

Jesper Kallestrup

*Knowing from not Knowing*

Arguments from ignorance are typically fallacious: one shouldn't infer that p is true merely from the fact that p isn't known to be false. For instance, one cannot conclude that ghosts exist merely because no one has ever been able to prove their non-existence. The reason one cannot invariably come to know that p on the basis of lack of knowledge that not-p is that p may well be false even though one hasn't been in a position—as a matter of practical fact or for more principled reasons—to know that not-p. The qualifiers 'merely', 'typically' and 'invariably' are key here. In cases where one would have known that not-p had p been false, reasoning from ignorance seems perfectly kosher, indeed where one knows that counterfactual independently, one is positioned to gain knowledge. For instance, if one has been watching the BBC News without interruption for hours, one can know that the Prime Minister hasn't recently been assassinated by al-Qaeda terrorists, for if that were true, one would have heard about it by now. In this case, one infers the truth of p from the fact that one doesn't know that not-p yet one would have such knowledge if p were false.

Bio: Jesper Kallestrup is a senior lecturer in philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. He specializes in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind and epistemology. He is the author of *Semantic Externalism* (Routledge 2011) as well as a number of articles on topics primarily at the intersection of those three areas.