PHL 243- Theory of Knowledge

A comprehensive guide to epistemology

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❖ **Traditional Analysis of Knowledge:** knowledge is justified true belief [JTB]
    S knows **x** IFF **x** is a **JTB**.

❖ **Gettier Cases:** problems with the JTB theory of knowledge. That is, S has a justified true belief B, but not knowledge.

> **examples:**
  - **John looks at the clock that says 4:00 pm.** John has a JTB that the clock is working and that it is in fact, 4:00 pm. **But the clock, in fact is not working.** It just happens to be in the right position at 4:00 pm. John is right, but such is the nature of epistemic luck, **not knowledge.**

  - **S believes that J owns a Ford** [S sees J drive everyday to work with the Ford, J has explicitly told S that it is his Ford]. S has a JTB for: **"[1] There is someone in the office who owns a Ford".** **But J doesn't own a Ford**, it is a rental car and he has been lying to S all this time. **In this case, S is right about [1] because T owns a Ford coincidentally.** Hence, not knowledge.

  - Harris drives by a field and has a JTB for seeing a sheep. Harris forms a belief **[1] There is a sheep in the field.** But it is infact a bear disguised as a sheep. Coincidentally, he happens to be right because there is a sheep in the field out of view.

❖ **Modifications of the traditional analysis of knowledge:**
  > **The No False Grounds Theory:**

  NFG.   S knows p = df. (i) S believes p; (ii) p is true; (iii) S is justified in
             believing p; (iv) All of S's grounds for believing p are true.

  G1.   The grounds for a belief include just those other beliefs that are
             explicit steps in the chain of inferences leading to the belief.

  G2.   The grounds for a belief include all beliefs that play any role in the
             formation of the belief, including "background assumptions" and
             presuppositions.

  > **Objections:**

  Smith has two independent sets of reasons for thinking that someone in his office owns a Ford. One set has to do with Nogot. Nogot says he owns a Ford, and so on. As usual, Nogot is merely pretending. But Smith also has equally strong reasons having to do with Havit. And Havit is not pretending. Havit does own a Ford, and Smith knows that he owns a Ford.

  - Smith knows that somebody in the office owns a Ford. But his grounds for believing that Nogot owns a Ford is false.

> **No Defeaters Theory:**

ND.   S knows p = df. (i) S believes p; (ii) p is true; (iii) S is justified in be-
         lieving p; (iv) There is no true proposition t such that, if S were
         justified in believing t, then S would not be justified in believing p.
         (No truth defeats S's justification for p.)

> **Defeater examples:** the fact that clock isn't working properly.
> **Objections:**

Example 3.6:   The Radio Case

Smith is sitting in his study with his radio off and Smith knows that it is
off. At the time, Classic Hits 101 is playing the great Neil Diamond's great
song "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon." If Smith had the radio on and tuned
to that station, Smith would hear the song and know that it is on.

- The truth that the radio is playing "...." is a defeator for the fact that the
radio is off. The likeliest way for the defeator to be true is if the radio is
actually on. But if that were true, then you would not be justified to believe
that the radio is on. **So you do NOT know that radio is off by account of the
theory because of the defeator. But you do know that the radio is off.** Hence, it
is not knowledge but the according to the theory but we know that it is
knowledge.

>**[D2]** D is a defeater of S's justification, J for believing B iff 1) S is
justified by J in believing B and 2) D is a true proposition such that the
conjunction (J and D) does not support B.

> **Objection1:**
[B1] Ted believes that John owns a ford or Marie is in Barcelona.
[J] Ted's justifications include: He sees John drive the Ford everyday to work
and John tells him that he owns a Ford.
[D] But John does not own a Ford.
[F] John is with Marie sipping tea in Barcelona.

-[D and J] do not support the truth-assertive part of B1.
-S is justified by J in believing B.
-So D is a defeator for J.
-By accounts of the no defeaters theory, it is not knowledge.
-But it is knowledge, because John knows that Marie is in Barcelona.

> **Objection2:** D1] Ted's mom said Ted didn't steal the book. D2] Ted's mom is a
lunatic. Defeators and restorers.

> **Infinite Regress Argument**
- Justified Basic Belief:

JB.   B is a justified basic belief = df. B is justified, but is not justified on
      the basis of any other beliefs.

Argument 4.1:   The Infinite Regress Argument
   1-1. Either there are justified basic beliefs or each justified belief has
         an evidential chain that either
         (a)   terminates in an unjustified belief
         (b)   is an infinite regress of beliefs
         (c)   is circular
   1-2. But beliefs based on unjustified beliefs are not themselves justi-
         fied, so no justified belief could have an evidential chain that
         terminates in an unjustified belief (that is, not (a)).
   1-3. No person could have an infinite series of beliefs, so no justi-
         fied belief could have an evidential chain that is an infinite
         regress of beliefs (that is, not (b)).
   1-4. No belief could be justified by itself, so no justified belief could
         have an evidential chain that is circular (that is, not (c)).
   _____
   1-5. There are justified basic beliefs (1-1)–(1-5).

Foundationalism: The argument is sound. There are justified basic beliefs,
and they are the foundation upon which all our other justified beliefs rest.

Coherentism: The argument goes wrong at premise (1-4). The justification
for one proposition can be another, which is itself justified by still others.
More generally, a person's belief is justified when it fits together with the
person's other beliefs in a coherent way. A belief is thus justified by a whole
system, of which it is a part. Hence, a belief is partially justified by itself, and
(1-4) is false.

Skepticism: Because neither foundationalism nor coherentism is at all plau-
sible, and there is no other place at which the argument goes wrong, it must
go wrong right at the start when it assumes that there are justified beliefs.
There cannot be any justified beliefs.

> **Foundationalism [Cartesian Foundationalism]**

CF1.   Beliefs about one's own inner states of mind (appearance beliefs)
       and beliefs about elementary truths of logic are justified basic beliefs.
CF2.   Justified basic beliefs are justified because we cannot be mistaken
       about them. We are "infallible" about such matters.
CF3.   The rest of our justified beliefs (e.g., our beliefs about the exter-
       nal world) are justified because they can be deduced from our
       basic beliefs.

> **Objections:**
> **1) We are not infallible to our own Mental States**

Example 4.8:   The Frying Pan

You are walking toward a counter that has an electric frying pan on it. You have just been told to be careful of the pan because it is very hot. As you approach the counter, you trip and put your hand out to stop your fall. Your hand unfortunately comes down right on the pan. You immediately pull it away, thinking:

5.   I am now having a sensation of extreme heat.

In fact, as you soon realize, the pan is actually not on. You did not feel heat at all.[11]

2)

Argument 4.2:   The Beliefs About Inner States Are Rare Argument

2-1.   People rarely base their beliefs about the external world on beliefs about their own inner states.

2-2.   If Cartesian foundationalism is true, then external world beliefs are well founded only if they are based on beliefs about one's own inner states.

2-3.   If Cartesian foundationalism is true, then people rarely have well-founded beliefs about the external world. (2-1), (2-2)

2-4.   It is not true that people only rarely have well-founded beliefs about the external world. (*The Standard View*)

2-5.   Cartesian foundationalism is not true. (2-3), (2-4)

D. Conclusions on Cartesian Foundationalism

It is clear that Cartesian foundationalism is not a satisfactory theory, given the truth of *The Standard View*. There are the following problems:

1.   Beliefs about one's own mental states are not immune from error. So if beliefs about these matters are basic, whatever it is that makes them justified has to be something other than this property. We need a different explanation of what makes basic beliefs justified. So (CF2) must be revised.

2.   Not *all* beliefs about one's own mental states are basic justified beliefs. Beliefs about one's own mental states can be derived from other beliefs, and thus can be nonbasic. Beliefs about these matters can be unjustified.

3.   The things that Cartesian foundationalists count as basic are things that in ordinary circumstances we do not believe at all. It seems that the starting point for our beliefs is ordinary observations of the world, not introspections. So (CF1) needs to be revised. (Of course, this point is controversial.)

4.   Much of what we know (according to *The Standard View*) cannot be deduced from what is basic. This is clearly true if our basic beliefs are beliefs about our own internal states. But even if we take spontaneous judgments about the external world to be basic, much of what we know goes beyond what can be deduced from that.

> Coherentism

C1. Only beliefs can justify other beliefs. Nothing other than a belief can contribute to justification.

C2. Every justified belief depends in part on other beliefs for its justification. (There are no justified basic beliefs.)[15]

CT1. S is justified in believing p iff p logically follows from the conjunction of everything S believes.

CT2. S is justified in believing p iff S's system of beliefs is coherent and includes a belief in p.

CT3. S is justified in believing p iff the coherence value of S's system of beliefs would be greater if it included a belief in p than it would be if it did not include that belief.

>Objections:

Argument 4.3: *The Alternative Systems Argument*

3-1. If (CT) is true, then a belief is justified iff it coheres with the believer's system of beliefs.

3-2. A person can make any selected belief cohere with his system of beliefs by properly adjusting the rest of the system to make it fit with that one.

3-3. If (CT) is true, then a person can make any selected belief justified by properly adjusting the rest of his beliefs. (3-1), (3-2)

3-4. But it is not the case that one can make any selected belief justified by properly adjusting the rest of one's beliefs.

3-5. (CT) is not true. (3-3), (3-4)

Argument 4.4: *The Isolation Argument*

4-1. If (CT) is true, then in all possible cases a belief is justified iff it coheres with the believer's system of beliefs. [Definition of coherentism]

4-2. MF's system of beliefs = MJ's system of beliefs. [Assumption about example]

4-3. MJ's belief that he is playing basketball coheres with his system of beliefs. [Assumption about example]

4-4. MF's belief that he is playing basketball coheres with his system of beliefs. (4-2), (4-3)

4-5. If (CT) is true, then MF's belief that he is playing basketball is justified. (4-1), (4-4)

4-6. But MF's belief is not justified. [Assumption about example]

_____

4-7. (CT) is not true. (4-5), (4-6)

Example 4.12: *The Psychology Experiment*

Lefty and Righty are in a psychology experiment. They are extremely similar people, with all the same relevant background beliefs. The experiment is one in which they see an image on a monitor and they form beliefs about what they see. They are told that they will see two lines on the monitor and they are to form a belief about which one is longer. They are both led to believe that the one on the right will be longer. The lines then appear on the monitors and they both believe that the one on the right is longer. However, expectations are playing a role. In fact, for one of them, Lefty, the one on the left is longer, and it looks that way. Lefty simply ignores the character of his experience and forms his belief entirely on the basis of what he was led to believe.

D. Conclusions on Coherentism

1. The main idea of coherentism can be given in two characteristic coherentist claims:

   C1. Only beliefs can justify other beliefs. Nothing other than a belief can contribute to justification.

   C2. Every justified belief depends in part upon other beliefs for its justification. (There are no justified basic beliefs.)

2. We have not yet found a suitable way to formulate the coherentist theory. Among the problems for coherentists are these: (a) Distinguishing sensibly among actual beliefs to characterize some as justified and some as unjustified; (b) saying what coherence actually is.

3. Many critics think that (C1) has been refuted by *The Isolation Argument*. This argument shows that experiences matter for justification.

> **Modest Foundationalism**
> **Causal Theory [20 mins in]**
> **Truth Tracking**
> **Proper Function**
> **Reliabilist Theory**

Exam 2 Outline

> **Pg. 109-119 [Skepticism I]**

> **Pg. 41-49 [Evidentialism]**

> **Pg. 130-155 *[Skepticism II]***

> **Pg. 157-166 *[Epistemology and Science]***

> **Pg. 182-189 *[REASONABLE DISAGREEMENTS]***

>**Evidentialism:**
EJ1. Proposition X is epistemically justified for S iff S's evidence supports X
(on balance, meaning the sum of all weights of justification).

-evidence: an indicator that something is true. Evidence by this theory:
mentally possed information.
-better than reliabilism? Brain vs brain?
-better than proper functionalism?

EJ2. Believing X is epistemically justified for S iff
1)X is EJ1 for S and
2)S bases belief in B on supporting evidence for B.

> Objections:
Practical vs epistemic justifications for **belief**.
 1) say you are drowning.
P1] I will soon drown.
You can get yourself to refrain from believing p1] due to wishful thinking.

Practical justification / wishful thinking would pose of problem for EJ2.
-Justified in believing with utility/ practical justification [if it helps you,
then it is justified]. But according to EJ2, it is not justified. That might
pose a problem.

2) Has no accounts for memory. An obvious fact like
 B1. A.L was a US President. Is not JTB according to EJ1 and EJ2 because you do
not have any current sensory evidence or memory to support B1. But it is a JTB.

3) Knowledge in the absence of evidence.
[b1] any red wagon is a wagon. [don't need any evidence to know that it is true]

4) Suppose smith is thinking abt a Sentence S1: Someone is smiling smugly.
Just because of a likable sentence, not because of any evidence. But that is not
a justified belief.
Now observes the following undoubtedly.
S2: Jones is smiling smugly.
S3: If Jones is, then someone is.

But Smith's belief of S1 is not epistemically justified, but the evidentialist
theory says it is. Smith has good reasons, but he is not using it to form his
belief. [opposes EJ1 and EJ2]

5) Suppose you are justified in believing S2. Then ~~S2 is true.

S4) it is not so that it is not so that it is not so that it is not so that Jones is smiling smugly. [~~~~S2]
You're not thinking about those negations, so it is beyond your cognitive limit. But your evidence supports it.
(EJ1) says: You are justified in believing S4 because you have evidence it. But it is beyond your cognitive ability (EJ2).

6) When you have conclusive evidence that disproves sth and you are not paying attention, your evidence still supports your epistemically irresponsible belief.

Pg. 130-155 *[Skepticism II]*
SKEPTICISM (II CH 7)

> The Problem of Induction

-Standard Argument: Seemingly supportive inductive argument from known premises
-problem1: What, if anything, gives justification to SIA conclusions?
-p1: What, if anything makes it rational to use SIA to seek truth.

> Hume's Problem: Reasoning in inductive inferences is not demonstrative. The conclusions could be false even though the premises are true.

> Hume's idea of IA:

PF.   The future will be like the past. (Or, somewhat more precisely, if x percent of the observed As have been Bs, then X percent of the unobserved As are Bs.)

Argument 7.5:   Hume's Argument
   5-1. If (PF) can be justified at all, then it can be justified either by a "demonstrative" argument or by a "moral" argument (an inference from observed facts).
   5-2. Only necessary truths can be justified by demonstrative arguments.
   5-3. (PF) is not a necessary truth.
   5-4. (PF) cannot be justified by a demonstrative argument. (5-2), (5-3)
   5-5. All moral arguments assume the truth of (PF).
   5-6. Any moral argument for (PF) would assume the truth of (PF). (5-5)
   5-7. Any argument for a principle that assumes the truth of that principle fails to justify that principle.
   5-8. (PF) cannot be justified by a moral argument. (5-6), (5-7)
   _____
   5-9. (PF) cannot be justified. (5-1), (5-4), (5-8)

> PF may be unreasonable to belief because it implies that trends do not break down.

> Inductive arguments are fallible.
> "Sound" in the sense that it is defendable. Not a technical sense.

> "its rational because it works" - utilitarian thing. Successful arguments.

> **Inductive Success Argument:**
P1. Mostly observed SIA conclusions have been true.
P2. Many SIA conclusions have been observed.

C. Most SIA conclusions are ture.

> Inductive Success Argument is itself an (inductive argument). Circular reasoning doesn't have to be bad. Like a tool helping itself, like a sharpening blade is not controversial.

> **Apriori defense of Inductive reasoning**

- PFR. Knowing X% of observed F's are G is a **good reason** to think that X% of all F's are G's.

> PFR. Knowing that things have been a certain way in the past gives you a good reason to believe that they will be that way in the future.[8]

> 5-3*. (PFR) is not a necessary truth.

-PFR is an a priori truth. It avoids the pitfalls of PF because it doesn't guarantee that inductive reasonings are never faulty. Doesn't guarantee a percent.

-the tea cup attack on apriori defense

TLR. Knowing that the tea leaves predict that p will be true provides good reason to believe that p will be true.

  - TLR has the same structure as PFR. It is the apriori defense of induction any better?

-Structure is not enough:
-All observed F's are G.
-Many varied F's have been observed.
Therefore, All F's are G;s.

-grew: X is observed before 2019 and green. Or X is not observed before 2019 and blue.
"X is grue". F1= emerald. G1= grue.
-if it is 2019, and all emeralds are green, they are grue. But emeralds would have to be blue after 2019 to be grue. We cannot conclude that All emeralds are grue.

-makes problem for PFR.

>Pragmatic Approach to Inductive Reasoning: (SIA is as good as its gonna get)

A. If anything will work to save the patient, the operation will.

- Red means you live or else you die.

B. If any bet will be successful, then a bet on red will be successful.

----------------------similar is true of induction

C. If anything will work to form accurate beliefs about unobserved
    things, induction will.

Pragmatists say that there are no guarantees of SIA. But if anything gets us to
the truth about the future, it will be SIA.

Pr1. If any inductive rule R1 works, then there is a patterns as:
R1 concludes X.
With mostly true conclusions.
Pr2. That pattern gives us SIA argument concluding X from R1 concludes X.
(if any inductive rule works then SIA works)

Pg. 152 - Attributor Contextualism
-Truth conditions depend on attributor context

Noon: S1 Art knows that the banks open saturday.
1pm : S2 Art does not know that.

If he is right in both situations, then the context for what counts as "knowing"
must change.

Skeptical Paradox:
Sx: R knows H
Sy: R does not know not SK (some skeptical scenario- brain in a vat)

Sz; R knows H only if not SK.

>Epistemology and Science

E	K	4	7
Card 1	Card 2	Card 3	Card 4
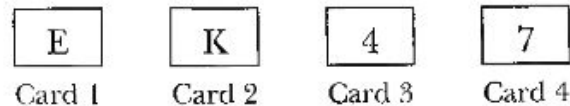
They are asked to identify which cards they must turn over to examine the other side in order to find out if there are any violations of the rule:

> If a card has a vowel on one side, then it has an even number on the other side.

[Solution]: need to check 1 and 4. There is no need fo check 2 and 3.

Question 2: Linda, the Bank Teller A second, much discussed example asks people to rank the likelihood of several propositions about a person given an initial description of that person.[3] The description is as follows: Linda is 31 years old, single, outspoken, and very bright. She majored in philosophy in college, and she was heavily involved in issues concerning discrimination and social justice. Given this description, they are asked to rank, in order of the probability that they are true, the following statements:

a. Linda is active in the feminist movement.
b. Linda is a bank teller.
c. Linda is a bank teller and is active in the feminist movement.

[Solution]: P(c) < P(a) and P(c) < P(b)

B) Argument for Human Irrationality:

Argument 8.1: The People Are Irrational Argument

1-1. People frequently give incorrect and unreasonable answers to questions such as those just described.
1-2. If (1-1) is true, then people are significantly irrational.
_____

1-3. People are significantly irrational. (1-1), (1-2)

> **Defending Human Rationality:**

    1) Evolutionary Argument: People must be rational because they have survived, and thrived in the evolutionary battle. If people's beliefs are systematically mistaken, they would not have been able to behave successfully.
    - beliefs that enhance survival need not be true or reasonable.

Pg. 182-189 *[REASONABLE DISAGREEMENTS]*

"**questio to be addressed concerns the extent to which it is possible lor rea sonable people to disagree. Perhaps relativists and absolutists differ over how much reasonable disagreement there can be.**

> **Maintaining Beliefs in the Light of disagreement**

-To say that your own beliefs are reasonable yet their competing beliefs are reasonable is to say the following:

a.   You have good reasons for your beliefs.
b.   They have good reasons for their competing beliefs.
c.   You are right and they are wrong.

> **The Relativist View:**

R7.   It is possible for a person to be justified in believing p while also being justified in believing that other people are justified in believing ~p.

> **Supportive: If J knows more than K, and J knows K's methodology is flawed but K isn't aware of K's flaws. It is then justified for J to believe in X, and that K is justified to believe ~X.**

Example 9.2:   Effective Treatments

Dr. J does a careful study to examine the effectiveness of drugs X, Y, and Z for treating some disease. The study indicates that X works best. Dr. J. has no other information relevant to the preferability of the three medications. Meanwhile, Dr. K has done a similar study and it indicated that Y works best. Neither researcher knows anything about the other's results, or even of the existence of the other study. Neither researcher is at all negligent for failing to know about the other's study. Each has good reason to think that his study was effectively designed and carried out.

At this point, we can accept each of the following:
1.   Dr. J is reasonably well justified in thinking that X works best.[10]
2.   Dr. K is reasonably well justified in thinking that Y works best.

> **Relativist View 2:**

R8. It is possible for a person to be justified in believing p, and justified in believing that other people are justified in believing ~p, and not have any reason to believe that his or her own reasons (or methods) are superior to those of the other people.

"I have my belief, you have yours, we are both justified, and our epistemic situations are comparable."

> **Absolutist View:**
  - Evidentialists will be committed to the view that the two doctors cannot be justified in believing different things on the basis of the same evidence.

  "You cannot reasonably think that your beliefs are justified by that evidence and that the others' competing beliefs are also justified by that evidence. And further, even if you have not shared all the evidence, once you concede that others have good reasons for their views, you must have good reason for thinking that they are mistaken if you are to be reasonable in maintaining your original beliefs."

> **Objections to the Absolutist View:**

Example 9.3:   Risky and Cautious

Risky and Cautious examine the evidence concerning a proposition, P, and they find that the evidence slightly supports it. Risky concludes that this is good enough evidence to believe P and believes it. Cautious concludes that believing on that amount of evidence is too risky. Cautious does not believe p. But each recognizes the legitimacy of the other's policy. They decide that each has a reasonable attitude toward p.

"And there is no way to modify the case so that Cautious would come to believe ~p on the basis of the evidence, unless they had a far more substantive disagreement about the nature of that evidence. So, even if correct, this is not a case of reasonable disagreement of the sort we have been seeking."

Examples such as Example 9.3 thus do not support any significant abandonment of the absolutist view. Perhaps they show that there is room for some reasonable differences in how much evidence is required in order to reasonably form a belief. But this does not come close to showing that there can be reasonable disagreements of the sort envisioned by (R8).

> Objection 2:

Example 9.4:   The Fork in the Road

Lefty and Righty are driving in separate cars to an important meeting. They drive at different times so that they do not see one another. There is a fork in the road. Each must take one of the forks. The directions did not mention the fork, they have no map or cell phone, and there is no one around to ask. Turning back is not an option. They must make a choice. Lefty chooses the left fork. Righty chooses the right fork. Later, upon hearing what has happened, Lefty says that Righty made a reasonable choice, although he, Lefty, was reasonable as well. Neither thinks his own choice was better than the other's.

Lefty and Righty had exactly the same information when they made their decisions. They made different decisions, and, at least at the later time, they each know that the other has made a reasonable decision. This shows that reasonable people can disagree, even when all die evidence is shared. This may seem to support (R8) and to refute absolutism.

> Class:

S1 and S2 are **peers** about X IFF S1 and S2 are about equally well informed and equally competent concerning X and they have shared info about X.

S1 and S2 are **mutually recognized** epistemic peers about X IFF

-S1 and S2 know that one another are epistemic peers about X.

-It is possible for mutually recognized ep peers about some X to have opposed epistemic justification attitude toward X.