first asks us to consider the set of beliefs that student S might have about the difference between goldfinches and canaries. According to him, S might believe one of the following three propositions:

- (A) That goldfinches have black wings while canaries have yellow ones,
- (B) That goldfinches have yellow wings while canaries have black ones,
- (C) That goldfinches as well as canaries have black wings.

For Black, student S does not believe A nor B, since he is supposed to be totally unaware that a difference in the colour of the wings constitutes a decisive clue as to whether the bird is a goldfinch or a canary. In particular, he is supposed to be totally unaware that being a black-winged bird constitutes a clue *at all*. According to Black, student S cannot be so unaware unless he believes C – that goldfinches as well as canaries have black wings – to a sufficiently high degree, in which case the Belief Rule makes the possibility that goldfinches as well as

canaries have black wings relevant<sup>4</sup>, thereby making the possibility of the bird being a black-winged canary relevant. And since the bird which student S is looking at does have black wings, that possibility is not eliminated by his evidence. Therefore it is false that he knows the bird is a goldfinch, and we thus get the verdict that was intuitively expected. Black thinks that a similar treatment can be offered so as to deal with any other thinkable missed clues case as well: for any such case to be a missed clues case, the subject depicted in it must fail to see the relevant clue as a clue at all, which requires him to have a belief which in turn, and in virtue of the Belief Rule, makes an uneliminated possibility relevant.

Several points may nonetheless be stressed. First, Black assumes that if student S has a belief about goldfinches and canaries at all, it must be a belief pertaining to the colour of their wings. But there is nothing in Professor A's question 'Goldfinch or canary?' suggesting that the clue to be appreciated has to do with the colour of their wings. After all, the relevant difference between the two species might be thought to lie in the size of the bird, in the size of its beak, in the size or colour of its tail, etc., rather than in the colour of its wings. In other words, student S might as well believe many other things instead of C: that goldfinches as well as canaries have their beak or tail of such and such a colour, of such and such a size, etc. Then why say that S believes C rather than any of these further things? Why not say that he believes all these things instead? To say that S can only believe C implies that S takes it for granted that the crucial difference between goldfinches and canaries lies in the colour of their wings. But then it is hard to see how he could believe that goldfinches as well as canaries have black wings, for then there would be a contradiction between what he believes and what he takes for granted.

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<sup>4</sup> We must bear in mind that according to Lewis, 'belief admits of degree' and that in some cases at least 'even quite a low degree of belief may be "sufficiently high" to bring the Rule of Belief into play' (Lewis, 1996, 428).



The only way for Black to make his way out is to concede that C is but one of the many beliefs that S might have to a sufficiently high degree about similarities and dissimilarities between goldfinches and canaries. He will thus have to say that student S believes:

(D) That goldfinches as well as canaries have their beak of the same colour as that of the bird,

(E) That goldfinches as well as canaries have their tail of the same colour as that of the bird,

and so on for each of the bird's aspects in respect of which, as far as student S knows about birds (that is, very little), goldfinches and canaries might differ from each other. But can we really say that student S *believes* C, D, or E, even if we add that he believes this *to a sufficiently high degree*? It seems that a more intuitive way to understand how S stands with respect to propositions such as C, D, E, is not in terms of 'belief' or in terms of 'sufficient degree of belief', but by saying that he stands with respect to them as to as many possibilities that are left open and that he is not in a position to rule out. Perhaps we could even say that in the missed clues case, student S is not ignoring any of these alternative possibilities. This would be the right thing to say, it seems. But not to ignore a possibility does not mean to believe it to obtain. It just means not to presuppose it not to obtain. And it is hard to make sense of how presupposing a not-P possibility not to obtain might amount to believing that P to a sufficiently high degree. So instead of saying that S believes C, D or E, maybe we had better say that C, D, and E correspond to possibilities that are left open to S, i.e. that he is not ignoring and is unable to rule out. If this is right, the Belief Rule does not come into play.

Moreover, even if we supposed that Black is right and his appeal to the Belief Rule helps relevant alternatives contextualism survive exposure to the 'Goldfinch or canary?' case, this

wouldn't mean that an appeal to that rule makes it missed-clue-resistant more generally. Indeed, we can easily think of other missed clues cases which Lewis's account cannot handle by the only means of the Belief Rule. To see this, consider the following case:

Monsieur Ferret stabs someone to death with a screwdriver. Detective Smart investigates the crime scene and finds Ferret's fingerprints on the screwdriver. The fingerprints still have to be compared to the national fingerprints files. So at this early stage of his enquiry Smart has no suspect and to his eyes anyone could have committed the crime and the fingerprints could be anybody's fingerprints. He is not allowed to ignore any possibility. So the set of possibilities that he may not properly ignore (in the sense of 'not presuppose not to obtain') is extremely large, a possibility being associated with each person able to have committed the crime. At this early stage of his investigation, does Smart know that Ferret did it?

Very intuitively, the answer is 'no'. Yet, Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism gives us the opposite result, viz. that it is true that Smart knows Ferret committed the crime. On the one hand, Smart's evidence – consisting of the fingerprints found on the screwdriver – does eliminate every relevant possibility in which not Ferret but someone else left their fingerprints on the screwdriver (since two persons cannot have the same fingerprints). On the other hand, the only uneliminated and relevant possibility is the possibility that actually obtains, in which Ferret rather than someone else left his fingerprints on the screwdriver. Here again we have a missed clues case against Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism, but one that cannot be countered with the same move as that used by Black to counter Schaffer's 'Goldfinch or canary?' case. For if we were to deal with the 'Ferret or someone else?' case by relying on the Belief Rule, we would first have to say that for each person who is able to have committed the

crime, Smart believes that person has the same fingerprints as someone else, in particular as Ferret, to a sufficiently high degree. But this option is to be straightforwardly excluded, since Smart is a well-enough trained and advised detective not to give it any sort of credence at all. Thus, Black's move could not be used to hold the undesirable conclusion back: Lewis's analysis would have the consequence of granting knowledge of Ferret's involvement in the crime to Smart, even at that early stage of his investigation.

In short, it does not seem so easy to immunize Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism against objections from missed clues cases. Anthony Brueckner thinks that accounts of knowledge as Lewis's are trapped by cases of that kind because 'they tie knowing to having good evidence (in the face of P's truth) but then allow that S can know that P without having a belief that P that is somehow based on his good evidence' (Brueckner, 2003, 304-5). Schaffer himself (*personal communication*) takes the real moral of his cases to be that the relevant alternatives theorist needs augment the basic condition that all relevant alternative possibilities be eliminated with both a belief condition and a condition that the belief in question be properly based on the subject's evidence. But regardless of what the precise meaning of 'belief' or '(properly) based' might be I do not think that we need go so far, at least not for the only purpose of dealing with missed clues cases. If one wants to maintain a version of relevant alternatives contextualism in the spirit of Lewis's analysis, all one needs to do so as to handle missed clues cases is add a new constraint to the original relevance criterion, the 'Subject Rule' as I will call it, which I will argue for in the next section.

### *III. Missed clues and the Subject Rule*

My own diagnosis of why it seems odd to attribute knowledge to the subject in the 'Goldfinch or canary?' case is that he is not ignoring and is even seriously attending to uneliminated

possibilities of error. Examples of such possibilities need not be multiplied. Let us just mention the possibility that the bird which student S is looking at is a canary with black wings, or alternatively the possibility that canaries, and *a fortiori* the canary S is looking at in particular, have black wings. Intuitively, this is a possibility we would not be ignoring and we would be attending to if we were in student S's shoes. For then we would not be aware of the fact that goldfinches and canaries significantly differ from each other in respect of the colour of their wings. The possibility that canaries have black wings would be left open to us if we were asked to decide between the goldfinch and canary options in S's place. And in his place we would not be inclined to claim knowledge that the bird is a goldfinch, just because, lacking ornithological background as S does, we would not be in a position to rule out the possibility that canaries have black wings. My conjecture is that Professor A, as well as anyone else, would also be inclined to deny us the piece of knowledge in question for the same reason: because we would not be able to rule out the possibility that canaries have black wings and this possibility is intuitively relevant for our being truly attributed knowledge that the bird is a goldfinch, given the position in which we would be if we were in student S's shoes.

To account for the intuitive relevance of the possibility that canaries have black wings, I suggest that we augment Lewis's original relevance criterion with a further rule, more precisely a meta-rule, to the effect that when the subject is not the same agent as the attributor, any possibility which the former may not properly ignore is a possibility which the latter may not properly ignore. Let me explain. Given a subject S, a proposition P, and an attributor A different from S, there are two contexts which we may think of and relative to which the truth value of an attribution of knowledge that P to S may be assessed. First there is the context in which S is the (possible) speaker and relative to which the truth value of the *first-person* knowledge ascription 'I know that P' (or something equivalent) may be assessed. Let us call it

‘subject S’s context’ for short. Second there is the context in which A is the (possible) speaker and relative to which the truth value of the *third-person* knowledge ascription ‘S knows that P’ (or something equivalent) may be assessed. Let us call it ‘attributor A’s context’ for short. I suggest that any satisfactory version of ‘knowledge’ contextualism must ensure that it cannot be easier for S to satisfy the conditions for ‘S knows that P’ to be true relative to the context in which attributor A is the (possible) speaker, than it is for S to satisfy the conditions for ‘I know that P’ to be true relative to the context in which subject S himself is the (possible) speaker. In other words, the epistemic standard holding in attributor A’s context cannot be less demanding than the one holding in subject S’s own context. This amounts to putting forth the following additional relevance rule, which I will call the ‘Subject Rule’:

(Subject)      Any possibility that is relevant in subject S’s own context is *ipso facto* relevant in attributor A’s context.

Before I proceed, let me make two observations. First, the chances are that accepting this new rule allows a withdrawal of the Belief Rule from Lewis’s original set of relevance rules. The Belief Rule says that any possibility which the subject believes or ought to believe to obtain may not be properly ignored by the attributor, that is, is relevant in the attributor’s context. But it seems right to suppose that if the subject believes or ought to believe that a possibility obtains, then this possibility is not being ignored by the subject and is in need of elimination. Not being ignored by the subject, the Rule of Attention makes it relevant in the subject’s context, and being relevant in the subject’s context, the Subject Rule makes it relevant in the attributor’s context, for any possible attributor. Thus, it seems that we may dispense with the Belief Rule provided that we opt for the Subject Rule.

Second, because it amounts to requiring that the epistemic standards holding in the attributor's context be at least as demanding as those holding in the subject's context, the Subject Rule amounts to a departure from what seems to be a piece of contextualist orthodoxy, according to which the condition of taking the subject's standards into account is purely optional, or so to speak. This view is explicitly expressed by DeRose:

The standards are set by the features of the attributor's setting. Of course, for certain purposes, we may wish to evaluate a subject's belief relative to standards set by features of her context. But there's nothing in attributor contextualism to rule this out: among the many standards a speaker's context may select are those relevant to the subject's context (DeRose, 1999, 191).

Lewis's account of knowledge seems to be another example of such contextualist orthodoxy about the role of the subject's context:

Suppose we are detectives; the crucial question for our solution of the crime is whether S already *knew*, when he bought the gun, that he was vulnerable to blackmail. We conclude that he did. *We* ignore various far-fetched possibilities, as hard-headed detectives should. But S does not ignore them. S is by profession a sceptical epistemologist. He never ignores much of anything. If it is our own ignorings that matter to the truth of our conclusion, we may well be right that S already knew. But if it is S's ignorings that matter, then we are wrong, because S never knew much of anything. I say we may well be right; so it is our own ignorings that matter, not S's.

But suppose instead that we are epistemologists considering what S knows. If we are well-informed about S (...), then if S attends to a certain possibility, we attend to S's

attending to it. But to attend to S's attending to it is *ipso facto* to attend to it ourselves.

In that case, unlike the case of the detectives, the possibilities we are properly ignoring must be among the possibilities that S himself ignores. We may ignore fewer possibilities than S does, but not more (Lewis, 1996, 130).

As should be clear from this extract, any possibility that is not ignored by the subject will not be ignored by the attributor, but this is *under the assumption that the latter is well-informed of the situation of the former*. This allows for cases in which a poorly informed attributor who is ignoring more possibilities than the subject himself truly ascribes knowledge to him. In contrast, and in my opinion, that the attributor be well-informed of the subject's situation is not an assumption that may or may not be made, but a *sine qua non* condition for any possible attributor. This means that an attributor will not be in a position to make a true knowledge attribution to a subject if he ignores, properly or not, more possibilities than the subject himself. In putting the Subject Rule to use to account for missed clues cases, as I shall do below, part of my purpose is precisely to emphasize the obligatory character of that condition. The Subject Rule can help us handle missed clues cases. Take the 'Goldfinch or canary?' case first. In this case, as already mentioned, the possibility that canaries have black wings is not being ignored by student S; it is therefore relevant in student S's context in virtue of the Attention Rule. Because it is relevant in student S's context, it is relevant in Professor A's context too, that is, in the context of the exam in which Professor A is testing student S's ornithological competence. Thus for it to be true in Professor A's context that student S knows the bird is a goldfinch, student S's evidence must eliminate the possibility that canaries have black wings. But this possibility is not eliminated by student S's evidence. So in Professor A's context it is false that student S knows the bird is a goldfinch and true that he does not know it.

Moreover, the Subject Rule ensures that it will be so for any possible attributor's context. Indeed, whoever the attributor may be and whatever his context, student S's context is a context in which the possibility that canaries have black wings is not being ignored and therefore relevant by the Attention Rule. And in virtue of the Subject Rule, any possibility that is relevant in student S's context will be a possibility relevant in the attributor's context, and this will be so for any possible attributor. In this way the Subject Rule ensures that whatever the attributor's context may be, it would be false in this context that student S knows the bird is a goldfinch. This accounts for the strong intuition we have, *qua* attributors, according to which it would be odd to grant student S the piece of knowledge in question while he misses the clue.

What is more, the Subject Rule can help us deal similarly with other missed clues cases as well. Let me give two examples. Take the aforementioned 'Ferret or someone else' case. Detective Smart found the murderer's fingerprints but does not have any suspect in mind yet. Because at this early stage of his investigation, to Smart's eyes anyone could have committed the crime and left their fingerprints on the crime scene, it is intuitively false that Smart knows that Monsieur Ferret did it, and this is so regardless of the context in which Smart's epistemic position is being assessed. However, Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism predicts that there may be contexts in which it is true that Smart knows Ferret committed the crime. For instance, let us suppose that:

Another crime was committed in the perimeter of the crime scene which Smart is investigating. And guess what, the victim was stabbed with a screwdriver! That time, the assailant did not leave any fingerprints on the crime scene. But the victim was not stabbed to death and, though severely injured, he managed to give an accurate description of his assailant. On the basis of this description Detective Clever, who is in



charge of this new case, has his eyes on two suspects: Monsieur Ferret and Mister Doe. Someone informs Clever of all the details of Detective Smart's investigation. Clever's thoughts immediately go to suspects Ferret and Doe.

In Clever's context the only relevant possibilities in Lewis's sense are the one that actually obtains, in which Ferret committed the murder, and the one that he is not ignoring, in which Doe rather than Ferret did it (for simplicity, let us suppose that no other possibility saliently resembles either of these two). And Smart's evidence – mainly consisting of the fingerprints found on the crime scene but not yet compared to the national fingerprints files – does eliminate the possibility that Doe committed the crime. So Lewis's analysis of knowledge will deliver the rather incongruous result that it is true in Clever's context that at that early stage of his investigation, Smart knows Ferret committed the crime.

Once the Subject Rule enters the picture we escape the undesirable result. For Detective Smart himself is not ignoring a great number of uneliminated possibilities pertaining to the person whose fingerprints were found. There is at least one possibility associated with each able-bodied person who lives in the country, is able to have committed the crime, and is free to come and go. The set of all such possibilities is actually too big to mention every one of them. It is only by gathering more and more evidence that Smart will be able to narrow it down. Comparing the murderer's fingerprints to the national fingerprints files shall do the job fairly well, but for now that has not yet been done. Because Smart is not ignoring any of those possibilities, that is, because none of them is being presupposed not to obtain in Smart's context, all of them are relevant in his context in virtue of the Attention Rule. And in virtue of the Subject Rule, all of them are relevant in any attributor's context, in particular in Detective Clever's context. He may not properly ignore any possibility that is not being properly ignored by Smart. Amongst the many possibilities which are not properly being ignored by

Smart and in which Ferret is not the one who committed the crime, are, say, the possibility that the fingerprints on the crime scene are Mr Chubby's and the possibility that they are Mrs Grumpy's. In virtue of the Subject Rule, these will both be possibilities that are relevant in anybody else's context, *a fortiori* in Clever's context, and that the not yet exploited fingerprints found on the crime scene do not eliminate. So it is false in Clever's context, as well as in anybody else's context, that Smart knows that Ferret committed the crime. Contrary to that delivered by Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism, this result does match the intuition we have on such a case.

Our second example of the efficaciousness of the Subject Rule in handling missed clues cases will be shorter:

Raul finds dirt on his wife's shoes. It comes from the building site of the new Got-U shopping centre, the only place in town and even in the world where you can find dirt like that. Like many people, Raul knows very little about dirt and is totally unable to tell where the dirt on his wife's shoes comes from. Does Raul know the dirt on his wife's shoes comes from the Got-U site?

I take it that our intuitive judgment on the matter will be that even if he has all that is needed to know it, it would be wrong to say that Raul knows the dirt comes from the Got-U site, regardless of the context in which one would say so. We get precisely this result by bringing the Subject Rule into play. Because Raul knows nothing about dirt and geology, any possibility pertaining to where the dirt on his wife's shoes comes from is left open to him and not presupposed not to obtain in his context. Being relevant in his context by the Attention Rule, any such possibility is *ipso facto* relevant in any possible attributor's context. And since Raul's evidence, consisting of the dirt on his wife's shoes, does not eliminate any possibility

in which the dirt comes from somewhere else than the Got-U site, there is no possible context in which it would be true that Raul knows the dirt on his wife's shoes comes from the Got-U site. The Subject Rule thus provides a very simple way to deal with missed clues cases without giving up relevant alternatives contextualism.

We thus have some reason to think that any satisfactory version of relevant alternatives contextualism must make the Subject Rule, or something equivalent, part of its criterion of relevance: incorporating the rule into such a view of knowledge and knowledge claims can rid us of the objection from missed clues cases and help us account for them. The Subject Rule amounts to requiring that the epistemic standards relevant to the attributor's context be at least as demanding as the epistemic standards relevant to the subject's context. By making that rule a rule of relevance and thus emphasizing the *sine qua non* character of that condition, I am thus suggesting that we depart from classical contextualist accounts of knowledge, including Lewis's relevant alternatives contextualism, which tend to make it purely optional that the attributor's standards include the subject's standards. In brief, my suggestion can be captured by the following maxim: don't make it easier to talk about knowledge in the attributor's context than it is in the subject's own context.

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