

Chapter 5, Knowledge

What is knowledge?

- Plato – Theatetus – the distinction between knowledge and true beliefs
- The problem of guesses
- Plato – Meno – justified, true beliefs

1. Belief:

- Subjective component
- Necessary, but not a sufficient condition for knowledge
e.g. Colin Radford and the nervous exam candidate

2. Truth:

- Objective component – true for you as it is for me
- Believing is not a defining characteristic of something being true
- Truth is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for knowledge
- Something is true when it depicts things as they are;
but how are we to recognize it?
 - Certainty
 - feelings of certainty are subjective
 - Rationalism
 - Descartes – immediate and indubitable data of consciousness
 - Empiricism
 - Direct evidence of the senses = primitive authenticity
 - General laws = only justified inductively with qualified assurance
 - Different criteria for certainty:
 - coherence: the jury
 - pragmatic: usefulness

3. Justification:

- Need to justify true beliefs to avoid inspired guesswork
- Sufficient reasons that a reasonable person would accept – good reasons:
 - Quality – is it reliable? Am I entitled to be sure? Meets certain standards
 - Entailment
 - Record of success – regardless of whether it can be explained
e.g. Chicken sexer – is the distinction between what we know and what we know we know unnecessary?
 - Quantity – how much evidence?
 - All the evidence – very few propositions we could claim to know – always possible to find more evidence
 - All the evidence available – still need to know how much evidence is sufficient
 - Adequate evidence – circular
 - Probability:
 - Statistical – begs the question
 - Inductive – shifts the problem on to ‘What makes a good inductive argument?’
 - Absolute – circular – we have to use the concept of knowledge to explain the concept of absolute probability
 - Good reasons – survives after prolonged questioning – but at what point have we questioned it enough?

Chapter 5, Knowledge continued

4. Are the **three conditions** sufficient for knowledge?

- a) **Gettier** examples – coincidence that the belief is true
- b) **Harman** – no false lemmas principle
- c) **Scruton** – externalist perspective

5. **Post-modernist challenge:**

Claim: we cannot have independent access to reality – the framework of our ideas through which we interpret experience and justify our beliefs = inescapably bound up with our own inventions.