

Gettier on Knowledge

G. J. Matthey

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Knowledge as Justified True Belief

- Philosophers such as Ayer and Chisholm have given analyses of “S knows that P” that have a common form.
- S knows that P if and only if:
 1. P is true,
 2. S believes that P, and
 3. S is justified in believing that P.
- Gettier will argue that the analysis fails because the conditions are not jointly sufficient.
 - It is possible for S to satisfy each of the three conditions yet fail to know that P.

Justification

- The notion of justification used in the analysis is fallibilist, in the sense that “it is possible for a person to be justified in believing a proposition that is in fact false” (36).
- Justification is also closed under deduced entailment.
- If
 - S is justified in believing that P,
 - P entails Q, and
 - S deduces Q from P, then
- S is justified in believing that Q.

Case I

- Let P be: 'The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.'
- P is entailed by 'Jones is the man who will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his pocket.'
- Let S be Smith, and let him be justified in believing that Jones (and not he) is the man who has the job and that Jones has ten coins in his pocket.
- From this evidence Smith deduces P, and so by closure he is justified in believing that P.
- In fact, Smith will get the job, and Smith has ten coins in his pocket.
- So it is true that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.
- But Smith does not know this.

Case II

- Let P be: 'Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona.'
- P is entailed by 'Jones owns a Ford.'
- Let S be Smith, and let him be justified in believing that Jones owns a Ford (while having no idea where Brown is).
- From this evidence, Smith deduces P, and so by closure he is justified in believing that P.
- In fact, Jones does not own a Ford, though Brown is in Barcelona.
- So it is true that Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona.
- But Smith does not know this.