Knowledge: What is it?

Thiago X. de Melo

Outline

Introduction to ‘Conceptual Analysis’ and ‘counter-examples’

Truth, Belief and Knowledge

JTB: Justified True Belief

- Gettier vs. JTB
- Cornman, Lehrer and Pappas

What's a lie? (Intro to conceptual analysis)

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The analysis fails. Saying something false is *not sufficient* for lying.

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Note: There are further problems with this analysis. But our focus here will be on a conceptual analysis of **knowledge**.

Our question

What's knowledge?

Recall: knowledge implies truth and belief

- Someone knows that P only if P is true.
  (Truth is necessary for knowledge.)

[1] See slides of Jan 28—'Knowledge: Three things we know about it' for explanation.

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Note: since one can believe something false but one cannot know something false, knowledge and mere belief are different.[1]

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- Truth in this sense is an *objective* matter.

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- To believe something is to take that as true; to take a certain thought as corresponding to a fact in the world.
- Note that there is a difference between *believing* something and something *being true*. Someone can believe that the Earth is flat — that is, one can take the thought that the Earth is flat as true — even if that thought is not true.

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Optimistic Charlie Case : Charlie is optimistic. Everyday he wakes up believing that the weather will be really nice. He's usually wrong — in his city it rains a lot. But one day last year (say, Sept. 13), it turned out Charlie was right. It was a nice day.

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- What else then? Is there something else X that is also necessary to have knowledge, besides truth and belief? Is there something else X, such that: If someone knows P, then X is the case?
- If so, would this X + *belief* + *truth* be *sufficient for* having knowledge?

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- Suppose justification does *not* entail truth. This means that sometimes it's possible for someone to be justified in believing that P is true without P being actually true.
  - **However**, here we have another problem, namely, the **Gettier Cases**. Edmund Gettier argued that, if we assume that justification doesn't imply truth, then the *JTB analysis of knowledge must be wrong*.

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- In *Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?* Edmund Gettier argued that the JTB analysis is wrong from other two cases.

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Outline

Cornman, Lehrer and Pappas (**CLP**) propose another analysis of knowledge:

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Can you imagine a case where the analysis proposed by Cornman, Lehrer and Pappas fails?
Homework 2 presents the 'Fake barns case'. Is that a counterexample to CLP?