Knowledge, the Structure of Justification, and Theories of True

Christopher L. Holland

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1 What is Knowledge?

Classic Definition of Knowledge: Justified True Belief (JTB)

1.1 The Gettier Problem

1.1.1 Edmund Gettier's Counterexample to JTB: Smith and Jones

- Two men, Smith and Jones apply for the same job.
- Smith forms **Belief A**: "Jones will get the job and Jones has ten coins in his pocket."
- Smith's belief is based on the following evidence:
  1. The company president told Smith that Jones would get the job.
  2. Just a few minutes ago, Smith counted the coins in Jones's pocket.
- From **Belief A**, Smith infers **Belief B**: "The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket."
- Meanwhile . . .
  - The company president lied and plans to give Smith the job instead of Jones—then does so.
  - Unbeknownst to Smith, he also has ten coins in his pocket.
- So, according to the classic definition of knowledge, did Smith *know* **Belief A**?
  - **Belief A**: "Jones will get the job and Jones has ten coins in his pocket."
  - Was **Belief A** justified?
    - Yes, because Smith had good reasons for believing it.
  - Was **Belief A** true?
    - No, because Jones did not end up getting the job.
  - So, did Smith *know* **Belief A**?
    - No, **Belief A** was a justified false belief.
- So, according to the classic definition of knowledge, did Smith *know* **Belief B**?
  - **Belief B**: "The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket."
  - Was **Belief B** justified?
    - Yes, because Smith had good reasons for believing it. The same reason he had for **Belief A**.
  - Was **Belief B** true?
    - Yes, the man who got the job did have ten coins in his pocket.
  - So, did Smith *know* **Belief B**?
    - Yes, **Belief B** was a justified true belief.
  - ☒ SOMETHING IS WRONG

1.1.2 Simpler Gettier Case: Bertrand Russell's Clock Example

- It is 3 o'clock.
- A broken analog clock on the wall reads 3 o'clock.
- Smith does not know the clock is broken.

- Smith reads the clock and forms **Belief C**: "It is 3 o'clock."
- According to the classical definition of knowledge does Smith know **Belief C**?
  - Is **Belief C** justified?
    - Yes, because in the thought experiment Smith has a good reason for **Belief C**. He believes it because the clock says that it is 3 o'clock.
  - Is **Belief C** true?
    - Yes, in the thought experiment it is 3 o'clock.
- But, does Smith really know that it is 3 o'clock?
- ☒ SOMETHING IS WRONG

For more see Wi-Phi Analyzing Knowledge #1.

1.2 Responding to Gettier Cases

- Lucky Knowing: Reject Gettier Counterexamples and retain the classic definition of knowledge.
- JTB + : Accept Gettier Counterexamples but add a fourth necessary condition for knowledge.
  - *No False Lemmas*: JTB + justification cannot include false beliefs
  - *Undefeated JTB*: JTB + no defeaters
  - For more see Wi-Phi Analyzing Knowledge #2
- TB +: Accept Gettier Counterexamples but replace "justification" with some other standard.
  - *Causal Theory of Knowledge*: TB + to know that P, your belief that P must be caused by P
  - *Reliabilism*: TB + a reliable belief forming process and environment
  - For more see Wi-Phi Analyzing Knowledge #3
  - *Truth Tracking Theory of Knowledge*: TB + Sensitivity and Adherence
    - Sensitivity: If P weren't true, then you wouldn't have believed P
    - Adherence: If P were true, then you would believe that P.
    - For more See Wi-Phi Analyzing Knowledge #4.

2 The Structure of Justification

2.1 Coherentism

A persons beliefs *should* be "coherent"

- Coherent beliefs are
  1. Consistent (they do not contradict each other)
  2. Mutually supportive. Your beliefs should support one another. Each of belief is justified by the way it fits within your larger system of beliefs. If you beliefs are consistent and mutually supportive, then you have achieved *Reflective Equilibrium*.
- Weak and Strong Coherentism
  - *Weak Coherentism*: Coherence is necessary for justification. If my belief is justified, then it coheres with my other beliefs.
  - *Strong Coherentism*: Coherence is both necessary and sufficient for justification. My belief is justified if, and only if, it coheres with my other beliefs.
- Problems with Strong Coherentism:
  - The Isolation Problem: There could be many different coherent belief sets.
  - What about self-evident truths of reason?
    - $2 + 2 = 4$
    - I think therefore I am
    - The laws of logic
- See also chap 15 "Neurath's Boat" in De Cruz, *Philosophy Illustrated*.

2.2 Foundationalism

In addition to being coherent and a persons believes *should* be justified (directly or indirectly) by properly basic beliefs.

- All justified beliefs are either basic or nonbasic
  - Nonbasic beliefs are justified, either directly or indirectly, on basic beliefs
  - Basic beliefs are not justified on other beliefs
  - Properly basic beliefs are not justified on other beliefs but meet some other justification requirement.
- *Strong Foundationalism*
  - Properly basic beliefs are either sensory belief or truths of reason (*a priori* knowledge).
  - Properly basic beliefs are indubitable (like "I think therefore I am").
- Problems for Strong Foundationalism:
  - Is the principle that all beliefs are either indubitable or nonbasic a basic belief?
  - Can we derive the principle that all beliefs are either indubitable or nonbasic from indubitable beliefs?
- *Weak Foundationalism*
  - Properly basic beliefs include sensory belief or truths of reason (*a priori* knowledge).
  - But weak foundationalism also allows for beliefs formed in a basic but "reliable way."
    - I believe there is a window over there because my visual processes are reliable.
    - I believe I ate breakfast this morning because my memory processes are reliable.

3 Truth

3.1 Correspondence Theory of Truth

- Classic definition from Aristotle: "To say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true."
- Truth is a relationship held between a proposition and reality.
- A proposition is true if, and only if, it corresponds to reality.
- A proposition is false if, and only if, it does not correspond to reality.
- The correspondence theory is a metaphysical theory of truth.

3.2 Coherence Theory of Truth

- Truth is a relationship held between propositions and other propositions.
- A proposition is true if, and only if, it coheres with a particular set of propositions.
- The coherence theory is an epistemological theory of truth.

3.3 Pragmatic Theory of Truth

- A belief is true if, and only if, it works or is useful to have.
- Non-epistemic Pragmatism:
  - A belief is true if and only if it is beneficial to have.
  - " 'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving." — William James
- Epistemic Pragmatism
  - Truth is the end of inquiry (i.e., views which we can no longer improve)
  - Truth is what an ideally rational community with all the relevant evidence would accept.

3.4 Post-Modernism

- Not a single view, but a family of related views.
- Common characteristics include:

- Reality is a social construction.
- Rejection of the correspondence theory of truth
- Rejection of foundationalism
- Rejection of meta-narratives

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