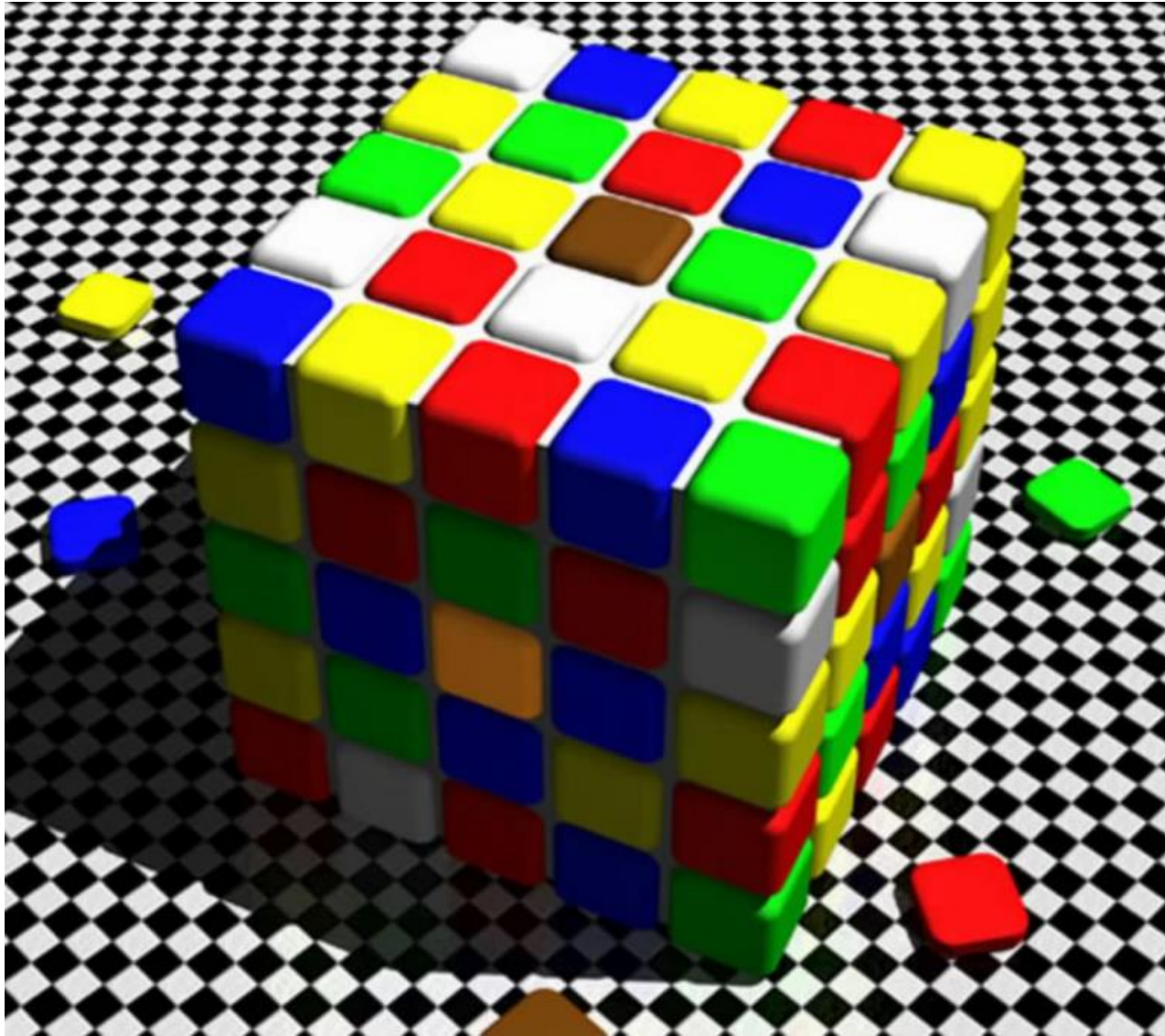


Theory of Knowledge Review

Sense perception

- Sense perception consists of *belief-forming* processes that are (mostly) automatic and inscrutable.
- Our visual field is the brain's presentation of the external world – how (the brain thinks) the world *is*.
E.g.
 - Nearby objects in the visual field are 3D.
 - Colours in the visual field represent the real colour, adjusting for light balance, not the apparent colour.

How do the centre squares compare?



Sense data?

- Do percepts actually *have* the properties (e.g. red, square, etc.) that they represent the external object as having?
- If not, then how does the representation work? Can you have representation without resemblance?

Knowledge of the external world

- Representative (and direct) realism
- Idealism
- Phenomenalism

- The very fact that the totality of our sense experiences is such that by means of thinking...it can be put in order, this fact is one which leaves us in awe, but which we shall never understand. One may say “the eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility.” It is one of the great realizations of Immanuel Kant that the setting up of a real external world would be senseless without this comprehensibility. (Einstein, “Physics and Reality”, 1936)

JTB theory

S knows that p =_{df}

(i) S believes that p

(ii) p is true

(iii) S is justified in believing p .

These 3 conditions are “individually necessary and jointly sufficient”.

Internal access is needed for justification

“A person has a justified belief only if the person has **reflective access to evidence** that the belief is true. . . . Such examples make it reasonable to conclude that there is epistemic justification for a belief only where the person has cognitive access to evidence that supports the truth of the belief. Justifying evidence must be **internally available.**”

Earl Conee (*Monist*, July, 1988 p. 398)

JTB = Internalism

- I think internalists want to be intellectually *self-sufficient* in a certain way.
 - Like a rugged individualist who can't bear to depend on anyone else (grows own food, builds own house, makes own clothes and shoes, etc.)
 - If you eat food prepared by others, then it might well be poisoned. (Or one day they might stop providing it.)
- An internalist wants to monitor and control the production of his own beliefs, in order to be able to vouch for them.

Externalism

- We don't know how our brains work.
- We have no idea how beliefs are formed, and have almost no control over the process
 - except those formed by conscious reasoning.
- We are highly dependent on our brains working well, and being in a suitable environment, but we often lack cognitive access to these matters.
- We do have certain epistemic duties, but they're limited
 - Mostly to beliefs formed by conscious reasoning.
 - We can't monitor and control very much of our belief formation.

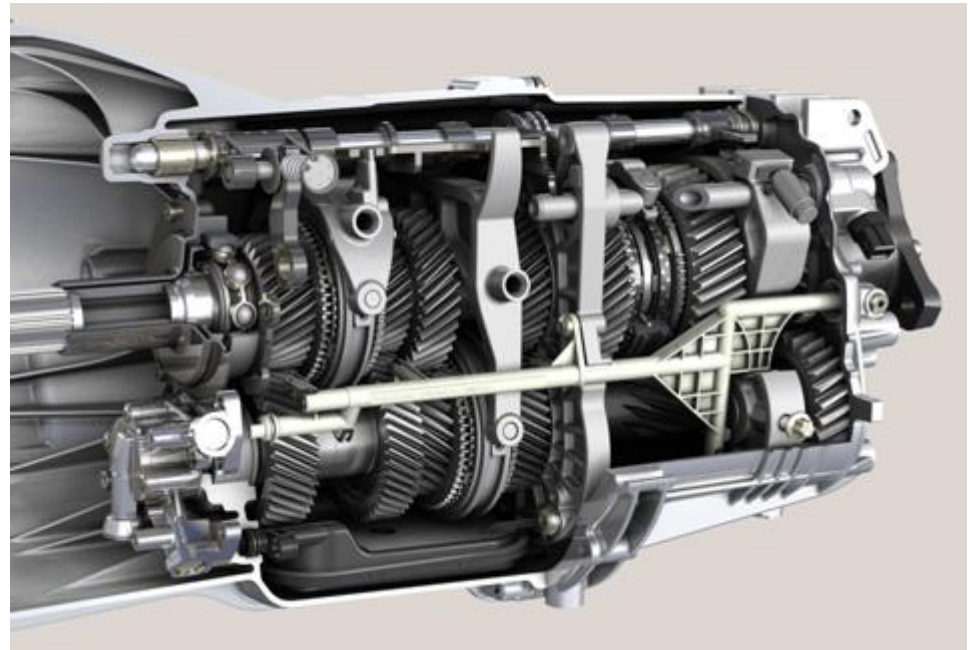
Driving standard vs. automatic

- Animals form beliefs automatically, and have few epistemic duties (or none).
- Being human however means that some of our cognitive mechanisms (inference) are 'manual'. It's possible for humans to be epistemically careless.
- Driving a manual car, you have a *duty* to keep the revs within the normal range, adjusting the gear as necessary. That's part of being a good driver.
- With an automatic transmission, this is handled by a hidden mechanism, so that the driver's duties are reduced.

We have cognitive access
to these:



This is what's really
happening.



Internalism vs. Externalism

- Knowledge is normative, i.e. a “good belief”. But what is the normative ingredient?
- Internalists see a good believer as someone who fulfills their epistemic duties. They also tend to think these duties are rather strict, even (for infallibilists) to the extent of ruling out the subjective possibility of a false belief.
- Externalists stress that our belief-forming processes are, to a large extent, unconscious, inscrutable and automatic. So **what is the normative element**, if not being epistemically diligent?

“Connection to the truth”?

- Here, the different versions of externalism diverge.
- But they all seem to share the basic idea that, in order to be knowledge, a belief must be **connected** (in the right way) **to the truth**, or the objective facts.
 - E.g. the belief must *track the truth*, be *caused by the facts*, be a *reliable indicator of the truth*, or be *authorised by the truth*.

Gettier exploits the loophole

- An *infallibilist* internalist is in full control. Every justified belief is true. $K = JB$. Knowledge is a mental state.
- But this is unrealistic, etc. So we become *fallibilist* internalists. $K = JTB$.
 - “Knowledge is not a mental state” -- there are justified false beliefs that (from the inside) are indistinguishable from knowledge.
- But this view does not require any *connection* between the (partial) justification and the objective facts.
- The Gettier cases exploit this loophole – cases where the justification of the belief is completely unconnected to its truth.

Quick fixes to the loophole

- E.g. Feldman's "modest proposal" to avoid the Gettier counter-examples:

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

- It's rather vague, but it seems to be trying to restore the connection between the justification of a belief and its truth.
- It's also a second *external* condition for knowledge. Knowledge is even less of a mental state.

Externalism and Gettier

- Gettier provided the impetus for externalism, but *the 'better' forms of externalism do not avoid the Gettier problem!*
- E.g. Plantinga's proper functionalism does not, at least in the standard version.
 - (See pp. 10-15 in the iweb extra reading.) A true belief, produced by a reliable, properly-functioning process (etc.) might still only be true by luck. (K = WTB, not K = WB)
- Authoritarian externalism *does* avoid Gettier. K = AB.
 - I think that **any theory that needs 'T' in the analysis will have Gettier problems.**

Foundationalism

- Foundationalism is committed, at a minimum, to there being basic beliefs (i.e. beliefs that aren't justified only by support from other beliefs).
- Internalism has trouble saying how basic beliefs are themselves justified. They pop into our heads, with “assurance” of truth, but so what?
- Externalism works best here, because they can appeal to the way the beliefs are actually formed, their being connected to the truth, even though we have no awareness of this.

Scepticism:

- Are sceptics trying to overload believers, giving them excessive and unrealistic epistemic duties?
- Fallibilism: Keep it realistic! Ought => can.
 - Since “knowledge is not a mental state”, we give up the hope of conclusively refuting the sceptic.
 - We retain the more modest goal, of showing that our standard beliefs are at least reasonable.
- Do externalists offer a different solution to sceptical problems?
 - Externalists have an even more modest goal, of showing that our standard beliefs can be knowledge, even if we’re ultimately incapable of validating them ourselves. They’re authorised by the truth (or something like that).

Empiricism

- In philosophy, empiricism is the claim that all of our knowledge and concepts come from experience. There is no *a priori* knowledge (of matters of fact) or *a priori* concepts.
- Rational intuition only supplies trivial, tautological facts, “relations of ideas”, “analytic truths”, e.g. “ $a = a$ ”.
 - “necessity resides in the way we talk about things, not in the things we talk about” (Quine 1966, p. 174)
- In the context of scientific knowledge, “empiricism” is used a little more loosely. It can just mean an emphasis on empirical rather than theoretical methods.
 - “In God we trust. Everyone else, bring data.”

Modest Rationalism

- Experience is *necessary* for most of our knowledge (e.g. knowing what pineapple tastes like).
- But experience isn't *sufficient* for everyday or scientific knowledge. Some core principles can only be known *a priori*.
- Some of these core principles (e.g. the law of excluded middle, arithmetical facts) are analytic. But others (e.g. Ockham's Razor) are synthetic.
- *A priori* knowledge is fallible. We are only human.

Scientific knowledge

- Rationalists argue that scientific knowledge would not be possible without *a priori* knowledge.
 - This argument has all but disappeared from contemporary discussions of induction.
- Empiricists say that the justification of scientific knowledge is a puzzle -- the ‘problem of induction’ – that seems practically insoluble.
 - The role of empiricism in creating the problem of induction is also obscured. (E.g. it isn’t mentioned in Feldman’s Chapter 7.)
 - When “Hume’s problem of induction” is summarised, the summary bears little resemblance to Hume’s argument.

Contextualism

- The standard of justification required for knowledge varies with context.
 - Compared to what?
 - How bad will it be if I'm wrong?
 - etc.

Testimony

- Knowledge from testimony doesn't fit well with the rugged individualism of an internalist.
 - E.g. Locke wants evidence that the source is trustworthy.
- For externalists, accepting testimony can be part of a general attitude that belief formation is largely out of one's conscious control.

New Approaches to Epistemology

- Should traditional epistemology be abandoned, in favour of empirical psychology?
- Does psychology show that humans have *a priori* concepts and knowledge?
- Do externalist theories (e.g. process reliabilism) present knowledge as normative?
- Does evolutionary biology support or undermine our trust in our own cognitive faculties?
- Epistemology is sociology? (Kuhn's non-rational paradigm shifts, incommensurability, etc.)

Feminist epistemology

- **Martin:** Feminist theory applied to epistemology has resulted in a wide variety of arguments and claims; but common to all of them is the idea that gender is an important (and historically neglected) consideration for the study, critique, and reconstruction of epistemology.
- Feminists have pointed to cases of gender bias in science.
 - But this doesn't challenge standard scientific *ideals*.
- Do women have a distinctive cognitive style?
 - If not, then one can still do science/epistemology *as a feminist*.

Feminist epistemology

- Feminist epistemology has been criticized for being motivated by political rather than scholarly goals
- Some feminists (not all) endorse standpoint epistemology
- Some feminists (not all) emphasize that a person exists at the intersection of various identities (the female identity isn't so important)
- Some feminists (not all) “argue that the ideals of rationality, objectivity, and truth are typically male, and a more balanced, more effective knowledge-seeking strategy would include ... : gut-feelings, ‘woman’s intuition’ ... common-sense, anecdotal evidence ...”