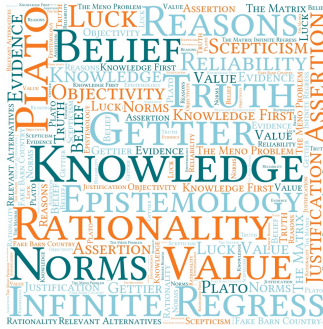




Knowledge, Individuals & Society

JAKE CHANDLER

*Can Knowledge be Analysed?
Worries from Gettier*



Bon Appetit!

S knows that h iff (1) h is true, (2) S is justified [by some evidence e] in believing h ..., (3) S believes that h on the basis of his justification and...(4) ...there is an evidence-restricted alternative F_S^* to S 's epistemic framework F_S such that (i) ' S is justified in believing that h ' is epistemically derivable from the other members of the evidence component of F_S^* and (ii) there is some subset of members of the evidence component of F_S^* such that (a) the members of this subset are also members of the evidence component of F_S and (b) ' S is justified in believing that h ' is epistemically derivable from the members of this subset. [Where F_S^* is an 'evidence-restricted alternative' to F_S iff (i) For every true proposition q such that ' S is justified in believing not- q ' is a member of the evidence component of F_S , ' S is justified in believing q ' is a member of the evidence component of F_S^* , (ii) for some subset C of members of F_S such that C is maximally consistent epistemically with the members generated in (i), every member of C is a member of F_S^* , and (iii) no other propositions are members of F_S^* except those that are implied epistemically by the members generated in (i) and (ii).] (Swain 1974)

Recap

- We've reviewed a number of arguably unsuccessful responses to Gettier
- These were among the most basic
- A cycle of proposals and counterexamples has indeed led to some *very* convoluted suggestions
- Here is a notorious later incarnation of No DEFEATERS...

What next?

- This raises two issues
 - (1) Is our poor track record perhaps evidence that no analysis of knowledge can be given *in principle*?
 - (2) If not, doesn't the increasing complexity of conditions and counterexamples bode badly for delivering it *in practise*?
- From the 80's / 90's onwards: increasing scepticism regarding solubility of the problem even in principle

A Wittgenstinian worry?

- Very early pessimism from Saunders & Champawat (1964):
‘[W]e would suggest that it is a mistake to believe that there is some...set of conditions which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for knowledge. It is our opinion that the instances of knowledge share at most a *family resemblance*.’
- This echoes Wittgenstein (1958) on games:
‘Consider for example the proceedings that we call “games”. I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all?—Don’t say: “There must be something common, or they would not be called “games””—but look and see whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that’

Zagzebski’s argument

- In an influential article, Zagzebski (1994) offered an argument allegedly showing that
‘Gettier problems are inescapable for virtually every analysis of knowledge which at least maintains that knowledge is true belief plus something else’
- Zagzebski considers the prospects of an account of the form
 $K = TB + W$
- W = ‘Warrant’, *defined* as ‘the property that in sufficient quantity converts true belief into knowledge’

A Wittgenstinian worry? (ctd)

- Cases of knowledge do have *some* features in common: most agree that TRUTH and BELIEF are necessary (and similar claims could perhaps be made of games)
- But Wittgenstein is perhaps more charitably interpreted as claiming that games do not have *defining* characteristics (collectively necessary *and* sufficient ones)
- *Is the family resemblance model of concepts, so construed, applicable to knowledge? That remains an open question.*

Zagzebski’s argument (ctd)

- The argument:
 - (1) If a reductive analysis of knowledge of the form ‘ $K = TB + W$ ’, is such that W *doesn’t* entail TRUTH, then the account will be implausible because subject to Gettier-style counterexamples
 - (2) If a reductive analysis of knowledge of the form ‘ $K = TB + W$ ’, is such that W *does* entail TRUTH, then the account will be implausible because too strict

- (3) No reductive analysis of knowledge of the form ‘ $K = TB + W$ ’ is plausible

Why believe (1)?

- Consider indeed, for sake of argument, the suggestion:
 $W = \text{If } P, \text{ then NO DEFEATERS is satisfied}$
- W doesn't entail P , but ensures Gettier-proofness:
 - If the belief is true, then, by W , NO DEFEATERS is satisfied
 - We saw that BELIEF + TRUTH + NO DEFEATERS is at least *sufficient*, if arguably not necessary, for knowledge

Why believe (2)?

- As we have seen, nearly all our candidates for W (INFALLIBILITY, NO DEFEATERS, CAUSATION, etc.) entail TRUTH
- Some of these were faulted for being too strong, but others (e.g. CAUSATION) were not!
- Seemingly, Zagzebski trades on an equivocation between 'warrant' in the technical sense and 'warrant' $\approx$ 'justification'
- On the 2nd reading, W 's entailing TRUTH, does leave us with something close to INFALLIBILITY, which is probably too strong
- But she needs the 1st reading to be able to create trouble for 'virtually every analysis of knowledge which...maintains that knowledge is true belief plus something else'

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