

# **EPISTEMOLOGY**

# Branches of Philosophy

- 1. *Metaphysics*:** Deals with the fundamental questions of reality.
- 2. *Epistemology*:** Theory of knowledge.
- 3. *Logic*:** Studies the rules of valid reasoning and argumentation
- 4. *Ethics (moral philosophy)*:** Concerned with human values and how individuals should act.
- 5. *Aesthetics*:** Deals with the notion of beauty and the philosophy of art.

# What is the extent of our knowledge?

- **Common sense:** We know a lot.
- **Scepticism:** We don't know much/anything at all.

- Sceptical Arguments

- Descartes' Dreaming Argument: You can't distinguish between dream state and waking state
- Brain in a Vat argument: You're nothing but a brain in a vat.

# **The Possibility of Error Argument**

- For any belief we have, it is possible for that belief to be false.
  - i. For (almost) any belief any person has about the external world, that belief could be mistaken.
  - ii. If a belief could be mistaken, then it is not a case of knowledge.
  - iii. Therefore, (almost) any belief any person has about the external world is not knowledge (i.e, no one knows anything, or more than very little, about the external world)

# The Certainty Argument

- No one is epistemically certain of anything and the sceptical scenario is an example for this.
  - i. If ***S knows P, then S is absolutely certain of P.***
  - ii. No one is ever absolutely certain of anything about the external world.
  - iii. Therefore, no one knows anything about the external world

# Three senses of “knows”

- (1) Propositional knowledge (Knowing ***that***)
  - knowledge of facts or true propositions
  - Distinction between **sentences** and **propositions**
  - Analytic **vs** Synthetic sentences
  - A priori **vs** A posteriori
  - Belief is a relation between a subject and a proposition
- (2) Acquaintance knowledge
  - Knowledge by ***acquaintance*** and Knowledge by ***description***
- (3) “How to” knowledge
  - Knowing ***how***

- **Analytic statements**
  - True by the very structure of the statement
  - Either it is raining or it is not raining.
  - Statements in mathematics
  - Tautologous
- **Synthetic statements**
  - True by facts
  - It is raining
  - Can be true and can be false
- **A priori**
  - Knowledge independent of experience
  - Through deduction and truth is self evident
- **A posteriori**
  - Knowledge through observation

# Traditional Analysis of Knowledge

- Knowledge is justified true belief. (JTB)
- **S** knows that **P** If and only If (**IFF**)
  - (1) **P** is true
  - (2) **S** believes that **P**
  - (3) **S** is justified in believing that **P**
- **S** knows that **P** iff **S** eliminates every possibility in which it is not-**P**.



# Belief-Condition

- Three different attitudes
  - We can believe it or accept it as true.
  - We can disbelieve it, i.e. believe that it is false or believe its negation.
  - We can withhold belief in it or suspend judgment.
- Belief as a propositional attitude, is a relation between a subject and a proposition.
- Hope, fear, doubt, and desire are just some ways in which one may be related to a proposition.

# Truth-Condition

- The correspondence theory
  - A proposition is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts. A proposition is false if and only if it fails to correspond to the facts.
  - One and the same proposition cannot be both true and false.
  - The truth is not “relative”.

- **Coherence theory of truth**
  - The truth of any (true) proposition consists in its coherence with some specified set of propositions.
- (i) I have the sense experience of something white in my hand, (ii) I have the experience of something round in my hand, (iii) I have the experience of something cold in my hand. The proposition, (iv) there is a snowball in my hand, coheres with (i) to (iii). It would seem that (iv) better coheres with (i) to (iii) than some other propositions, e.g. that I have a hot lump of coal in my hand.
- “There are pink elephants dancing on the highway in front of us”
  - Elephants are gray.
  - This locale is not the habitat of elephants.
  - There is neither a zoo nor a circus anywhere nearby.

# The Gettier Kind Counter Examples

## Case 1

- Smith has strong evidence for believing the following proposition
- (1a) Jones owns a Ford.
- Smith's evidence could be the following. Sometimes Jones has given ride to Smith and Jones himself says that he (Jones) owns a Ford. Thus, Smith is justified in believing (1a) Jones owns a Ford. Let us consider that Smith has got another friend called Brown and Smith does not know the whereabouts of Brown. Smith constructs three disjunctions randomly. Here Gettier uses one of the rules of inference that is the Rule of Addition which will help Smith to preserve the truth even if he does not know the actual fact.

- (1b) Either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Boston.
- (1c) Either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona.
- (1d) Either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Hyderabad.

# Sheep-Shaped-Rock Case

Smith sees something on the hill that appears to him to be a sheep. In fact it is not a sheep but just a rock which looks like a sheep. But behind this rock there happens to be a sheep which is not visible to Smith. Here, the true belief is that (P) **there is a sheep on the hill**. Smith is also justified in believing that P since it is based on the perceptual experience which is reliable.