Hawthorne concludes this book with a parable about a fictional culture that is divided into two camps over what can and cannot be known. The Practicians contend that they can and do have knowledge while the Theoreticians embrace a skeptical attitude towards knowledge. Hawthorne wants to point out that something has gone very wrong with these two groups. The Practicians debate amongst themselves and the same is true of the Theoreticians. The Practicians and the Theoreticians do not seem very interested in reconciling the issues that have been brought up, that of skepticism and the intuitive notion that we have knowledge. Yet for both the Practicians and the Theoreticians there is an amount of doubt. The Practicians see the intuitive reason to doubt their own knowledge. The Theoreticians see the intuitive reason that they do possess knowledge. During this time a group called the Variantists emerge from the debate who claim that neither side is even on the same ground; the Theoreticians and the Practicians are debating two totally different things that may or may not have anything to do with knowledge. Hawthorne uses the Lottery Paradox to illustrate what is at stake in these debates.

Hawthorne applies four epistemological approaches to the paradox, contextualism, skeptical invariantism, moderate invariantism, and the view he favors; sensitive moderate invariantism. He argues that sensitive moderate invariantism is our best bet for solving the Lottery Paradox, but he does not entirely exclude contextualism as a viable position (though he sees contextualism as most likely being wrong). There are five conditions that Hawthorne argues should be met for knowledge to obtain and those are the Moorean Constraint, Single Premise Closure, Multi-Premise Closure, the Epistemic Possibility Constraint (or a variation of it), and the Objective Chance Principle. Each one of these conditions is defended and the undesirable consequences of rejecting them are shown.

Chapter 1 presents the puzzle of someone reaching the conclusion that she will not be able to afford to go on an African Safari even though she has a lottery ticket. It would seem perfectly reasonable for someone to claim she will not be going on an African Safari and at the same time claim that she does not know she will lose the lottery. Also, Hawthorne wants to say that one is perfectly reasonable when concluding that she will not win the lottery and at the same time can make the reasonable decision not to sell her lottery ticket for a penny since there is a small chance she might win. How does one use any knowledge of the lottery and still retain that knowledge? He tries to find a clear definition of what knowledge is or when someone has acquired knowledge. Although his main focus is that of knowledge he also tries to deal with the connection between probability, practical reasoning, and assertion which he takes as closely tied to knowledge. Hawthorne sees the Single Closure Principle as essential and the first chapter explains why
he sees the cost of giving it up as too great a price to pay. Basically, the Single Closure Principle says that if we have knowledge of one premise we can conclude another piece of knowledge. If such a principle is given up then either knowledge is not possible or at best, knowledge is random since one could not gain any new knowledge from their previously held knowledge. With Multi-Premise Closure you can acquire a piece of knowledge from more than one premise. He is not sure if Multi-Premise Closure is essential for a definition of knowledge.

He presents the side of contextualism from the arguments put forth by Stewart Cohen, David Lewis, Keith DeRose, and Fred Dretske within chapter 2. Looking to the problems with semantic value (that this value changes from individual to individual) and salience (that one has to deal with the possibility of being wrong), contextualism attempts to address these problems with knowledge claims. It treats a knowledge claim as one that could be true when uttered by someone and could be false when uttered by another person. Hawthorne gives several challenges to the contextualist’s approach and focuses a good portion of the book towards these challenges. These challenges are geared toward the contextualist’s failure to give an objective account of knowledge. It would seem that contextualism is a relativist’s position. “Our epistemic practice [within the contextualist framework] runs smoothly not because we have clarification techniques available when responding to challenges, but because we are sparing about raising challenges in the first place.” (Hawthorne p. 105).

He groups the traditional views of skeptical invariantism and moderate invariantism into chapter 3. He defines skeptical invariantism as the view that all (or most) of our knowledge claims are false. He breaks down skeptical invariantism into three different arguments, ones from Error Theory, Exaggeration, and Unasserted Semantic Value. The one that appears to have any real promise is the view from Error Theory; the reason we are wrong is because attaining any knowledge is far too difficult for humans to attain. Hawthorne looks to Moore’s attacks towards skeptical invariantism by using common sense. Hawthorne does not agree that you can attack skepticism with common sense because he sees common sense as also pulling toward the direction of the skeptic as well. Hawthorne does attempt some further defense of skepticism, though like contextualism, he rejects it because the skeptical definition of knowledge is too high to ever be attainable. He does shape Moore’s argument into the Moorean Constraint, that there are people who have knowledge which is essential for knowledge to obtain. The skeptical response to the Lottery Paradox is that we cannot make any true knowledge claims about the outcome.

Moderate invariantism claims that most of our everyday knowledge claims are true and at the same time hold to the Moorean Constraint. The moderate invariantist says that when knowledge is present then there is a zero chance that the knowledge is wrong. When applied to the Lottery Paradox, moderate invariantism needs to be able to claim that a ticket has a chance to win without accepting the idea that the person should make plans to go on an African Safari because of that small chance. Hawthorne wants to modify this view so that it can deal with the Lottery Paradox, which he calls Sensitive Moderate Invariantism. Sensitive Mod-