

- It has become increasingly popular to suggest:
(EPISTEMIC) CONTEXTUALISM (antonym: INVARIANTISM): The truth conditions of knowledge attributions vary with the attributor's context
- Key proponents: later Unger (1986), Lewis (1996), Cohen (1987, 2013), DeRose (1995, 1999),...
- This suggestion is thought to help with the AI, it allows us to say:
 - (i) When uttered in the context of the argument from ignorance, the sceptic's concluding claim is true (as are his two premises)
 - (ii) When uttered outside of that context, the same claim is false
- A failure on the audience's part to appreciate (ii) then allegedly explains the discomfort experienced in relation to the conclusion

In greater detail

- In what *precise way* is 'knows' thought to be context sensitive?
- It has been suggested that attributing knowledge involves
 - (a) attributing a *gradable property* to the knower (e.g. Cohen)
Example: If *S* knows that *P*, then *S*'s evidence entails that *P* is **probable**
 - (b) making a *universal quantified* statement (e.g. Lewis)
Example 1: If *S* knows that *P*, then *S*'s evidence is inconsistent with **every** alternative to *P*
Example 2: If *S* knows that *P*, then, were **any** alternative to *P* to be true, *S* wouldn't believe that *P*
- The context-sensitivity of 'knows' is then claimed to derive from that of gradable adjectives or quantifier phrases

Gettier cases

- Lewis claims his own proposal sheds light on Gettier cases
- Consider CLOCK and its de-Gettiered counterpart (CLOCK*), in which the clock didn't stop
- Lewis: whether *S* can be said to know *P* hinges partly on whether *S*'s evidence can be said to eliminate all alternatives to *P*
- In both cases the evidence is the same (the clock's displaying '12'), but what counts as 'all' alternatives can be argued to vary:
 - CLOCK: the alternative in which it isn't 12 but the clock says it is *is* included, because made salient by the fact that the clock stopped (hence: we don't know)
 - CLOCK*: that alternative *isn't* included (hence: we know)

In greater detail (ctd)

- On pains of doing no better than a 'bare' WAM, the contextualist *also* needs a story as to *how* the context yields the result that an utterance of
 'I know that *O*'
is true in ordinary contexts but false in the context of the AI
- Lewis, who requires inconsistency of evidence with all alternatives, proposes:
 Any alternative made salient (e.g. mentioned) in the conversational context is included in the quantifier's scope ('**Rule of Attention**')
- In the context of AI, alternative *H* is explicitly mentioned; outside of that context, it typically isn't

Problem: semantic blindness

- Schiffer (1996; see also Conee 2013) complains:
 If the meaning of 'knows' were indeed context-dependent, it would be surprising that competent speakers didn't realise this
- Compare indexicals such as 'I' or 'here': any competent speaker is aware of the context-dependence of their meaning
- Since the contextualist *requires* lack of awareness regarding 'knows' for the AI, he can't dig his heels in and claim awareness
- Response: gradable adjectives and quantified phrases are context dependent but speakers aren't immediately aware of this (Cohen 2013)

Problem: semantic blindness (ctd)

- Counter: even if we grant that they are context dependent, the situation seems disanalogous.
- Regarding gradable adjectives:
 - 'Sam's car is old.' (uttered in the roadtrip context)
 - 'Sam's car isn't old.' (uttered in the vintage car show context)
- Competent speakers might possibly be convinced that there is no contradiction by someone's claiming the respective contents are:
 - 'Sam's car is old *for something meant to get us across Russia*.'
 - 'Sam's car isn't old *for a display piece on a vintage car show*.'
- Similar comments apply to quantified phrases
- No such move seems available for 'knows'

Problem: Conee on quantified phrases (ctd)

- Apparent upshot: Stickler's assertion 'you spoke falsely' is false
- Conee finds this problematic (do you agree?)
- If he is onto something, epistemic contextualism seems in similar trouble

Problem: Conee on quantified phrases

- Conee (2013) offers an interesting objection to contextualism about quantified phrases
- Assume that Mr. Robinson says, at the meeting:
 - 'Everyone is here.'
- Mr. Stickler interjects:
 - 'You spoke falsely. Not everyone is here: *the Pope* isn't here.'
- Conee says that, according to contextualism, the meaning of 'everyone' is different in the two assertions
 - Stickler's assertion 'not everyone is here' is true
 - But Robinson's assertion 'everyone is here' is *also* true

References

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References (ctd)

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