Knowledge and Reality, Lecture 07

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Short Version

- In cases involving accurate beliefs under oppressive circumstances, reliability is enough for rationality.
- So internalism is false as applied to these rather important actual cases.

Three Cases

1. Instinctive correct belief.
2. Instinctive correct belief which persists despite counter-evidence.
3. False belief that matches lots of testimony.

Three Rival Theories

- Internalism.
- This is incompatible with all of the cases.

Three Rival Theories

- Process reliabilism, with the defeater condition.
- This is incompatible with the second case.

Three Rival Theories

- I don't know of anyone who has this view, but the third case seems designed to oppose a view that someone probably should have.
- Call it the generous view of rationality.

Three Rival Theories

Here's how the 'generous' view (my term) works. A belief is rational iff it is:

1. Formed by a reliable process; or
2. Properly based in the evidence.

Three Rival Theories

No one has this view, but it seems interesting because it gets a lot of cases right, especially evil demon cases.

- But it gets the third of Srinivasan's cases wrong.

Case Judgments

What do **you** think about the three cases?

Argument Structure

What role do the cases play in Srinivasan's theory?

1. Trigger snap reactions that theory is judged against?
2. Make us reflect on what we want a theory of good belief for?

Argument Structure

- My (idiosyncratic) view is that 1 isn't a very good reason to think about cases like these.
- But 2 could be a good reason.

Cases and Principles

What general lessons about belief can we draw from reflection on these kinds of cases?

Cues

On the next slide is one kind of argument I think can be drawn from these cases (not sure if it's a fair reading of the paper though).

Cues

1. Rational, justified belief is a matter of doing well in believing.
2. Doing well in believing, for creatures like us, involves picking up on subtle cues.
3. This is often something that is not available to consciousness, or available to reasoning.
4. So rationality isn't just about reasoning from conscious states.

Racists and Clairvoyants

To end, let's look at Srinivasan's argument that her examples generalise to promote a simple, or what she calls **radical** externalism.

- I found this part of the argument rather odd.

Argument by Analogy

1. Nour is justified in believing her host is racist.
2. Nour's case is just like Bonjour's case of Norman.
3. So Norman is justified in his clairvoyant beliefs.

Argument by Analogy

- Why should we believe premise 2 here?
- I know why an **internalist** should believe it, by stipulation the cases are pretty similar from the inside, but why should an **externalist** believe it?

Disanalogies

- The Nour example is pretty realistic, the Norman case is totally not.
- There is an explanation for why Nour could have this ability; there is no explanation for Norman.
- Nour's ability is widespread; Norman's is idiosyncratic.

Group Externalism

So here's a view that is untouched by Srinivasan's example, but agrees with Bonjour about Norman.

- A belief is justified iff it is produced by a process that is reliable, and widely shared among similar people.

Group Externalism

This could obviously do with some more care about the details - I literally just made it up - but it feels more natural given the Marxist motivations to think about groups than individual reliability.

What is Knowledge?

Question: What conditions are both **necessary** and **sufficient** for knowledge.

Necessary Conditions

- These conditions are needed for knowledge.
- In any case of knowledge, these conditions obtain.

Sufficient Conditions

- These conditions suffice for knowledge.
- If you meet all of them, you know.

Dream

Some conditions such that:

- Each of them on their own is necessary.
- Between them, they are sufficient.

Example

The following are all necessary conditions on being a square, and between them they are sufficient.

- Quadrilateral.
- Equal sides.
- Equal angles.

Analysis

In this way we've analysed the concept of being a square, just like a chemist might analyse water into Hydrogen and Oxygen.

- Can this kind of analysis, modeled on the great successes of early C20 chemistry, work for more concepts than geometric ones?
- Can it work for knowledge?

Spoiler Alert

No

A Theory Schema

S knows that p iff the following conditions are met:

- S believes that p.
- p is true.
- S's belief is rational/justified.

JTB

In short, S has a Justified True Belief that p.

- This became known as the JTB theory.

JTB

- Fun fact: although it gets talked about a lot, it's not clear anyone ever held exactly that theory.
- The terminology comes from Ed Gettier's 1963 paper "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?".
- But Gettier is using "justified" as a shorthand for a few different things that could go in place of third condition.

Gettier

The short paper you've seen is one of the most cited in contemporary philosophy.

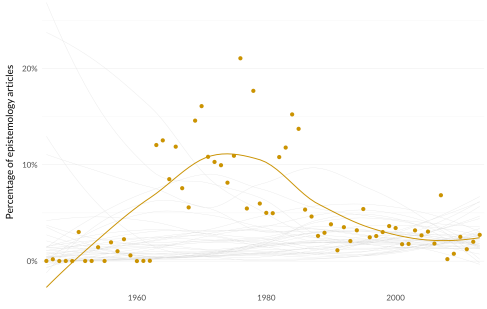
- It launched the "Gettier problem", which was the problem of either adding to, or replacing, one of those three conditions to get the analysis right.
- Nowadays the general view is that the problem can't be solved, but it was a big deal.

The Gettier Problem

You'll often see people say that this was what epistemologists talked about in the late 20C.

- Pasnau very often alludes to this, for example.
- I don't think the data backs this up.

Some Data



Percentage of epistemology articles each year that were on Gettier problem

Two Cases

I'm going to go over one case from Gettier, and one from the 9th century philosopher Dharmattara.

Gettier Example

- Smith believes, on good evidence, that Brown is in Barcelona.
- Brown is not in Barcelona.
- Smith has just learned in logic class that from A, we can always infer A or B.
- So Smith infers Brown is in Barcelona or he's in Bordeaux.
- By complete coincidence, Brown is in Bordeaux.

Question

Does Smith know that Brown is in Barcelona or Bordeaux.

Generalisation

- Take any justified false belief that p.
- Imagine the believer infers both $p \vee q$ and $p \vee \neg q$.
- One of these is true!
- Is it a piece of knowledge.

Dharmattara Example

- A traveller sees a black cloud the other side of a hill.
- It looks like smoke, and he infers that it is smoke.
- By a well known rule, he infers there is a fire over the hill.
- There is a fire, but that's not smoke.
- It's the swarm of flies that have gathered over the fire.

Question

Does the traveller know that there is a fire over the hill?

Lesson from Dharmottara

Causation isn't enough.

A Proposed Theory

S knows that p just in case

- S believes that p.
- p is true.
- S's belief is rational/justified.
- S's belief is caused by p.

Problem

The traveler's belief satisfies all these conditions!

Lesson from Gettier

Linda Zagzebski pointed out that the original example worked against a very broad range of theories.

Zagzebski

Consider a theory that says S knows that p just in case

- S believes that p.
- p is true.
- S's belief has feature F, where F (a) is preserved by logical inference, and (b) does not imply truth.

Zagzebski

For any F whatsoever, you can do a Brown in Barcelona example.

- Make the belief that Brown is in Barcelona have feature F.
- Make it be true (but completely unknown) that Brown is in Bordeaux.
- Then Brown is in Barcelona or Bordeaux will be F.
- But it won't be knowledge.

Two Ways Out

1. Make F not be closed under logical inference.
2. Make F imply truth.

- These are not incompatible; you could do both!

For Next Time

Look at some theories that take one or both of these options.