

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL SOLUTION TO GETTIER'S PROBLEM

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ABSTRACT: In "Is Justified True Belief, Knowledge?" Gettier shows us two counter examples of analyzing Knowledge, as "Justified True Belief" or "JTB". Lots of scholars have reconstructed similar counter examples to JTB but we can see they follow a similar algorithm. Other scholars have tried to re-analyze knowledge by adding a fourth element to JTB and reformulating knowledge in a "JTB+X" formula and some replaced justification with another alternative component (Y) and proposed a "YTB" analysis of knowledge. In this article I first overview Gettier's problem and I show that we can construct a similar Gettier problem for each "JTB+X" or "YTB" formula. After that, I will focus on re-analyzing knowledge with a phenomenological attitude that can avoid Gettier's problem.

KEYWORDS: Justified True Belief, knowledge, Gettier's Problem, phenomenology, uncovering, presence

Introduction

In "Is Justified True Belief, Knowledge?", Gettier shows us two counter examples of analyzing Knowledge as "Justified True Belief" or "JTB" (Gettier 1963). Since then, lots of attempts have taken place to reanalyze knowledge such that pass Gettier's counter examples. Lots of post-Gettier analysis of knowledge can be formalized in the "JTB+X" formula and some other trials replaced justification with other alternative component Y and have formulized knowledge as "YTB". But these attempts to reformulate classical analysis of knowledge to pass Gettier's criteria almost fail. As Williamson shows, almost all of them have failed and did not push forward in research programs of contemporary epistemology. (Williamson 2013) He proposes setting aside research programs focused on analyzing knowledge and instead advocating for knowledge-first epistemology which does not focus on analyzing knowledge into more fundamental elements. In Williamson's conception of knowledge, knowledge is the primary concept in epistemology and all other epistemological concepts must be analyzed based on the concept of knowledge. (Williamson 2013) but there is a problem in defining other epistemic concepts based on knowledge. For example, consider defining justification based on knowledge. In the ordinary sense, the set of justified beliefs is greater than the set of knowledge. Sometimes we are justified but we do not know. Assuming that we only know when

we are justified, we can say that the set of knowing propositions is a subset of justified propositions. So, in defining justification based on knowledge, we are defining the more universal set by a specific subset, which is weird and not acceptable based on the concept of set, in set theory. (Rysiew & Dougherty 2015)

In this article I am going to take a phenomenological turn on the concept of knowledge. I first formulate Gettier's criteria and show why there is a problem in every JTB+X analysis of knowledge. After that, I will show how we can avoid Gettier's problem based on a phenomenological concept of knowledge.

Formulating Gettier's Problem

As Gettier indicates, his examples are based on two assumptions:

A1) S can be justified in a false belief.

A2) If (S is justified in P) & (P entails Q) & (S deduces Q from P in valid process), then (S is justified in believing Q)

Assuming A1 & A2, "GC" is Gettier case when;

1. S believes P.
2. S is justified in believing P.
3. P entails Q.
4. S deduces Q from P in a valid process.
5. Q is true.
6. P is not true.

In these cases, it seems that S is justified in believing Q and Q is true but S does not know Q. Based on Gettier's criteria, an analysis of knowledge is acceptable if and only if there is no Gettier case for it. (Gettier 1963)

Reformulating Gettier's Problem for "JTB+X" Analysis of Knowledge

Let's name each Pseudo Gettier case for the "JTB+X" formulation of knowledge "X-Gettier Case" or "XGC".

Assume that:

A1) S can be justified in a false belief.

A2) If (S is justified in P) & (P entails Q) & (S deduces Q from P based on valid process), then (S is justified in believing Q)

Assuming A1 & A2, "XGC" is a X-Gettier case when;

1. S believes P.

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2. S is justified in believing P.
3. P entails Q.
4. S deduces Q from P based on a valid process.
5. S's belief in P has quality X.
6. Q is true.
7. P is not true.

Assume knowledge as "JTB+X". If entailment is closed on X quality, there is XGC to refute "JTB+X" analysis of knowledge. And if entailment is not closed on X-ness, we cannot gain knowledge through logic because X-ness is an internal quality of knowledge and if we deduce new belief by logic because of non-closure on X, it is undecidable if we have knowledge or not and we cannot be justified in a belief when it is undecidable to be justified or not.

So, if there is GC for JTB, then there exists a XGC for "JTB+X" that refutes this analysis of knowledge.

To articulate the argument in a step-by-step way:

1. Consider Knowledge is "JTB+X"; it means that S knows P IFF:
 - A. S believes P.
 - B. P is true.
 - C. S's belief in P is justified.
 - D. S's belief in P has the quality of X.
 2. Entailment is closed on quality of X or not.
 3. If yes, there is an XGC which refutes the "JTB+X" definition of knowledge.
 4. If not, we cannot expand our knowledge through logic, which is absurd.
- So: knowledge cannot be defined as "JTB+X".

Reformulating Gettier's Problem for "YTB" Analysis of Knowledge

Let's name each Pseudo Gettier case for the "YTB" formulation of knowledge a "Y-Gettier Case" or "YGC".

Assume that:

A1) S's belief in P could have Y-ness and while S believes P, it is a false belief.

Assuming A1, "YGC" is a Y-Gettier case when;

1. S believes P.

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2. P entails Q.
3. S deduces Q from P.
4. S believes that P has quality Y.
5. Q is true.
6. P is not true.

As you see, the similar argument for “JTB+X” runs here for “YTB” analysis of knowledge and such solutions cannot help us to over Gettier’s problem. The argument can be articulated as below:

1. Consider knowledge as “YTB”. It means that S knows P IFF;
 - A. S believes P.
 - B. P is true.
 - C. S’s belief in P has Y-ness.
2. Entailment is closed on Y-ness or not.
3. If yes, there is a YGC that refutes “YTB” analysis of knowledge.
4. If not, our knowledge cannot be expanded through logic, which is absurd.

So, knowledge cannot be defined as “YTB”.

The Phenomenological Turn in Analysis of Knowledge

In this part, I am going to propose a definition of knowledge that has risen from a phenomenological attitude to knowledge. The phenomenological attitude will lead us to a turn to acquaintance knowledge, which seems primary to propositional knowledge in this attitude. I will show this approach to guide us to a definition of knowledge which is sound for propositional knowledge too and can pass Gettier’s Criteria.

In “Four Principles of Phenomenology”, Michel Henry and colleagues formulate phenomenological attitudes into four principles. “So much appearance, so much being”, “that every original presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition”, “Towards the things themselves” & “So much reduction, So much givenness” (Henry, Rivera, & Faithful 2015). As we see in these principles, there is a turn toward familiarity and acquaintance with knowledge. The phenomenological attitude guides us to look more closely in the event of presence and givenness that happens in every knowledge. Finally, we can say that in each knowing, the subject is experiencing a kind of presence. In which something that we will call “The Present” is uncovered and appears to the subject in a kind of intuitive sense of

presence. It does not matter if objects of knowledge are concrete things like day-to-day objects or abstract entities like propositions. In each case, if we put anything beyond appearance in bracket in the process of phenomenological reduction, we will face the presence in which knowledge of things is experienced.

So, from the above paragraph we have:

S knows X; IFF,

- 1) X is "The Present" in the world.
- 2) S has a "Sense of Presence" from X. (Mediated or Immediate)
- 3) The present-hood of X is "Uncovered" for S through the "Sense of Presence" S has from X.

As mentioned above, X could be concrete, like ordinary day-to-day objects or abstract, like propositions. Beyond that, the "Uncovering" can be mediated or it can be immediate. If the process of uncovering X is not immediate, so the sense of presence from X which is x_1 is uncovered through another sense of presence called x_2 . This mediation can continue more but it must end somewhere, even condition (3) would fail. As you see, this articulation of knowledge explains children and ordinary people's knowledge. It allows us to get rid of over intellectualization and connects the definition of knowledge to sensation and experience directly. And as you will see below, it passes the Gettier Case criteria.

But before going to analyze specifically if this definition passes the Gettier's case criteria, let us reframe the above definition for propositional knowledge:

S knows proposition P; IFF,

- 1) p, which is the truth maker of P, is "The present" in the world.
- 2) S has a "Sense of Presence from p" called y (Mediated or Immediate).
- 3) The present-hood of p is "Uncovered" for S by y.

Does the Phenomenological Turn in Definition of Knowledge Pass the Gettier Challenge?

As discussed above: "GC" is a Gettier case when;

1. S believes P.
2. S is justified in believing P.
3. P entails Q.
4. S deduces Q from P.
5. Q is true.
6. P is not true.

Let's name the states of affairs that make P and Q true, p and q. And let us name the sense of presence S has immediately from p and q, p* and q*. In this context, we examine a scenario where GC occurs, and our goal is to demonstrate that when GC happens, it does not align with our phenomenological understanding of knowledge. So, it shows us that our definition of knowledge passes Gettier's criteria.

S knows Q when the truth maker of Q or q is "The present" in the world and S has a sense of presence of it. But in Gettier's case, S does not have access to an immediate sense of presence of q or q*. And in this case, S has access only to p*, which leads to uncovering p. And uncovering p uncovers the correctness of proposition P. And P entails Q. Which means the present-hood of q. But there is a problem: "p" is not "The Present" here. So, it is not the case that "The present-hood of q" is "Uncovered" through the "Sense of Present S has from q". As you see, the chain which must lead us to uncovering the present-hood of q from a mediated sense of present is cut. So, our definition passes Gettier's criteria.

Conclusion

As we can see, the new formulation based on phenomenological attitudes has the concept of presence and uncovering at its core. Based on this approach, "No presence, no knowledge" and "Acquaintance knowledge is primary to propositional knowledge". As shown above, we have formulated the concept of propositional knowledge based on our phenomenological formulation of acquaintance knowledge and exactly this shift was what we needed in avoiding Gettier's problem.

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