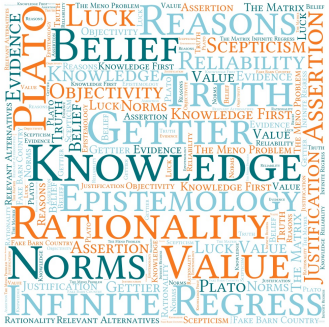

Knowledge, Reason & Belief

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2. The nature of knowledge: the Gettier problem

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Last week

- Course overview
- Discussion of the possible existence of different 'modes' of knowledge (know-how, etc.)
- Brief introduction to the notion of philosophical analysis
- First look at the analysis of knowledge:
  - The Truth condition
  - The Belief condition
  - The Justification condition (prompted by Microbes case)
  - The Gettier problem (Ford and Clock cases)

Introduction

The Gettier problem: reminder

Ford: Smith tells you he has just bought a Ford, shows you the receipt, takes you for a drive, etc.: you justifiedly form the belief that he owns a Ford. On similarly good grounds, you believe that he can only have bought a Ford if he has received a pay rise. From this, you legitimately infer that Smith has received a pay rise. However, Smith has lied to you: the car is in fact his brother's. As it happens, however, Smith *has*, by chance, just received a pay rise. You have a justified true belief that falls short of knowledge.

Clock: You glance at your usually reliable Swiss Cuckoo clock. It reads 12 o'clock. You legitimately form the belief that it is indeed 12 o'clock. And it is in fact 12 o'clock. However, unbeknownst to you, the clock stopped yesterday at 12. You have a justified true belief that falls short of knowledge.

Reacting to Gettier: the options

- The options:
  (1) Deny that Gettier victims fail to have knowledge
  (2) Deny that Gettier victims are justified in holding their beliefs
  (3) Accept that the JTB analysis needs strengthening ($K = JTB + X$ or $K = TB + X$)
- I'll set aside (1), while noting that
  - Sartwell (1992) heroically argues that knowledge is true belief
  - Hetherington (1999) suggests that Gettier victims do enjoy knowledge, albeit of a lower-grade
- Today: 2 responses faling under strategies (2) or (3)
- Warning: some of this will be difficult; please interrupt if lost!!

'No False Grounds'

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- A very early response to Gettier (Clark 1963) was to add:

  No False Grounds: *S*'s belief that *P* was not derived from false premises

- This handles Ford:

  Jones' belief that Smith has received a pay rise was derived from his false premise that Smith owns a Ford

- But there are apparent failures of necessity (Saunders & Champawat 1964):

  Handouts: Professor Plum miscounts the number of people in the audience: 63 instead of 62. He infers from his false belief that 100 handouts would be sufficient for the lecture. It seems to be the case that he knows this number to be sufficient even though he inferred it from a false premise. (this one from Warfield 2005)

'No False Grounds' (ctd)

- Rejoinder:

  It isn't clear that Prof Plum derived his belief regarding 100 handouts' being sufficient from the particular head count that he arrived at

- Perhaps more seriously, we seem to have objections from failure of sufficiency (Saunders & Champawat 1964):

  In the clock case: no obvious inference from a false premise (e.g. that the clock is working)

- Our two next proposals beef up No False Grounds

Infallibilism

The basic idea

- The following would certainly do the job:

  > Infallibility: *S*'s belief that *P* was not inferred from premises that either (i) fail to all be true or (ii) fail to jointly guarantee *P*

- This clearly strengthens No False Grounds
- How this handles Ford and Clock:
  - Being shown receipts for a car and being driven around in it fails to guarantee that the would-be owner is a genuine owner (+ there is an inference from a false premise)
  - The clock's indicating 12 does not guarantee that it is 12, even though it makes it very probable

Objection: rampant ignorance

- On this view, we are then left knowing very little of what we intuitively think we know; there is a seeming failure of necessity
- Rejoinder (Unger 1975):

  > Our intuitions that we know all these things are mistaken: there are the result of taking loose talk at face value
  >
  > (Analogy: I might loosely say that the road is flat, but *strictly speaking* it is not)

- Objection:

  > If this is so, what explains the apparent asymmetry in knowledge attributions between Gettier cases and their non-Gettier analogues (e.g. cases in which the clock is not broken)?
  >
  > (Why is it OK to speak loosely wrt to the latter but not wrt the former?)

Justificatory Infallibilism

- Infallibility is sometimes bolstered by an argument suggesting that one is *justified* in believing that *P* on the basis of *E* only if *E* guarantees that *P*
- We would then recover Infallibility from No False Grounds + Justification
- We also would be denying, in the process, that Gettier victims have justification (strategy (2))
- Framed in probabilistic terms:

  > J-Infallibility: For any propositions *P* and *E*, *S* is justified in believing that *P* on the basis of *E* only if *E* would entail that $\Pr(P) = 1$

The Lottery

- Indeed, one can show that J-Infallibility follows from the following arguably plausible claims:

  Fair Lottery: For any n, there exists some possible evidence E that would entail that there is a fair n-ticket lottery being held, with one guaranteed winner, so that:

  (a) For $1 \leq i \leq n$, $\Pr(L_i) = 1 - (1/n)$: each ticket has a probability of $1 - (1/n)$ of losing

  (b) $\Pr(\neg(L_1 \& \ldots L_n)) = 1$: it is guaranteed that not ('¬') all tickets will lose

  Monotonicity: If (i) S would be justified in believing P^* on the basis of E^* and (ii) the probability that E would entail P to have is at least as great as the probability that E^* would entail P^* to have, then (iii) S would be justified in believing P on the basis of E

  &-Introduction: If S would be justified in believing that P and would be justified in believing that Q, then S would be justified in believing that P and Q

The Lottery (ctd)

- And finally:

  Consistency: S would not be justified in believing a contradiction

- I'll give a proof by reductio ad absurdum, where we'll:
  (a) assume for *sake of argument* that J-Infallibility is *false*,
  (b) show that this leads to a contradiction given the other assumptions in place,
  (c) conclude that J-Infallibility is therefore true

Proof

(1) J-Infallibility is false: for some E^* and some P, S would be justified in believing that P on the basis of E^* even though E^* would entail that $\Pr(P) = t < 1$ (e.g. $t = 0.9$) (assumed for *reductio*)

(2) There exists possible evidence E entailing that there is a fair n-ticket lottery being held, with one guaranteed winner, where n is such that $1 - (1/n) \geq t$ (e.g. $n = 1000$) (from Fair Lottery)

(3) E would entail that, for $1 \leq i \leq n$, $\Pr(L_i) = 1 - (1/n) \geq t$ (e.g. $\Pr(L_i) = 1 - (1/1000) = 0.999 \geq 0.9$) (from (2))

(4) On the basis of E, S would be justified in believing, of each ticket, that it will lose (from (1), (3) and Monotonicity)

(5) On the basis of E, S would be justified in believing that not all tickets will lose (from (1), (2) and Monotonicity)

Proof (ctd)

(6) On the basis of E, S would be justified in believing that all tickets will lose and not all tickets will lose (from (4), (5) and &-Introduction)

(7) On the basis of E, S would not be justified in believing that all tickets will lose and not all tickets will lose (from Consistency)

(8) On the basis of E, S would and would not be justified in believing that all tickets will lose and not all tickets will lose (from (6) and (7))

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(9) J-Infallibility is true (by *reductio* from (8))

Rejecting &-Introduction or Consistency

- Kyburg (1961) rejects &-Introduction:

  > If S would be justified in believing P and would be justified in believing Q, then S would be justified in believing P and Q

- But recall that we reasoned from our initial assumptions to

  (6) On the basis of E, S would be justified in believing that all tickets will lose and not all tickets will lose

  (7) On the basis of E, S would not be justified in believing that all tickets will lose and not all tickets will lose

  and from this, to

  (8) On the basis of E, S would and would not be justified in believing that all tickets will lose and not all tickets will lose

- Unhappy with this, we then decided that we would have to give up on (1): the falsity of J-Infallibility

Rejecting &-Introduction or Consistency (ctd)

- But on Kyburg's suggestion, it seems that we can happily commit ourselves to (6) and (7) without (8)
- As Kaplan (1981) notes, Kyburg's move seems to undermine the very argument that motivates it
- Similar comments apply to the rejection of Consistency:

  > S would not be justified in believing a contradiction

- Indeed, the fact that we would be led to (8) shouldn't then be a problem
- This leaves the option of rejecting Monotonicity (more on this during the seminar)

Next week

- Topic: 'The nature of knowledge: more on Gettier'
- Required reading:
  - Pritchard, D. *WTK*, Ch. 6
- Recommended reading:
  - Feldman, R. 2003: *Epistemology*. Pearson. Ch. 5.
  - Williamson, T. 2011: Knowledge first epistemology. In S. Bernecker & D. Pritchard (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*. London: Routledge, pp. 208-218.
  - Zagzebski, L. 1994: The inescapability of Gettier problems. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 44(174), pp. 65–73.

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- Unger, P. 1975. *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
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