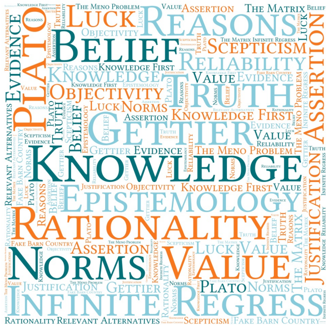

Knowledge, Individuals & Society

Jake Chandler

Can Knowledge be Analysed?
Knowledge First

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

Knowledge-First

- Taking cue from the lack of success regarding Gettier, Williamson (2000) urges a 'Knowledge First' approach to a number of philosophical problems
- Two key claims:
  (1) The concept of knowledge is primitive (unanalysable)
  (2) The concept of knowledge is required in order to analyse other important concepts (including belief and justification!)
- Williamson turns our whole project on its head!

Defining justification in terms of knowledge?

- There are a number of ways of analysing *justification* in terms of knowledge
- Williamson's own suggestion is based on the equation of one's evidence (E) with what one knows (K):

  > 'Questions of justification and rationality concern doing the best one can on one's limited evidence; given $E = K$, that means doing the best one can on one's limited knowledge. If so, they are not prior to questions of knowledge. What you are justified or rational in believing depends on what you know.'

- Justification is explained in terms of evidence, which is explained in terms of knowledge
- Note: What he needs here is not even $E = K$, but simply $E \subseteq K$

A "chain reaction" argument for $E \subseteq K$?

- He offers two considerations for his claim. The most convincing one (roughly as developed by McGlynn 2014):
  - Assume that K is not necessary for E and that JTB suffices
  - Assume that we are watching a video of a series of balls drawn from a bag, which, as a matter of fact, will all prove to be red
  - Assume that we have witnessed enough red draws n to be justified in believing the (true) claim "ball $n+1$ will be red"
  - We have a JTB that "ball $n+1$ will be red" and so can add it to our evidence
  - We now have even stronger grounds to believe "ball $n+2$ will be red", which we can also add to our evidence

  …

A “chain reaction” argument for $E \subseteq K$? (ctd)

- Continuing the argument:

  …

  - We now have yet even stronger grounds to believe “ball $n+3$ will be red”, etc.
  - It seems that we set off a “chain reaction” of ever stronger grounds
  - But it seems that our grounds, do not get stronger as we move forward: if anything, they get *weaker*!
  - Hence E cannot merely be JTB
- See McGlynn (2014) Chs 3 & 4 for more on this and other approaches

Defining belief in terms of knowledge?

- Common line:

  Belief is, by definition, a state that “aims at” knowledge
- Similarly, one could suggest:
  - Thirst is, by definition, a state that aims at hydration
  - Desire is, by definition, a state that aims at satisfaction
  - Anger is, by definition, a state that aims at retribution
- Why believe this? Because it would explain the plausibility of the following implication for rational agents:

  KNOWLEDGE NORM FOR BELIEF: $B(P) \Rightarrow B(K(P))$ (Huemer 2007)

  (If S believes that P, then S believes that she knows that P)

(“$B(P)$” = “S believes that P”; “$K(P)$” = “S knows that P”)

The ‘knowledge norm’ for belief

- In support of KNOWLEDGE NORM: Moore-paradoxical beliefs, such as

  (a) ‘It’s raining, but I don’t know that it is.’
- These do not seem rational to believe, *even* when true
- But *why* so?!?
- KNOWLEDGE NORM FOR BELIEF can explain this, using:

  (CLOSURE UNDER) CONJUNCTION: $B(P)$ and $B(Q) \Rightarrow B(P\&Q)$

  CONSISTENCY: $\neg B(P\&\neg P)$

  plus:

  DISTRIBUTION OVER CONJUNCTION: $B(P\&Q) \Rightarrow B(P)$ and $B(Q)$

The ‘knowledge norm’ for belief

- Argument by reductio ad absurdum:

(1)	$B(P\&\neg K(P))$	(M-paradoxical belief, assumed for reductio)
(2)	$B(\neg K(P))$	(from (1) and DISTRIBUTION)
(3)	$B(P)$	(from (1) and DISTRIBUTION)
(4)	$B(K(P))$	(from (3) and KNOWLEDGE NORM)
(5)	$B(K(P)\&\neg K(P))$	(from (2), (4) and CONJUNCTION)
(6)	$\neg B(K(P)\&\neg K(P))$	(from CONSISTENCY)
(7)	$\neg B(P\&\neg K(P))$	(by reductio from (5) and (6))

References

- Huemer, M. 2007: Moore's Paradox and the Norm of Belief. In Susana Nuccetelli & Gary Seay (eds.), *Themes From G. E. Moore: New Essays in Epistemology and Ethics*. Clarendon Press.
- McGlynn, A. 2014: *Knowledge First?* Palgrave Macmillan.
- Williamson, T. 2000. *Knowledge and its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.