1. Introduction

At the most general level, *epistemological naturalism* can be characterised as the view that epistemology, including its normative parts, should be reconciled with, and even draw upon, science. This, of course, is vague, at best. Thus stated, epistemological naturalism does not qualify as a position, and hardly even as a programme, and it certainly does not permit any more detailed discussion. Part of what I intend in the present essay is to state and separate various views falling under the broad heading of epistemological naturalism. This will serve as a basis for a discussion of certain objections made to the most controversial part of the naturalistic programme in epistemology.

The plan of the essay is as follows. For the purpose of later discussion, I need to indicate very roughly what I take the content of certain epistemic concepts to be. In particular, I shall indicate what I mean by the property of justifiedness and the term ‘epistemic norm’. This is what I do in section 2. In section 3, I separate two broad questions that naturalistic theories address, what I call the *location problem* and the *justification problem*. The location problem concerns how to find an acceptable place for what appears to be normative epistemological properties. The justification problem, on the other hand, concerns how to justify our ways of forming beliefs. I shall argue that epistemological naturalism becomes controversial (and exciting) primarily when seen as a response to the justification problem, and when taking the form of *normative naturalism*. Roughly, normative naturalism is the view that we can justify our ways of forming beliefs (our epistemic norms) by appealing to empirical facts (in a broad sense) about humans and the rest of nature, where our knowledge of these facts is not in turn thought to rest on some a priori foundation.

Normative naturalism is the position which will remain at the center of discussion in the rest of the essay. In section 4, I review the main arguments...
for epistemological naturalism, and discuss to what extent they actually support normative naturalism. I conclude that the many arguments normally brought forward in support of epistemological naturalism are surprisingly weak reasons for accepting normative naturalism. The best reason on offer stems from a denial of both scepticism and the possibility of providing an *a priori* justification of our epistemic norms, but not even that is a strong reason.

I shall, however, argue that we need not be that concerned about offering reasons for normative naturalism. The crucial issue is whether the position is coherent at all. What I have in mind here is primarily the question if normative naturalism leads to a vicious circularity, as one might suspect of a position which holds that we can display the cogency of our epistemic norms by appealing to empirical facts, which we have obtained through reliance on those very norms. I discuss this circularity objection, as I shall call it, in section 5, where I also turn Quine’s and Kitcher’s attempt to reply to that charge. In section 6, I present in brief outline what I take to be the best answer to the circularity charge.

2. Epistemic norms and other epistemic concepts

The general issue in the naturalisation of epistemology is to provide an understanding of the relation between an empirical description of our ways of forming beliefs and the normative parts of epistemology. To pave the way for a discussion of normative naturalism, it will prove useful with a rough statement of what I take the content of certain crucial epistemic notions to be.

One central epistemic notion is the property of *justifiedness* (or the concept of justifiedness). We might assume that the property of justifiedness is relational, such that a belief $P$ is justified for $S$ in context $C$. When a belief is justified, the subject holding the belief is in some sense permitted in doing so. Many writers, of course, also take justifiedness of a belief, together with truth, to be sufficient for knowledge, but some disagree. For the purpose of the present discussion we can by and large remain neutral on this further issue. What is important, however, is that the concept of justifiedness is normative in the sense that saying that a belief is or is not justified essentially involves an evaluation of a belief and an agent in a particular context.

Now, while the property of justifiedness is perhaps the most central, at