

Introduction to Epistemology I : The Classical Account of knowledge and Gettier Cases

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A Quick Explanation of Epistemology

- ▶ Epistemology is the branch of philosophy and is called the theory of knowledge.
- ▶ One of the characteristic questions concerns what the things called knowledge have in common: what is knowledge?

Types of Knowledge

- ▶ Propositional knowledge: “I know it is fine today.”
- ▶ Ability knowledge: “I know how to swim.”
- ▶ Scientific knowledge
- ▶ \vdots

Defining Knowledge

Two Requirements on Knowledge

- ▶ The truth requirement: knowledge must be true.
- ▶ The belief requirement: knowledge must be belief.

Knowledge is true belief?

Consider Harry, who forms his belief that the horse Lucky Lass will win the next race purely on the basis of the fact that the name of the horse appeals to him. . . . Harry's belief turns out to be true, in that Lucky Lass does win the next race. Is this knowledge? (Pritchard, D., 2013, p.5).

Justification

- ▶ *Justification*: being in possession of good reasons for thinking that a belief is true.
- ▶ The classical (tripartite) account of knowledge: it is necessary to justify one's belief to gain knowledge.

Gettier Cases

- ▶ Gettier showed cases where one has justified true belief but still lacks knowledge.

Imagine a man, let's call him John, who comes downstairs one morning and sees that the time on the grandfather clock in the hall says "8.20." On this basis John comes to believe that it is 8.20 a.m., and this belief is true, since it is 8.20 a.m. Moreover, John's belief is justified in that it is based on excellent grounds.... Suppose, however, that the clock had, unbeknownst to him, stopped 24 hours earlier, so that John is now forming his justified true belief by looking at a stopped clock. (Pritchard, D., 2013, pp.24-25)

Responding to the Gettier Cases

- ▶ Proposal 1: add a new requirement “justified not in any way based on false presuppositions” into the account.
- ▶ It is difficult to spell out presuppositions to justify a belief.

- ▶ Proposal 2: adopt *reliabilism*.
- ▶ Reliabilism: a view that knowledge must be a true belief gained in a reliable way.

Imagine, for example, that you find out what the temperature of the room is by looking at the thermometer on the wall... The thermometer is, in fact, broken and is fluctuating randomly. Crucially, however, this isn't making the thermometer an unreliable indicator of what the temperature in the room is for the simple reason that someone is hidden in the room and adjusting the temperature of the room to match whatever reading is on the thermometer whenever she sees you look at the thermometer (we won't concern ourselves with why). (Pritchard, D., 2013, p.56)

Conclusion

- ▶ We saw the classical account of knowledge and the defect shown in Gettier's paper.
- ▶ To respond to the Gettier cases, it is necessary to consider the part of "justified" in the classical account.
- ▶ Next, I will explain the structure of justification and virtue epistemology.

REFERENCES

- Pritchard, D. (2013). *What is this thing called knowledge?*. Routledge.