

Philosophy 183
Theory of Knowledge
Lecture Notes

RZ

Sept 2022

Introduction Sept 26 2022

From Plato, knowledge has been treated as "**Justified True Belief (JTB)**" such that

S knows that P if and only if:

- P
- S believes that P
- S is justified in believing that P

Until Meusieur Gettier in 1962...these conditions are not jointly sufficient.

Two approaches in solving this problem:

- Conservative: not jointly sufficient, we have to add!
- Non-conservative: some or all of the JTB analysis is BS.

but there are always counterexamples...are the counterexamples, in some ways, the same?

The Traditional JTB Account Sept 28 2022

In *Theaetetus*, Plato shows that the first two conditions (knowledge is true belief) are not sufficient for knowledge by giving complicated examples. A simpler one: at gaming table, "it's gonna be 6!" and it turns out to be 6.

Later, Theaetetus offers to add the third condition "with an account" or "logos." With the example of the first syllable of Socrates' name - so. Knowing the first syllable is kinda having an account (or constituent)- which is making the sound of s and o.

The Socratic dialogue above gives us a way to "add a third condition" to a true belief to make knowledge, though Williamson claims that we cannot do so because we cannot make the third condition without mentioning the subject's feature. Maybe it's a mistake to try to fill out the third blank! However, this is what philosophers were up to in the entirety of 20th century.

Overall, Plato set a tone for answering this question "how would we know?" However, this "filling in the black approach" could be wrong by Williamson.

Let's leap into the 20th century! Philosophers who support the JTB account: C. I. Lewis, A. J. Ayer, R. Chisholm. Among these philosophers, none rejects the truth condition - a view that know is factive ("S knows that P" entails P). However, there are disagreements regarding the belief condition (Lewis uses "belief", Ayer uses "sure", etc). Overall, less common to the JTB account than expected... :)

The third condition: Lewis thinks that justification comes in when you ask the question "how do you know?" Ayer starts in the same way, but ends in claiming that we establish the right to believe, referring to the fortune-teller on lottery numbers. They are all proponents of the JTB account, but the justification condition is drastically different.

Continued Analysis of JTB Account Oct 3 2022

Recall the current account for S know that P iff:

For Gettier, the most standard JTB

- P
- S believes that P
- S is justified in believing P

For Ayer, an specific account of JTB

- P
- S is sure that P
- S has the right to be sure that P

Let's go into Radford, who targetted Ayer's account. Some the accounts he's making: the justification condition is not necessary. "S knows P does not entail that S is sure about P" or entails "S knows that S knows P."

Radford's approach through linguistic confidence: we examine how we commonly use the word "know" in daily lives, or the meaning of the word "know."

The most interesting example being the French-Canadian Jean - where another English Canadian forces Jean into a bet about knowing English history - a matter of personal credence (strength of belief) or betting behaviour. Why betting? Remember the Bayesian stuff - this shows personal

credence! Jean resists betting since he has low credence and not sure that he knows any English history, but he did get a couple questions (almost) right! Since he only inverted two digits, isn't it a case that he knows when James I died? It seems like he learned the information somehow, retained it somehow, and presented it. Jean still knows something when he's not sure!

So Radford rejects the second point of Ayer: "S is sure that P" is now not necessary. However, when Radford uses the word sure, he invites his readers to consider betting behaviour on credence and belief. Radford proposes that knowledge is accessible without being sure when it's hard to grasp, but aren't beliefs also hard to grasp? He makes a good case against Ayer, but maybe not Gettier.

Platinga Oct 5 2022

Context for Platinga: 20th century philosophers have incoherent view on the theory of knowledge. He claims that having justification as a condition is BAD.

In the beginning, Platinga quotes everything contemporary and claim they are confusing, offers 4 themes in the studies around TOK.

- pervasive place of justification - it's necessary and almost sufficient!
- justification is a matter of responsibility and fulfillment of epistemic duty
- justification for belief = fitting the believer's evidence
- the internalist connection - Lewis' idea of knowledge - knowledge having to do with the reason you think OR an awareness of the thing you believe. You can't just say the true lottery number and claim it to be knowledge - needs to be responsible inside you

Therefore, Platinga made it incomprehensible since he wants to show that these philosophers' views are incoherent. We saw from Lewis to Ayer, they all have a notion of justification - if you have the right to, it's kinda justified.

Platinga thinks that the early modern epistemology were not confused - **deontological** conception of justification, which implies internalism about justification. Therefore, internalism is integrated into the early modern epistemology.

Deontological meaning: "deon" = duty & responsibility. In ethics it means thinking of the actions themselves as opposed to the consequences, but in epistemology refers to a duty of coming to a view, or a justification. In contrast to consequentialist, who focus on the outcome of actions. If one is a deontologist, it makes sense to be an internalist - the idea that a person knows the thing that justifies their beliefs.

Continued Platinga Oct 10 2022

Classical Epistemology

Platinga, again, points out the incoherence of justification in the 20th century philosophers with the theories of Locke and Descartes. He points out that all justification is internal states. Ex. why did you open the window? I'm too warm! Although it may be hard for others to know, the person him/herself knows the justification as an internal state.

Internalism:

- You are aware of the justification for your belief
- you are aware of it in a special way
- justification is internal state

In classical epistemology, the deontological justification implies internalism - that's why their view was coherent.

For these philosophers, there is a very close connection between blameworthiness and failure to do one's duty. However, Platinga argues that we cannot blame a properly function person for doing what she non-culpably takes to be their duty. "A person is properly blamed...disapproval iff she fails to do her duty." To avoid this contradiction, classical epistemologist must hold that there is a large class of cases that we can see something is wrong/unjustified.

Some suspicion: Going back to Locke - does the word "knowledge" appear in the text? As for Descartes, he was not worried about "cognitio", rather worried about "scientia" in the *Meditation*, as science needs the highest level of certainty. Plantinga may used these passages too quick, as it is not clear they really meant knowledge in their writing.

The "just" part in the justification comes from the Latin word *ius*, meaning law & justice. Justification is therefore the action of giving justice.

Continued Platinga Oct 12 2022

Alston uses a "utilitarianism" for knowledge that we can increase the utility of knowledge - emphasize on the consequence - therefore not deontological. Therefore also Alston has no place for internalism. NOT coherent!

Some Commentary on Platinga

Justification is something we know only to a certain extent. Killed someone? I did it for self-defense! Calling something justified means it carries a non-negative legal status - therefore highly general.

When we take the word "justified" to other places, it is made general to imply a positive status. In TOK, we take a positive status from the standpoint of knowledge - make it favourable into

a case of knowing. That's not an analysis...To make a positive status means we need to lay out the condition for this status.

The JTB proposal is conformed to a certain form of an account. If we have the notion of justification in the legal sense, we necessarily have internalism. It is therefore natural to have disagreement on the word justification, as it was always used as the broadest legal sense. Moreover, it's not clear that the classical epistemologists were thinking about knowledge in our case - Descartes' *Discourse* is targeted towards scientia, not general knowledge. Platinga's claim therefore sounds like a distortion.

It is not necessary to have justification since knowledge isn't necessarily the result of our investigation. This also responds to Platinga's response on classical epistemology. He also points out the knowledge has nothing to do with our inquiry.