The Nature of Knowledge OUTLINE

This course will span **six lectures**. In these lectures, we will cover canonical readings in analytic epistemology. Via these readings, we will seek to answer two main questions: **(1) What is knowledge?**, and **(2) Why is it valuable?** Indeed, we will see that these two questions are deeply connected; what we think about one heavily influences what we should think about the other. The lectures will proceed as follows:

- 1. JTB I: Introduction to JTB & Gettier Cases
- 2. JTB II: Responses to Gettier
- 3. Justification I: Externalism
- 4. Justification II: Internalism
- 5. Rejecting Analysis I: Virtue Epistemology
- 6. Rejective Analysis II: Knowledge First

Lecture 1 JTB I: Introduction to JTB & Gettier Cases

1. Knowledge and True Belief

Consider the following argument from the *Meno* (97a-b)

Socrates: A man who knew the way to Larissa, or anywhere else you like, who went there and guided others there would surely lead them well?

Meno: Certainly.

S: What if someone had a true opinion about which way was the right way, but he hadn't gone there himself and wasn't acquainted with the place. Wouldn't he also lead the way correctly?

M: Certainly.

S: As long as he has the right opinion concerning that which other people know, he will not be a worse guide than one who knows. For he has a true opinion, though not knowledge.

M: So it seems.

S: So correct opinion is no less useful than knowledge?

Something seems wrong about this though. We *do* seem to value knowledge more highly than lucky guesses. Why?

According to Socrates, knowledge is "fastened" is the right kind of way to the cause of that knowledge (i.e. to the relevant fact). As he puts it, merely true belief could easily 'run away'. We could easily begin to belief falsely if we only accidentally believe truly.

In another dialogue, the *Theaetetus*, Socrates again considers this question. Here, Theaetetus argues that knowledge is <u>true belief, with</u> <u>a reason</u>. This is the precursor to our contemporary JTB account.

2. Justified True Belief

In contemporary debates, many are interested in giving an *analysis* of knowledge. That is, they seek to state the *necessary and sufficient* conditions for knowledge.

We can state the <u>JTB analysis of knowledge</u> as follows:

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S knows that p (where 'p' is a proposition) iff,
JTB1. S believes that p
JTB2. S is justified in believing that p
JTB3. It is true that p
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In much of the debate that ensues on this analysis, we will take for granted that, whatever it takes for S to believe that p, this is satisfied in the cases we're considering. We will also assume that p is true in every case. In other words, the debate will largely focus on the following questions:

- Are **JTB1-3** independently necessary and jointly sufficient for knowledge?
- What does it take to satisfy **JTB2**?

3. Gettier Cases

In 1963, Edmund Gettier publishes a brief, two-page paper with a series of counterexamples to the *sufficiency* of JTB. Each of these cases involves a subject *S* who, Gettier argues, satisfies each of the conditions **JTB1-3**. And yet, in each case, we have an intuition that it would be wrong to say that *S* knows that *p* (for the relevant *p*).

Case 1. 'The person who will get the job has 10 coins in her pocket.'

Smith and Jones are both up for the same job. Smith is told by her boss that Jones will get the job. Smith also earlier observed Jones put 10 coins in her pocket. So, Smith infers 'the person who will get the job has 10 coins in her pocket.' Smith has this belief (**JTB1**), and has this belief and this belief is justified (**JTB2**). As it happens, Smith is the one who gets the job; Smith has also forgotten that she also has 10 coins in her pocket. So Smith's belief is true (**JTB3**). But does she know?

Case 2. 'Either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona.'

Smith has good reason to believe that Jones owns a Ford. She's seen Jones drive her Ford to work, see Jones holding keys with a Ford fob on, and so on. Smith has no idea where Brown currently is. On the basis on her belief about Jones, Smith forms the belief 'either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona'. She therefore holds this belief (JTB1), and is justified in doing so given the logic of disjunction (JTB2). As it happens, Jones is currently *renting* a Ford because her car was in need of a service; and Brown is in fact travelling in Barcelona. So, it is true that either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona (JTB3). Does Smith *know* this?

From these, we can distil a general recipe for constructing a Gettier case:

<u>Step 1</u>. Construct a case where *S* has a justified *false* belief.

<u>Step 2</u>. Modify the case so that S's belief is luckily true (e.g. true, but not at all connected to S's justification for her belief).

NEXT WEEK: Responses to Gettier