GRUEING GETTIER

Giovanni MION

ABSTRACT: The paper aims to stress the structural similarities between Nelson Goodman's 'new riddle of induction' and Edmund Gettier's counterexamples to the standard analysis of knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Edmund Gettier, Nelson Goodman, Or Introduction, grue, knowledge

In *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Saul Kripke emphasizes the analogy between Wittgenstein's puzzle about 'rule following' and Nelson Goodman's 'new riddle of induction.' In particular, Kripke claims that in the language of colour impression, Goodman's 'grue' plays the same role that Wittgenstein's 'quus' plays in the language of arithmetic.[1] In this short paper, I will stress the less obvious structural similarity between Goodman's riddle and Edmund Gettier's counterexamples to the standard analysis of knowledge. More specifically, I will argue that both Goodman and Gettier's argumentative strategies trade on the same logical trick: Or Introduction (or its infinitary counterpart, Existential Introduction, in the case of Gettier's first example). Moreover, I will also argue that they aim to accomplish similar goals: on the one hand, Goodman stresses "the problem of distinguishing between lawlike and accidental hypothesis;"[2] while, on the other hand, Gettier stresses the distinction between knowledge and justified beliefs accidentally true or true "by the sheerest coincidence."[3] The main difference is that while Goodman, like most philosophers of science, focuses on our knowledge of universal truths: "All emeralds are green;" Gettier, like most epistemologists, is concerned with our knowledge of particular truths: "Jones owns a Ford."

In *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*, Goodman invites us to consider a new unfamiliar predicate: 'grue.' By definition, the term "applies to all things examined before t just in case they are green but to other things just in case they are blue."[4] Literally, something is grue *iff* if it's examined before t, then green and if it's not so examined, then blue. In other words, something is grue *iff* it's examined before t

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[1] Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 58.

[2] Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 77.

[3] Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23 (1963): 123.

[4] Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*, 74.

and green OR it's not so examined and blue. All my evidence before *t* indicates that all emeralds are green. But the same evidence can be used to support the claim that all emeralds are grue. Nevertheless, while the first hypothesis seems to be a genuine candidate for scientific knowledge, the second one appears to be a spurious generalization.

Let us now consider a slightly revised version of Gettier's second example. Accordingly, let us consider the following unfamiliar term 'fowner.' By definition, the term applies to individuals that own a Ford now OR a Fiat later. Now suppose that I have strong evidence that indicates that Jones owns a Ford. Accordingly, I form the belief that Jones owns a Ford. In addition, suppose that on the basis of the same evidence, I also come to believe that Jones is a fowner. Nevertheless, Jones does not own a Ford, his car is a rental, but unbeknownst to me, he is about to buy a Fiat. My original belief, although false, was a genuine candidate for knowledge. In contrast, my belief that Jones is a fowner might be true and justified, but does not amount to knowledge.

Consider now the following revised version of Gettier's first example. Suppose that I have evidence that indicates that my colleague Mike will get the job and that he has ten coins in his pocket. Exploiting the rule of Existential Generalization, I form the belief that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket. However, since there are only three potential candidates for the job (Mike, Mark and I), I also form the belief that Mike will get the job and he has ten coins in his pocket OR Mark will get the job and he has ten coins in his pocket OR I will get the job and I have ten coins in my pocket. In addition, suppose that I also choose to construct the following unfamiliar term 'jten.' By definition, someone is a jten *iff* he has ten coins in his pocket and he is Mike OR Mark OR I. Accordingly, I form the belief that someone is a jten. As you know, in the end, Mike will not get the job, I will. So, once again, my original belief that Mike will get the job and that he has ten coins in his pocket, although false, was a genuine candidate for knowledge. In contrast, my belief that someone is a jten might be true and justified, but does not amount to knowledge.

'Grue,' 'fowner,' and 'jten' are all artificial terms constructed via Or Introduction. They are all used to generate artificial beliefs (in one of Gettier's original example, Smith uses Or Introduction to form three propositions at random), nevertheless they seem to pose a genuine challenge for any theory that aims to establish a distinction between those true justified beliefs that can aspire to the status of knowledge and those that cannot.

It could be objected that not all Gettier cases employ Or Introduction (or similar logical devices). For example, Bertrand Russell invites us to contemplate

the case of a man who acquires a true belief about the time by looking at a broken clock at the moment when it's right.[5] But in such cases, it's not clear that the belief in question is justified. Russell himself does not use this example to challenge the standard definition of knowledge, but to support it. So on the one hand, Gettier's aim is different from Russell's; while, on the other hand, since the beliefs offered by Gettier are the result of a deductive inference, they do not readily invite the objection of not being justified.

In *Pyrrhonian Reflection on Knowledge and Justification*, Robert J. Fogelin divides Gettier-like counterexamples into two categories:

> (i) Those that employ a normally sound justificatory procedure in a context where it is not, in fact, reliable, then arrive at a normal *strong* true conclusion by good fortune.

> (ii) Those that employ a normally sound justificatory procedure in a context where it is not, in fact, reliable, then arrive at something true by drawing a conclusion *weaker* than normally warranted by this procedure.[6]

Obviously, Russell's case belongs to the first category, but in the present paper, I'm solely concerned with examples of the second kind.

'Fowner' and 'jten' helped us creating a disjunctive predicate in Goodman's style in order to bring forward the structural similarities between Goodman and Gettier. On the other hand, Goodman's riddle can be appropriately redescribed using the classic epistemic notions that Gettier traces back to Plato's *Meno*.

So, suppose that on the basis of the available evidence I form the belief that all emeralds are green. In addition, suppose that on the basis of the same evidence, I also form the belief that all emeralds are grue. Both beliefs seem to be equally justified by my evidence. Nevertheless, the belief that all emeralds are grue would not count as knowledge even if it turned out that some emeralds were really blue.

It might be tedious to address and critically evaluate all the responses to Gettier and Goodman in order to further enlighten the structural similarity between their arguments. However, I should at least indicate how my favorite solution to the challenge posed by Gettier's counterexamples can also be applied to Goodman's new riddle of induction.

There exist two kinds of solutions to the puzzles raised by Gettier. According to most responses, the counterexamples in question are genuine. Thus, we should seek for a better understanding of what knowledge is. But according to

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[5] Bertrand Russell, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2009), 140-141.

[6] Robert J. Fogelin, *Pyrrhonian Reflections on Knowledge and Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 23.

a minority of responses, such counterexamples are spurious. I happen to stand with the minority. In particular, I think that since logical rules are designed to preserve truth, as opposed to justification, we should not readily accept the idea that since my belief that Jones owns a Ford is justified, also my belief that Jones owns a Ford now OR a Fiat later is justified. As Irving Thalberg argues, "the justification for accepting a proposition is not always transmissible to propositions that it entails."[7] It should be now clear that Thalberg's solution can also be applied to Goodman's case: even if all my evidence indicates that all emeralds are green, I cannot just assume that *that* same evidence can be used to support the claim that all emeralds are grue.[8]