

KNOWLEDGE HANDOUT

Introduction to Philosophy
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The standard account of knowledge is that knowledge is **Justified True Belief** (the JTB theory of knowledge). Each of these three conditions is held to be **necessary** for having knowledge (without any of the three one cannot have knowledge) and all three together are held to be **jointly sufficient** for knowledge.

Edmund Gettier offers a **counter-example** to this claim. In his example, he explains that Smith has justified true belief, but intuitively he does not have knowledge. Here is how it goes:

- (1) Smith's normally reliable boss tells Smith that Jones will get the promotion.
- (2) Smith has himself counted the number of coins in Jones's pocket and found it to be ten.
- (3) Smith validly infers from (1) and (2) that "A man with ten coins in his pocket will get the job."
- (4) (3) turns out to be true; Smith believes (3) and Smith is justified in believing (3) given (1) and (2), so (3) satisfies the JTB theory and so it is supposed to be true that Smith knows that (3).
- (5) However, Gettier argues that Smith does not know that (3) since it turns out that Smith himself gets the job and unbeknownst to Smith he himself has ten coins in his pocket.
- (6) Hence, JTB is not a satisfactory account of knowledge since the three conditions have been satisfied but have not jointly entailed that Smith has knowledge.

Elliott Sober argues that many other types of situations also show JTB as stated is not sufficient for knowledge:

A. The Lottery counterexample: You buy 1 ticket out of 100 and believe that you will lose. Suppose that you do lose so your belief was true. You were justified in believing you would lose since the chances of winning were only 1 out of 100, while losing was 99 out of 100. However, did you **know** that you would lose? No.

B. The Big Ben example: In London is a normally reliable clock tower. Suppose that at 3 a.m. in the morning the clock breaks down. Later that afternoon you happen to glance at the clock at precisely 3 p.m.. Your belief that it is 3 p.m. is true and you are justified in your belief since the clock is normally reliable. Once again you have JTB, but intuitively you do not know that the correct time. If you have glanced at the clock ten minutes earlier you also would have believed it to be 3 p.m., but you would have been incorrect. The fact that your belief turned out to be correct was a lucky accident.

This shows that we require that knowledge be **non-accidental**. When someone knows something it must be in some way guaranteed that his or her mind is related to the information believed in an appropriate manner to count as knowledge.