The Gettier problem

JTB $\not\Rightarrow$ K

Classical (JTB) analysis of knowledge

S knows that p *if and only if*

(i) p is true;

(ii) S believes that p;

(iii) S is justified in believing that p.

Enter Gettier

"Gettier cases":

(i) p is true;
(ii) S believes that p;
(iii) S is justified in believing that p, **but**
(iv) The truth of p is not related to the justification of it. (The truth of p is accidental, or lucky.)

Since the belief is true just by luck, or accident, there seems to be something *wrong* with the belief. But then, since knowledge is good belief, or belief with nothing (too much) wrong with it, so *this belief isn't knowledge*.

Gettier cases

- E.g. Nogot and Havit,
- Sheep in a field, etc.

Gettier has caused headaches ...

S knows that *p* iff

I.   *p* is true,

II.   *S* is justified [by some evidence *e*] in believing

III.   *S* believes that *p* on the basis of his justificatio

        (ivg)…there is an evidence-restricted alternativ

I.   (i) '*S* is justified in believing that *p*' is ep
        evidence component of Fs* and

II.   (ii) there is some subset of members of the evidence component of Fs* such that

III.   (a) the members of this subset are also members of the evidence component of Fs
        and

IV.   (b) '*S* is justified in believing that *p*' is epistemically derivable from the members of
        this subset.

V.   [Where Fs* is an 'evidence-restricted alternative' to Fs iff

VI.   (i) For every true proposition *q* such that '*S* is justified in believing not-*q*' is a member of the
        evidence component of Fs, '*S* is justified in believing *q*' is a member of the evidence component of Fs*,

VII.   (ii) for some subset C of members of Fs such that C is maximally consistent epistemically with the
        members generated in (i), every member of C is a member of Fs*, and

VIII.   (iii) no other propositions are members of Fs* except those that are implied epistemically by the
        members generated in (i) and (ii).]

Gettier scenario Type 1

JF: "It is possible for a person to be justified in believing a false proposition."

(basic logic) A false belief can entail a true belief

JD: The consequences of a justified belief are justified.

Hence a belief may be justified, and true, when a person infers it from a justified false belief.

- "Jack got the job, so a letter firing Joan is in her mailbox."
- "Nogot own a Ford, so someone who works in my office does"

Reject JF (fallibilism)?

- Many of us have *infallibilist* intuitions.
  - Can you really know p if you're not even justifiably certain that p?
  - Can you know p if your total evidence is consistent with p being false?
- Yet if we reject fallibilism, then it appears that we almost never know anything.
- E.g. I believe that my car is parked in the garage, etc., but of course it might have been stolen since I left it. (So I don't *know* it's there.)

Argument for **JF**

- Feldman claims that, for any *ordinary knowledge claim* (a "Typical Case") it is possible to construct an imaginary "Unusual Case" in which the proposition is false, yet there's no difference in the evidence accessible to the subject.

- What's an example of that?

Argument for JF

- Assuming access internalism (the view that justification supervenes on matters cognitively accessible to the subject) "the belief is either justified in both cases or else not justified in both cases."

- In other words, rejecting JF takes us away from the "Standard View" of knowledge, and into the "Sceptical View".

Reject JD?

JD: "justification can be transferred through deduction"

- Can we give a *reason* why JD should hold?

  - If JD fails, then deductive reasoning has no epistemic value. We cannot extend our knowledge using logical inference.

  - A paradigm case of a justified belief B (e.g. of Sherlock Holmes) is where B is deduced from observational evidence.

Responses to Gettier

- There have been many responses to Gettier, generally following one of two approaches:

  1. Keep JTB as *necessary* conditions, and just add a 4th condition to get a set of jointly sufficient conditions.

  2. Start from scratch. Get rid of J, and maybe T, while adding other conditions (e.g. W).

- N.B. both approaches tend to incorporate *external* factors.

"No false grounds" proposal

- Michael Clark (1963)

NFG

S knows that p if and only if

(i) p is true,

(ii) S believes that p,

(iii) S is justified in believing p, and

(iv) **all of S's grounds for believing p are true**.

Problem with NFG

- What counts as a "ground for believing p"?
- ("Nogot owns a Ford" is *supposed* to be included in Smith's grounds. But what if Smith reasons as follows?)

(N). Nogot, who works in Smith's office, drives a Ford, has Ford ownership papers, etc. T

∴ There is someone who works in Smith's office who drives a Ford, has Ford ownership papers, etc. T

∴ There is someone who works in Smith's office who owns   a Ford. T

"Stopped Clock" scenario

- You look at the town clock, and it shows 1:17

- You *believe* that it is 1:17 on this basis.

- The time is, *in fact*, 1:17.

- Yet the clock stopped weeks ago. It *always* shows 1:17.

- Are there any false grounds here?

- Are there any false grounds in the stopped clock scenario?

The clock shows "1:17"   T

∴ The time now is 1:17   T

- What about the assumption that *the clock is working*? Is that a "ground" here?

The clock shows "1:17"   T

The clock is working   F

∴ The time now is 1:17   T

Multiple lines of evidence

- N.B. There could be *multiple lines of evidence* supporting *p,* with only *one* involving false grounds.

- (E.g. *Many* clocks I'm now looking at show 1:17. All but one of these clocks are working.)

- E.g. "Smith has two independent sets of reasons for thinking that someone in his office owns a Ford. One set has to do with Nogot. Nogot says he owns a Ford, and so on. As usual, Nogot is merely pretending. But Smith also has equally strong reasons having to do with Havit. And Havit is not pretending. Havit does own a Ford, and Smith knows that he owns a Ford."

Is NFG *externalist*?

- On the face of it, NFG (no false grounds) involves the standard (internalist) notion of justification. (A belief that's justified on false grounds is still justified.)
- But, obviously, a person has no internal access to whether their justification is based on a false belief.
  - So a further, *external* requirement of knowledge is introduced.
- One might think that NFG should be part of the notion of justification itself, rather than an extra 4th condition of knowledge. *That* would be externalist.

ND: No "defeaters" for *p*

S knows that p if and only if:

(i) p is true,

(ii) S believes that p,

(iii) S is justified in believing p, and

(iv) **there are no defeaters for S's justified belief that p.**

A proposition q is a *defeater* for S's justified belief that p just in case:

(i) q is **true** and

(ii) if S were to learn q, S would not be justified in believing p.

Defeater examples

- The fact that the clock has stopped is a *defeater* for the belief that it is now 1:17.

- The fact that Nogot doesn't own a Ford is a *defeater* for Smith's belief that someone in the office owns a Ford.

- The fact that what looks like two ducks are actually decoys is a defeater for Max's belief that there are ducks on the lake.

What's the difference?

NFG: Gettier cases are "ones in which S's justification is undermined by a false belief of S's, that's importantly involved in that justification."

ND: S doesn't necessarily believe anything false. "it's just that S hasn't (maybe even couldn't) take into account all the facts, at least one of which would have undermined S's belief."

Problems with ND

1. Some defeaters only *partially* remove the justification for *p*.

2. There are *misleading* defeaters
   – defeaters that can themselves be defeated!

1. Partial defeaters

- In the stopped clock example, knowing that *one clock in this town has stopped* (not necessarily the one you're looking at) reduces your justification for believing that it's 1:17.

- In the ducks on the lake case, knowing that **there are decoy ducks on the lake** is a partial defeater for "there are ducks on the lake"

- Do partial defeaters disqualify knowledge?

Defeater defeaters

- "Black sees her student Tom Grabit stick a tape in his coat pocket and sneak out of the library. *She knows that Tom took the tape*. Now, imagine that Tom's crime is reported to Tom's mother in her room at the psychiatric hospital. And she replies that Tom didn't do it, that it was his twin brother Tim. And imagine further that he has no twin, that this is just another one of her delusions. Black is ignorant of all this."

1. "*Tom's mother said* that Tom's twin Tim took the tape." T
2. "Tom has no twin. Tom's mother is delusional" T

- "There are lots of possible variations on (ND), and perhaps some versions avoid the examples considered here. The other variations add more complexity to the analysis, and there are even more odd counterexamples proposed against them, but we will not pursue them here."

No "Essential Dependence on Falsehood"

S knows that p if and only if

(i) p is true,

(ii) S believes that p,

(iii) S is justified in believing p, and

(iv) **S's justification for p does not essentially depend on any falsehood**.

Qu. Is condition (iv) something that the subject has cognitive access to?

- "this idea [of essential dependence] has not been spelled out in complete detail"

Are these 4th conditions *ad hoc*?

- What is an *ad hoc* theory?

- An *ad hoc* theory is generally the result of a theory being repeatedly modified.

- The theory *had* to be modified, since the original version (while perhaps simple and intuitive) was contradicted by experience, or suffered from counterexamples.

- The modifications are made **solely to protect the theory from refutation**. Elegance and intuitive plausibility are sacrificed for this goal.

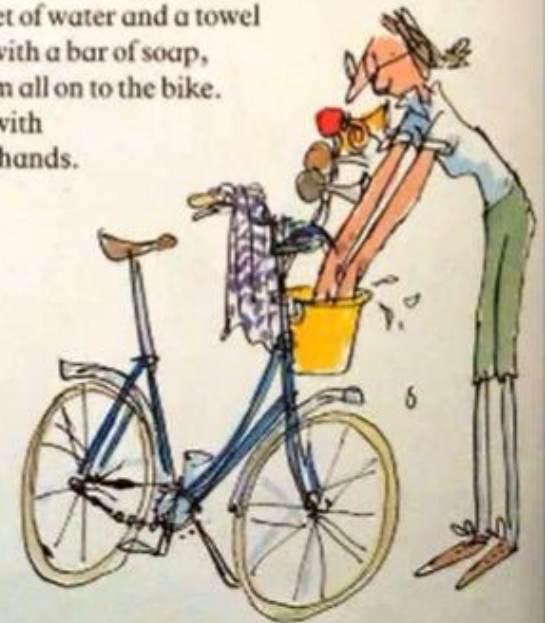- The final result then is an ugly hodgepodge of ideas.

e.g. Mrs. Armitage's bicycle

"What this bike needs," said Mrs Armitage to herself,
"is somewhere to wash your hands."

So she got a bucket of water and a towel
and a soap-rack with a bar of soap,
and she hung them all on to the bike.
And off she went with
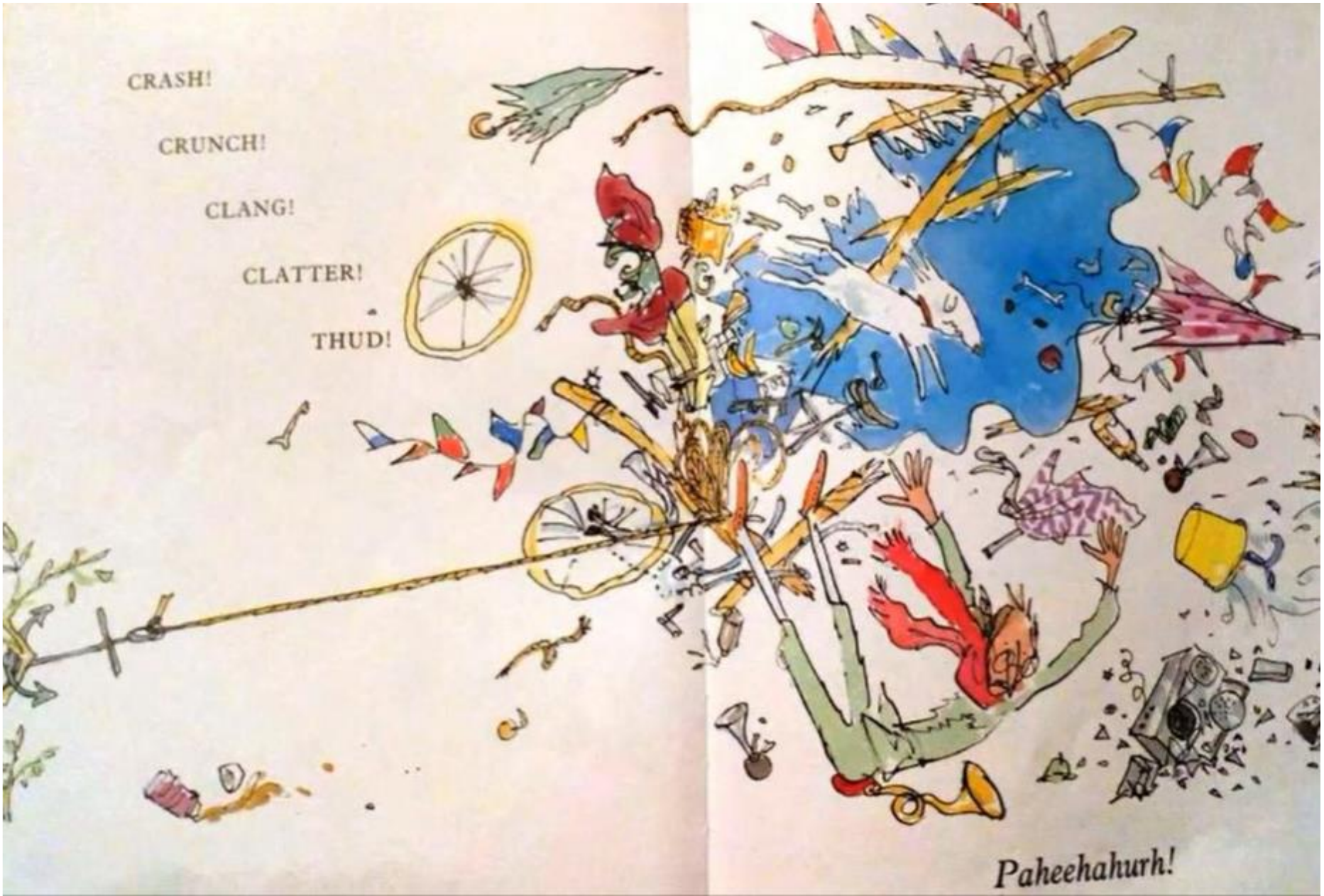beautifully clean hands.

Later …

CRASH!

CRUNCH!

CLANG!

CLATTER!

THUD!

Paheehahurh!

Mrs. Armitage?

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