THE ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE

THE TRADITIONAL ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE

A person, S, knows that P if and only if
(a) P is true,
(b) S believes that P, and
(c) S's belief that P is justified.

EDMUND GETTIER'S "IS JUSTIFIED TRUE BELIEF KNOWLEDGE?"

Gettier's cases are supposed to show that conditions (a), (b), and (c) are not sufficient for knowledge and thus that the traditional analysis of knowledge is inadequate. In particular, Gettier's cases are supposed to show that S's justification for believing that P is sometimes not properly connected to the fact that P (or to whatever it is that makes P true). Here are the cases:

I. THE COINS CASE

Smith is justified in believing that

(d) Jones is the man who will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his pocket.

From this, Smith legitimately infers that

(e) The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.

Since Smith is justified in believing that (d), and since the inference from (d) to (e) is legitimate, Smith is *justified* in *believing* that (e). Furthermore, (e) is *true*. Thus, Smith has a ***justified true belief*** that (e).

Yet Smith does *not* ***know*** that (e). For "unknown to Smith, he himself, not Jones, will get the job. And, also, unknown to Smith, he himself has ten coins in his pocket" (p. 445).

II. THE FORD CASE

Smith is justified in believing that

(f) Jones own a Ford.

From this, Smith legitimately infers that

(g) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona.

Since Smith is justified in believing that (f), and since the inference from (f) to (g) is legitimate, Smith is *justified* in *believing* that (g). Furthermore, (g) is *true*, for Brown is in Barcelona. Thus, Smith has a ***justified true belief*** that (g).

Yet Smith does *not* ***know*** that (g). For "Jones does *not* own a Ford, [and] … by the sheerest coincidence, and entirely unknown to Smith" (p. 446), Brown is indeed in Barcelona.

ALVIN GOLDMAN'S "A CAUSAL THEORY OF KNOWING"

A. Goldman thinks that the thing that's missing from the traditional analysis of knowledge is a *causal* connection between the fact that P and S's believing that P.

B. Goldman's *first* revision of the traditional analysis of knowledge

S knows that P if and only if
(a) P is true,
(b) S believes that P,
(c) S's belief that P is justified, and
(d) S's believing that P is connected to P by a causal chain.

According to Goldman, his first revision works well in cases of perception, memory, testimony, and inference.

- For *perception* and *memory*, the fact that P causes S's belief that P.

- For *inference*, the fact that P causes the fact that Q, which causes S to believe that Q. This, along with certain background beliefs, causes S to believe that P. (See the diagram on p. 453 of our text.)

    - Goldman employs an important principle here: If a chain of inferences is "added" to a causal chain, then the entire chain is causal.

- For *testimony*, the fact that P causes a person, T, to believe that P, and T's holding this belief causes her to assert that P. This causes S to believe that T has asserted that P and, in turn, to believe that T believes that P. Finally, this, along with certain background beliefs, causes S to believe that P. (See the diagram on p. 454 of our text.)

C. But what about knowledge of the future, for example, knowledge that T will go downtown on Monday?

- For *knowledge of the future*, the fact that T intends to go downtown on Monday causes her to go downtown on Monday. Furthermore, the very same fact causes T to tell S that she will go downtown, which causes S to believe that T has told her that she'll go downtown, which in turn causes S to believe that T intends to go downtown, which finally causes S to believe that T will go downtown. (See the diagram on p. 456 of our text.)

D. The problem presented by knowledge of the future motivates Goldman's *second* revision of the traditional analysis of knowledge:

S knows that P if and only if
(a) P is true,
(b) S believes that P,
(c) S's belief that P is justified, and
(d) S's believing that p is causally connected in an "appropriate" way to the fact that P, where the "appropriate" ways include
  i. S's believing that P is connected with the fact that P by a causal chain and
  ii. S's believing that P and the fact that P have a common cause.

KEITH LEHRER AND THOMAS PAXSON'S "KNOWLEDGE: UNDEFEATED JUSTIFIED TRUE BELIEF"

A. L&P begin with the traditional analysis of knowledge:

S knows that P if and only if
(a) P is true,
(b) S believes that P,
(c) S's belief that P is justified, and

To this, they add a *fourth* condition, one that concerns *defeasibility*:

(d) nothing defeats S's justification for the belief that P.

B. What is defeat?

Some proposition (or set of propositions) Q *defeats* S's justification, J, for the belief that P if and only if
(a) Q is true, and
(b) J plus Q together do not completely justify S's belief that P.

C. The proposal in B is inadequate, however. For consider THE GRABIT CASE:

(J*) I see someone who looks very much like Tom Grabit leave the library

with a suspicious, book-shaped bulge in his coat.

(Q*) Mrs. Grabit says that John Grabit, Tom's twin brother, has been hanging around campus, and that Tom is away.

(P*) Tom Grabit stole a book from the library.

Given that Mrs. Grabit is completely unreliable and that she is in fact lying on this occasion, it seems that Q* *fails* to defeat my justification, J*, for believing that P*. Yet according to the proposal in B, Q* *does* defeat my justification. The proposal in B is therefore inadequate.

D. What more is needed for an adequate account of defeat? Consider THE NOGOT CASE:

(J**) I've seen Nogot driving a Ford; he says he owns a Ford; he has expressed a fair degree of brand loyalty; …; Mr. Nogot is a student in my class.

(Q**) Mr. Nogot does *not* own a Ford.

(P**) Someone in my class owns a Ford.

Here, Q** *does* defeat my justification J** for the belief that P**. But why? L&P offer the following suggestion, which is *the second proposed account of defeat*:

E. The Second Proposed Account of Defeat

Some proposition Q *defeats* S's justification, J, for the belief that P if and only if

(a) Q is true,
(b) J plus Q together do not completely justify S's belief that P, and
(c) S is completely justified in believing that Q is false.

KEITH DEROSE'S "CONTEXTUALISM AND KNOWLEDGE ATTRIBUTIONS"

A. The Relevant Alternatives Theory of Knowledge

S knows that P if and only if

(a) P is true,
(b) S believes that P,
(c) S's belief that P is justified, and
(d) S (or S's evidence) can distinguish P from all *relevant alternatives* to P.

B. What's an alternative?

An alternative to P is a proposition, Q, that cannot be true if P is true.

C. What's relevance?

A variety of conditions might make an alternative relevant. DeRose suggests the following list of three conditions:

1. Whether it is *important* to get things exactly right
2. The *mentioning* of a possibility
3. The *consideration* of a possibility

D. Subject factors vs. Attributor factors

SUBJECT FACTORS are features of the *subject's* situation.
ATTRIBUTOR FACTORS are features of the *attributor's* situation.

E. The Relevant Alternatives Theory of Knowledge focuses exclusively on *subject* factors. Only subject factors matter when it comes to determining whether an alternative is relevant.

F. Contextualism focuses on *both* subject factors *and* attributor factors. Both factors matter when it comes to determining whether an alternative is relevant.

Because subject factors can be different from attributor factors, the set of relevant alternatives can vary from context to context. Thus, whether S knows that P can (and often does) vary in certain ways according to the context in which knowledge-attributing (and knowledge-denying) sentences are uttered.

G. What advantages does Contextualism have over the Relevant Alternatives Theory of Knowledge?

- Imagine a situation in which we are inclined to say *both* that a subject may say of herself that she knows that P *and* that someone in a different conversational context (i.e. an attributor) may say of S that she does not know that P. **Contextualism allows us to maintain *both* that the subject is correct *and* that the attributor is correct.** We may do this because, according to the contextualist, the factors that make alternatives relevant for the subject can be *different* from those that make alternatives relevant for the attributor. Thus, the standards for knowledge can be lower in the subject's context than in the attributor's context, making it easier to know in the subject's context and more difficult to know in the attributor's context.