

Knowledge

Analysis

JTB

S knows that p if and only if:

- S believes that p
- p is true
- S is justified in believing p

Gettier cases

This does not work because the conditions are not always sufficient for knowledge. For instance: Smith applies for a job but he has good evidence that not he but John will get the job. He also knows that John has coins in his pocket. From these things he can deduce that:

The person who gets the job has coins in his pocket.

However, not John but Smith will get the job and unbeknownst to Smith, Smith has coins in his pocket. Therefore his claim that the person who gets the job has coins in his pocket turns out to be true. Therefore, even though our intuition tells us it is not knowledge, it satisfies all the conditions of the JTB-account of knowledge. So, the JTB-account must be wrong.

No false beliefs

Some people suggest that the no false beliefs account solves the problem of Gettier cases. This argues that knowledge cannot rely on false beliefs. Since Smith's knowledge relies on the false belief that John gets the job, it is not knowledge.

However, there is a counterargument: People seem to be able to have knowledge even if there are false beliefs such as a detective investigating a murder in broad daylight who interviews many witnesses who all blame the same person and gets a lot of evidence. Even if one of the pieces of evidence was false, we would still regard the detective as knowing who the murderer was.

This can be overcome with some theories but it's still not good enough to overcome the barn scenario.

Causal account of knowledge

In the Gettier case given above, the reason that we should not count it as knowledge is because the belief that the person who gets the job has coins in his pocket is not believed because of the facts but because of some other things. This is what the causal theory of knowledge tries to catch:

S knows that p if and only if:

- S believes that p
- p is true
- S's belief in p is caused by the facts in virtue of which p is true

A few problems: Causes precede their effect, therefore we could have no knowledge about the future. Can be fixed by changing the 3rd condition to: S's belief in p is causally connected to the facts in virtue of which p is true. For instance, I know that it is raining tomorrow because the atmospheric pressure today has both caused my phone to display that it is going to rain and the rain itself.

Second problem, in an appropriate way, talk about goldman

The barn

Henry is driving in the countryside, unknown to Henry, the district he has just entered is full of papier-mâché facsimiles of barns. They are so cleverly constructed that travellers invariably mistake them for barns. When Henry looks outside, he sees the one and only real barn. Henry comes to believe that what he sees is a barn, he would have also believed this if it was a fake barn. With all the above accounts this would count as knowledge.

Counterfactual account

Nozick tries to fix this, but let's look at Nozick and closure and Kripke in scepticism.

Externalism vs. Internalism

Internalists think that you need an internal justification for a belief to count as knowledge. Externalists think that an external justification can be given, arguing that internalism leads to a vicious infinite regress argument, I will get into this argument in scepticism. Externalists thereby think that the person who has a foundational belief does not need to have a reason why this belief is basic for them, those reasons can be entirely external.

Mentalism vs. Accessibilism

Internalism is that internal justification has to be given. However, what actually does 'internal' mean? There are two responses: mentalism and accessibilism. Accessibilism is the thesis that what is internal to someone is what she is aware of (has access too). Mentalism thinks that what is internal to someone is their mental state.

Reliabilism

Reliabilism is a form of externalism that a belief is justified if and only if it is produced by a reliable belief-forming process. For instance, if one's vision reliably creates true beliefs, then beliefs formed through vision can be justified even if the subject cannot internally justify them.

How reliable does it have to be

How much percentage does there have to be. Lottery problem.

However, how reliable does something have to be in order for it to be a reliable belief-formation process. There is only a very small chance that you win the lottery, therefore it would be very reliable to say that a lottery ticket does not win, 99.999%. Yet, most people would say that they would not *know* whether they had won or not before the announcement is made. If it has to be more reliable, 99.9999999999%, that would be a slippery slope towards scepticism, vision can also be sometimes wrong for instance.

Though maybe, there are lots of things that seem weird to say. What about implicatures. For instance creating a disjunction when there might be an implicature.

However, there is a more thorough version of the lottery problem. Framing it as an objection against closure. Let's say we have a lottery with a thousand tickets, the winning ticket is the 1000th ticket. Im a reliabilist, according to my theory when I look at ticket number 1 I statistically infer that it is a losing process. It says the same thing for all the other ones. However, it does not say I know that the 1000th ticket will lose, because truth is a condition for it. But for each of them I would still form the belief, but that wouldn't be knowledge because it wouldn't be a true belief. SO the conjunction of the first 999 is true, but from that you can deduce that the final one will know win because of closure. But obviously you don't know that. Maybe redefining closure??

This might be an argument for scepticism. In lottery cases there is an incredibly high likelihood of being true. Maybe then, this would lead to an infallibilist notion of knowledge. However, this would then make it very difficult not to be a sceptic.

Reliabilism

It allows children and animals to have knowledge. Work this out.

How does this deal with gettier cases, according to Nick it does

How does it deal with the barn façade case. Only if the process is: vision+barn façade recognition in the given region: so it is unreliable, but this leads to the generality problem. It looks a bit too ad hoc.

Just like all externalist theories, it would reject the KK principle:

- **Maybe that is good because KK leads to infinite regress**
- **It is in general the case that responses to the sceptic seem a bit unsatisfying.**
 - **You give up quite a lot, it blocks the sceptic's argument but does not really vindicate you, you are almost making a concession to the sceptic.**

The notion of justification might be normative notion, a badge of approval which goes on certain beliefs. Maybe, it is hard to square this kind of normativity with a naturalistic universe – a universe that consists out of atoms etc.

Reliabilism seems to fit much more easily in a naturalistic universe.

Generality problem

Some philosophers argue that it is very difficult to determine what the belief-formation process is in any given situation, how general should this be? In the case of Henry, if you argue that the belief formation process is sight then it clearly leads to the wrong thing. However, if you argue that the belief-formation process is barn-shaped-object-discrimination, then it probably does lead to the right results. More generally, you could make it even more specific, my looking at my screen right now on April 4th 18:45.5423 2025 only happens once and therefore is a very reliable mechanism. Yet, most people would not allow this as one of the mechanisms that is reliable because then any true belief would count as knowledge.

Initially, externalists seem to have an easy objection to this. The whole point of externalism was that they did not have to internally justify their beliefs. Reliabilists do not have to tell you which process is reliable, only that there is a process which is reliable. However, even if you tell the reliabilist all the conditions under which someone

forms a certain belief, they could still not tell you which process is the right belief-formation process.

The generality problem then is that the level of generality seems to determine how reliable a process is. If it is very specific, it is very reliable, either a 0 or a 1. But if it is very general, then it gets much less reliable.

One response is by arguing that it is also a problem for internalists. The reliabilist could say that the process is: forming belief B on the basis of evidence E. Of course, the generality problem does not go away. It is now a question how general the evidence E should be (me seeing something at a certain date and time while someone else is sleeping at the other side of the earth could be evidence). However, the reliabilist could now say that every account of knowledge which relies on justification has the generality problem.

Easy knowledge

If I see that the wall is red, then that is reliable. But if I then from that deduce that the wall is not white shined on by a red light, it suddenly seems a very weird deduction. Contrast this with Moore: I have hands therefore I am not a brain in a vat. But reliabilism cannot, like Nozick, deny closure so this is a serious problem.

This leaves us with a dilemma: do we need to know that a process is reliable before getting knowledge from it?

- If yes, knowledge seems impossible (internalism leads to scepticism)
- If no, knowledge seems too easy

Clairvoyance

Bonjour argues that reliabilism is not sufficient for a justification of a belief by giving the example of a clairvoyant:

“Norman, under certain conditions that usually obtain, is a completely reliable clairvoyant with respect to certain kinds of subject matter. He possesses no evidence or reasons of any kind for or against the general possibility of such a cognitive power, or for or against the thesis that he possesses it. One day Norman comes to believe that the President is in New York City, though he has no evidence either for or against this belief. In fact the belief is true and results from his clairvoyant power, under circumstances in which it is completely reliable.”

Is Norman's belief that the president is in New York City justified? Bonjour tries to show that a belief formed through a reliable process (clairvoyance) can still lack justification.

Bonjour thinks that for Norman's belief to be justified, he needs more epistemic justification. If Norman does not have any evidence that his clairvoyance is a reliable process, his belief that the president is in New York City is not justified. This demonstrates that the reliabilist condition alone is not sufficient to justify a belief.

One could argue, however, that our intuition is wrong in this case. Firstly, it is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to imagine that Norman would not have any evidence whatsoever for or against his belief. We have all sorts of evidence for or against the belief formation processes that we have. Secondly, there is a reason that Bonjour talks about clairvoyance: it is really hard to imagine. Bonjour, in his paper, first gives several other examples of cases which are more intuitive. Maybe he did this to prepare the reader to more easily accept his intuition about clairvoyance. However, we do not necessarily have the same intuitions about more realistic cases, such as perfect pitch or simple arithmetic. In the same way that beliefs just pop up in the mind of the clairvoyant. The sum of 2 and 3 simply comes to us effortlessly, without requiring deliberate reflection or reasoning. Possibly, clairvoyance is like basic arithmetic. Because it is so difficult to imagine what clairvoyance would be like for the clairvoyant, it is hard to judge whether it would be similar to how one knows that 2 plus 3 is 5. If clairvoyance would be like basic arithmetic, our intuition might disagree with Bonjour. Therefore, we probably should not completely trust our intuition in this case and maybe even, as Srinivasan argues, accept the clairvoyant justification for the belief.

What implications does clairvoyancy have for internalists?

Thermometer

Another counterexample with which the intuition is clearer is one given by Pritchard:

“Temp forms his beliefs about the temperature in the room by consulting a thermometer. His beliefs, so formed, are highly reliable, in that any belief he forms on this basis will always be correct. Moreover, he has no reason for thinking that there is anything amiss with this thermometer. But the thermometer is in fact broken, and is fluctuating randomly within a given range. Unbeknownst to Temp, there is an agent hidden in the room who is in control of the thermostat whose job it is to ensure that every time Temp consults the thermometer the “reading” on the thermometer corresponds to the temperature in the room.”

This is similar to the benevolent demon from Goldman:

Imagine that there is a benevolent demon who arranges things in such a way that beliefs formed by wishful thinking are reliably true. Percy, who has no clairvoyant powers, forms the belief, through wishful thinking, that the president is in New York City.

The benevolent demon then makes it so that the president is actually in New York City. Is Percy's belief that the president is in New York City justified? I think that our intuition is more clearly 'no' in this case. The difference between this counterexample and Bonjour's clairvoyance scenario is that we usually do not think that wishful thinking is a reliable process. Whereas it is possible that clairvoyance is similar to basic arithmetic or perfect pitch, that is not the case for wishful thinking. Therefore, for the clairvoyance scenario it is easier to maintain that clairvoyance is actually a reliable process. If our intuition tells us that 2 plus 3 is indeed 5, or that the statement "the president is in New York City" is true, it is still possible to have these beliefs not justified. If the process of belief formation is merely wishful thinking, and if we intuitively regard wishful thinking as not being a justifying belief formation process, then the beliefs formed in this way are not justified. Even if a benevolent demon intervenes to ensure that these beliefs are reliably true, they remain intuitively unjustified. This shows that the reliabilist condition is not sufficient to justify a belief.

New evil demon

To show that the reliabilist condition is also not necessary for the justification of a belief, consider the following two worlds, w1 and w2. In both the worlds, a five-year old child, Max, has exactly the same experiences and goes through exactly the same reasoning processes. As a result, Max forms the same beliefs in both worlds. However, an evil demon ensures that Max's experiences are misleading in w1. In w2, all Max's experiences are true. Proponents on the counterexample argue that Max in w1 and w2 is the same with respect to the justification of his beliefs. Even though Max is different externally in w1 and w2, he is the same with respect to justification. Even though Max's experiences in w1 are not very reliable – the evil demon makes them wrong – his beliefs are just as justified as the beliefs of Max in w2. It seems like the justification is not dependant on the external state of affairs but on the internal state. Max beliefs are, even in w1, justified. Consequently, the reliabilist condition is also not necessary for the justification of a belief.

John Grecko counterargument: Dean martin is Italian american

Maria believes that Dean Martin is Italian, so it is a true belief. We have many beliefs that you no longer know how you acquired but you just kind of believe. She got it from testimony from her mother. However, her mother is usually very wrong about nationalities of people, she is unreliable.

Imagine a duplicate of maria, who also believes that Dean Martin is Italian, but she got it from a very reliable source like Wikipedia.

Now these people are intrinsically alike, they both know it and got the belief a long long time ago. Yet, it seems reasonable that they are not the same. The way you got the belief matter, not just internal stuff matters but also external stuff matters.

One could argue, however, Max in w1 and w2 is not the same with respect to the justification of his beliefs. Although, intuitively, they are the same because Max has exactly the same experiences and belief formation processes in both worlds, it is defensible to deny this claim. Therefore, to support this proposition, consider the following scenario. Two people, A and B, both live in w1, the evil demon world. "A, who is a good reasoner, i.e., reasons in accordance with the canons of inductive inference, and B, who engages in confused reasoning, wishful thinking, reliance on emotional attachments, guesswork, etc." (Cohen, 1984, p. 283). According to reliabilism, the beliefs of A and B are both unjustified as they are formed through unreliable processes. Intuitively, however, are the beliefs of A not more epistemically justified. Under the reliabilist approach, the beliefs of A and B would be equally justified but, clearly, there is a difference between them with regards to justification. Internally, they are different. This seems to suggest that the justification is dependent on the internal reasoning rather than the external state of affairs. This supports the idea that Max's beliefs are equally justified in w1 and w2.

Another example is this one, this also argues in favour of mentalism, the thesis that what ultimately justifies any belief is some mental state of the epistemic agent holding that belief:

Bob and Ray are sitting in an air-conditioned hotel lobby reading yesterday's newspaper. Each has read that it will be very warm today and, on that basis, each believes that it is very warm today. Then Bob goes outside and feels the heat. They both continue to believe that it is very warm today. But at this point Bob's belief is better justified. Comment: Bob's justification for the belief was enhanced by his experience of feeling the heat, and thus undergoing a mental change which so to speak "internalized" the actual temperature. Ray had just the forecast to rely on. (Conee and Feldman 2001, p. 236)

Transitivity and indistinguishability

Lastly, an argument against internalism (more for accessibilism):

Imagine a long line of brains in vats from 1 to 1,000,000. Each one has only a one pixel difference with the one before it, otherwise they are completely identical. No brain can detect a one pixel difference. But while brain 1 is having the experience of a tree, brain 1,000,000 is having the experience of a bowling ball. (Tim Williamson)

By transitivity, because brain 1's internal state is the same as brain 2's and so on, brain 1's internal state is also equal to brain 1,000,000's internal state. Yet, they are clearly completely different. And this is supported by the new evil demon scenario. Maybe the internal states are not transitive, mentalism could easily reject this because they could say that indistinguishability does not make the same mental state.