IS JUSTIFIED TRUE BELIEF KNOWLEDGE?

By Edmund L. Gettier

VARIOUS attempts have been made in recent years to state necessary and sufficient conditions for someone's knowing a given proposition. The attempts have often been such that they can be stated in a form similar to the following:

- (a) S knows that P IFF
- (i) P is true,
- (ii) S believes that P, and
- (iii) S is justified in believing that P.

For example, Chisholm has held that the following gives the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge:²

- (b) S knows that P
- (i) S accepts P,
- (ii) S has adequate evidence for P, and
- (iii) P is true.

Ayer has stated the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge as follows:³

- (c) S knows that P
- IFF

IFF

- (i) P is true,
- (ii) S is sure that P is true, and
- (iii) S has the right to be sure that P is true.

I shall argue that (a) is false in that the conditions stated therein do not constitute a *sufficient* condition for the truth of the proposition that S knows that P. The same argument will show that (b) and (c) fail if 'has adequate evidence for 'or 'has the right to be sure that 'is substituted for 'is justified in believing that 'throughout.

I shall begin by noting two points. First, in that sense of 'justified' in which S's being justified in believing P is a necessary condition of S's knowing that P, it is possible for a person to be justified in believing a proposition that is in fact false. Secondly, for any proposition P, if S is justified in believing P, and P entails Q, and S deduces Q from P and accepts Q as a result of this deduction, then S is justified in believing Q. Keeping these two points in mind, I shall now present two cases

² Roderick M. Chisholm, *Perceiving: a Philosophical Study*, Cornell University Press (Ithaca, New York, 1957), p. 16.

¹ Plato seems to be considering some such definition at *Theaetetus* 201, and perhaps accepting one at *Meno* 98.

³ A. J. Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge, Macmillan (London, 1956), p. 34.