

Attempt 3: Knowledge = true belief with a logos

Meno, an important background dialogue:

SOCRATES: I will tell you. A man who knew the way to Larissa, or anywhere else you like, and went there and guided others would surely lead them well and correctly?—Certainly.

SOCRATES: What if someone had had a correct opinion as to which was the way but had not gone there nor indeed had knowledge of it, would he not also lead correctly?—Certainly.

SOCRATES: And as long as he has the right opinion about that of which the other has knowledge, he will not be a worse guide than the one who knows, as he has a true opinion, though not knowledge.—In no way worse. (97a-c)

...

SOCRATES: For true opinions, as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man's mind, so that they are not worth much until one ties them down by (giving) an account of the reason why. And that, Meno my friend, is recollection, as we previously agreed. After they are tied down, in the first place they become knowledge, and then they remain in place. That is why knowledge is prized higher than correct opinion, and knowledge differs from correct opinion in being tied down. (97e-98a)

Structure

Theaetetus defines knowledge as a true belief with an account. Call this TBA. Socrates, in true mid-wife fashion, first helps Theaetetus deliver his theory, i.e., he develops the TBA by offering a theory about what accounts are, or at least, a theory about what things must be like if they have accounts. Once developed, Socrates and Theaetetus test whether TBA is a wind-egg by examining Socrates' proposed foundations for it. They find these foundations wanting. Socrates subsequently offers three different ways of characterizing what an account might be, and, in each case, they reject TBA.

TBA

Tht: Oh, yes, Socrates, that's just what I once heard a man say; I had forgotten, but now it's coming back to me. He said that it is true judgment with an account [logos] that is knowledge; true judgment without an account [logos] falls outside of knowledge. And he said that the things of which there is no account [logos] are not knowable (yes, he

actually called them that), while those which have an account [logos] are knowable.

Logos: It can be translated as 'statement', 'argument', 'speech', 'discourse'. It is a word you already know. Think of English words that contain a form of the word 'logos'.

Theaetetus claim that there are things with a logos. What does this mean? What are these 'things'? And what does it mean to say that there is a logos of them. Contrast:

1. Why did you come to believe that it is raining?
2. Why is it raining?

1 captures contemporary epistemologists' interest in justification. Many today believe that

- S knows that *p* if and only:
 - a. *p* is true
 - b. S believes that *p*
 - c. S has adequate justification that *p*

There are different theories about justification, about what it is and how much is required for knowledge. Some think that S's belief that *p* is justified if that belief was formed by a reliable mechanism. If anyone had infallible eyesight, then they would have a reliable way of forming at least some beliefs. Still others claim that S's belief that *p* is justified if S believes that *q* and *q* entails *p*. Some proponents of this view believe that there some basic beliefs that are either non-inferentially justified or not in need of justification at all. This view, *foundationalism*, argues for a dramatic distinction between two types of justified true belief.

The Dream Theory

Socrates first recounts a dream and then criticizes it. The basic idea:

1. There are two kinds of existents, complexes and simples.
2. "An account" is "an account of the complexes that analyses them into their simple components." The simple components do not have an account; they cannot be analyzed into anything simpler.
3. Knowledge of *P* = true belief about *P* with an account of *P* that analyses *P* into its simple components.