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28000139

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KNOWLEDGE, REASON AND REALITY, ASSESSMENT 1

THOMAS MICHAEL PARKER, STUDENT NO: 28000139

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.

In this annotated bibliography, I have selected three texts which approach the topics of epistemology and ontology from different perspectives. I intend to start with an exploration of Chapter XIX of Copleston's 'A History of Philosophy' which will provide an introduction to Plato's epistemology and ontology. The introduction offered by Copleston will allow for a grounding from which we can compare and contrast other texts that will focus either on epistemology or ontology. I have selected Russell's chapter 'The World of Universals' to explore his ontological arguments and Gettier's 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge' to offer a further understanding of the issues surrounding epistemology. In order to correctly address each text, I intend to present a summary of the main arguments. From here I will evaluate the arguments that have been presented before I go on to assess the effectiveness of the critiques against those texts. The result of this process will allow me to move towards a conclusion on the successfulness of the text in achieving its goals.

Frederick Copleston, 'Theory of Knowledge' in *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1: *Greece and Rome (Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 1947)*, ch. XIX.

To frame the discussion, it is necessary to define ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the branch of metaphysics which deals with the nature of being and what is real, with epistemology being concerned with knowledge and what constitutes knowledge. Chapter XIX of Copleston's 'A History of Philosophy' provides a comprehensive and accessible introduction to Plato's epistemology, establishing early on the difficulties in separating Plato's epistemology from his ontology as the two are very closely linked. The approach adopted by Copleston in first addressing Plato's epistemology through his work *Theaetetus* serves the reader well by preventing Plato's epistemology and ontology being conflated early on. Copleston sets the requirements for knowledge according to Plato, whereby 'knowledge must be (i) infallible (ii) of the real' and then systematically moves through the arguments contained in *Theaetetus*, discounting what knowledge cannot be by comparing them against these criteria.

We begin with the refutation that 'knowledge is perception, that what appears to an individual to be true is true for that individual'² which we see in *Theaetetus* with the assertion that 'knowledge is nothing else than perception'.³ While Copleston addresses most of the numerous arguments contained within *Theaetetus* that refute the premise that 'knowledge and perception are the same',⁴ two have been selected that contest either the infallibility requirement or the realness requirement.

¹ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1: *Greece and Rome* (Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 1947), p. 149.
² Ibid. p. 143.
³ Plato and Harold Fowler, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12 (Harvard University Press, London, William Heinemann Ltd, 1921) p. 151.
⁴ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, p. 144.

When refuting the infallibility of sense-perception, it is discussed how 'when the same wind blows, one of us feels cold, and the other does not'.⁵ Interestingly, this example is used to demonstrate the implications that change has on knowledge. Whereby, as nothing we perceive is static and all objects are changing or 'in the process of becoming',⁶ then our perception of those objects is continually changing. Consequently, our knowledge of an object is continually changing. It is possible for us to have perceived or have knowledge of an object in one way, but then to perceive an object in the opposite way. For example, a litre of water may be frozen and then boiled. Our perception of the object in each instance would have been correct, but they are contradictory perceptions of the object. Therefore, our knowledge is continually changing and not infallible. The cold wind example raises a simpler issue, whereby if two individuals can have differing perceptions of the same object, the knowledge from those two individuals is different. With sense perception being true for every individual and all perception being subjective, then knowledge cannot be universally true. As a result, knowledge via perception is not infallible.

Should we not know a concept of knowledge as fixed, unchanging, true?

Having shown that sense-perception is not infallible, we can address issue that knowledge must be of the real. Within this context we shall accept that real means that which is known by the senses or through 'bare sensation'.⁷ In Theaetetus it is quickly demonstrated that perception cannot be the whole of knowledge as we have knowledge 'of truths involving terms which are not objects of perception at all'.⁸ The dimensions or colour of an object might be revealed through the sense, but it is through reflection or 'minds-activity'⁹ that we have developed greater knowledge and appreciation. For example, we can demonstrate that 'arguments of mathematics are not apprehended by sense',¹⁰ having developed knowledge of triangles outside of what is immediately available to sense-perception, such as the Pythagorean Theorem. Should the proposition of that knowledge must be of the real require that all knowledge is perceived through the senses, then the proposition is clearly refuted by 'geometry, the sciences and the crafts'.¹¹

Copletion devotes little time to the lengthy discussion on the relationship between judgement and knowledge in Theaetetus, summarising the context to the argument that judgement alone cannot be knowledge because false judgements are possible. Therefore, if judgement is not knowledge, should we consider the possibility that 'knowledge is true judgement'.¹² The simple response framed by Copletion which defeats the proposition in Theaetetus is that 'a judgement may be true without the fact of its truth involving knowledge on the part of the man who makes the judgement'.¹³ Copletion uses examples of epistemic luck, presenting the example of a jury who 'have judged without knowledge' but have come to the correct conclusion regarding a court case. However, I would argue that a simpler example of demonstrable luck would serve as a better example, such as the true judgment of declaring that a coin will land tail side down when flipped. We can clearly see that the coin has an equal chance of not landing tail side down, but my true judgment that is objectively true would be based on epistemic luck rather than what anyone would like to call knowledge. Consequently, knowledge cannot solely be true judgement as it possible to be fallible.

⁵ Plato, Theaetetus, p. 152.
⁶ Copletion, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 1, p. 144.
⁷ Ibid. p. 145.
⁸ Ibid. p. 145.
⁹ Ibid. p. 145.
¹⁰ Ibid. p. 145.
¹¹ Ibid. p. 143.
¹² Ibid. p. 147.
¹³ Ibid. p. 147.
¹⁴ Plato, Theaetetus, p. 201.

An alternate suggestion which Copleston explores in *Theaetetus* asserts that providing an 'account' or explanation would convert true belief into knowledge.¹⁵ If this were to be the case, 'what does giving an account mean'¹⁶ or what shape must this account take? We can quickly dismiss the idea that if any correct proposition is expressed in words it constitutes knowledge, as we find ourselves just providing a vocalising to the already disproven proposition that 'knowledge is true judgement'.¹⁷ While several attempts are given exploring the definition of account, we shall focus on the suggestion that dividing the explanation behind a true belief into its 'knowable parts'¹⁸ allows access to knowledge. Copleston quickly rejects this proposition on the basis that it is possible to provide a description of the various steps involved in forming a conclusion without really grasping the 'necessity of the premises and the necessary and logical sequence of deduction'.¹⁹ For example, it is possible to list all the necessary parts needed to build a fire, including air, heat and fuel, but not have understood why those parts are required. In making this suggestion, Copleston draws us back to the troubling proposition of the 'enumeration of elementary parts'.²⁰ If knowledge is based upon a complete understanding of its parts, we could argue that this demand creates an infinite regression of knowledge. Much of the knowledge we have is based upon other knowledge, which is in turn based upon further knowledge. At what point in this infinite regression could we claim to have knowledge? Furthermore, the interwoven nature of knowledge would make everything except the most basic of knowledge fallible due to the requirement for understanding.

We have seen that sense-perception does not provide true knowledge as it fails to meet the characteristics of (i) infallibility and (ii) realness set initially by Plato. Objects of sense-perception are subjective to the observer and are therefore 'unfit to be the objects of true knowledge'.²¹ Furthermore, we are able to access information or knowledge beyond what we can glean from the senses. Consequently, 'true knowledge must be knowledge of the universal and abiding'.²² With a basis of true knowledge, we can search for characteristics of knowledge that are 'stable and abiding, fixed, capable of being grasped in clear and scientific definition'.²³ For example, a cup of tea will possess a number of characteristics immediately after being made. One of those characteristics is heat. The cup of tea will be continually undergoing change as the cup of tea loses heat. However, as that characteristic can be applied to multiple objects and can be applied to objects in the future, the characteristic must persist even as the tea loses this characteristic and becomes a cold cup of tea. As a result, 'true knowledge is knowledge of the universal'.²⁴ The true knowledge we have of universals fulfils the criteria set by Plato. The unchanging nature means that knowledge of them are not fallible once recognised. However, coming to the realisation of the characteristics of universals means that recognising their realness or existence may be problematic for some. The reality in which the objects exist is a higher order which those who are stuck at 'lowest kind of knowledge'²⁵ of opinions may struggle to reach.

¹⁵ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, p. 147.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 147.
¹⁷ Ibid. p. 146.
¹⁸ Ibid. p. 148.
¹⁹ Ibid. p. 148.
²⁰ Ibid. p. 147.
²¹ Ibid. p. 149.
²² Ibid. p. 149.
²³ Ibid. p. 150.
²⁴ Ibid. p. 150.
²⁵ Ibid. p. 151.

Understanding Plato's epistemology and ontology is challenging. Copleston offer a succinct introduction to these theories. Although familiarity with the primary texts is required, the method which is used to break down and review the texts is extraordinarily helpful. Although Copleston does not offer direct criticism of Plato through the introduction of new arguments, he does review those within the text and address the weaknesses used or that are apparent. Copleston refers to the solution that Plato offers to the theory of knowledge, recognising the entanglement between Plato's epistemology and ontology and the 'standing difficulties to determine the precise relation between the particular and the universal'.²⁶

Bertrand Russell, 'The World of Universals' in *The Problems of Philosophy*, (OUP Oxford, 2001), ch.9.

Italic, as above.

The foundation of the arguments made in *The World of Universals* by Bertrand Russell can all be seen in Plato's epistemological and ontological arguments that were examined by Copleston earlier. Russell uses this chapter in *The Problems of Philosophy* to present three closely linked arguments to build upon the theory that relations have 'a being which is in some way different'²⁷ or resides outside of the means that we perceive sense-data. Plato came the conclusion that sense-data did not allow access to real knowledge, as any knowledge gained from sense-perception are subjective, affected by the environment and continually changing. To have knowledge is to have knowledge of something abiding. Russell²⁸ begins the chapter with by exploring a modified version of Plato's Theory of Ideas:

P1) For just acts/people to be just they must 'partake of a common nature'²⁹ of justice.

P2) The common nature found in just acts/people is the 'pure essence'³⁰ of justice. While the 'pure essence' can be realised by the mind, it is independent of the mind.

P3) In order to be able to apply the label of justice to numerous actions/people, justice must be universal.

C1) Therefore if justice is not identical with any one act/person, justice cannot exist in the 'world of sense'.³¹ Consequently, justice is 'eternally itself'³² and not prone to change like the acts/persons we perceive through sense.

Rather than focusing on the nature of the universal and its relationship to knowledge, Russell³³ uses the two following arguments contained in the chapter to demonstrate the existence of universals.

P1) When we wish to discover something about whiteness or a triangle, we discount features that cannot be applied to all triangles or white things.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 151.
²⁷ Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, (OUP Oxford, 2001), p. 52.
²⁸ Ibid. p. 52.
²⁹ Ibid. p. 52.
³⁰ Ibid. p. 52.
³¹ Ibid. p. 52.
³² Ibid. p. 52.
³³ Ibid. p. 54.

P2) If we avoid using those universal features that are applicable to all, we are reduced to identifying our chosen triangle or white thing through its resemblance to a particular triangle or white thing.

P3) However, our identification of our chosen triangle by its resemblance to another indicates that the resemblance is universal.

P4) If resemblances exist between groupings of white things or triangles, resemblances must also hold between those many groupings

P5) By acknowledging that resemblance hold between many different groups of particular things, there must also be a universal resemblance.

C1) Therefore, resemblance must exist as a true universal. ✓

With the resemblance established as a true universal. Russell's³⁴ third argument builds upon the existence of universals to demonstrate that universals must exist independent of the mind.

P1) Our knowledge of a proposition does not affect the truth of behind the proposition, we are simply understanding a fact that existed before we understood it and would exist if there were no minds to comprehend the fact.

P2) The proposition 'Edinburgh is north of London'³⁵ regards the relationship between Edinburgh and London. This proposition would remain true if there were no minds to perceive it.

P3) The proposition 'Edinburgh is north of London' contains the universal 'north of'.

P4) If the truth of the proposition is not mind dependent, then the universals involved that constitute that truth are not mind dependent.

P5) The existence of universals is entirely independent of the mind.

C) Therefore, universals must be independent of the mind, but can be apprehended by the mind.

Whereas Plato argued for the existence of universals as part of his theory of knowledge that rely on (i) infallibility and (ii) realness, Russell's arguments are far more ontological than epistemological. The similarities and differences become clearer when comparing Copleston's reading of Plato to Russell. Plato uses the analogy of the line and the cave to discuss how we can reach knowledge by moving beyond our opinions grounded in sense-data, to the actual know knowledge of the real and infallible. The World of Universals pays homage to Plato's dialectic, noting that 'it is strange that hardly anybody except students of philosophy ever realises that there are such entities are universals'.³⁶ The conclusion drawn here is similar to Plato's Divided Line, where 'it is possible to progress from one state of mind to the other, to be 'converted'³⁷

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³⁴ Ibid. p. 55.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 56.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 53.

³⁷ Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 1, p. 155.

Russell's arguments for universals culminates in the argument that everything that can be apprehended by the sense or by introspection exists at some particular time.³⁸ However, the universals of relations seem to have a different nature to other universals which can be instantiated in objects. In the example of the two cities, their relationship in the physical world exists before our knowledge of it and if we did not exist at all to realise. The cities will have features that are abiding and physically instantiated. Universals of relationships do not appear to be instantiated but are an addition to the objects in the physical world. Unlike other universals, relations do not appear to exist in either a place or time. Therefore, Russell concludes that the relations cannot be either physical or mental. Plato would argue that the universals of relationships exist 'within the domain of pure reason'.³⁹ Relations would probably mirror the lower end knowledge according to the divided line, being more like mathematical entities. While being 'north of' is a universal, it forms 'a class of intelligible particulars'⁴⁰ that we can understand through their relation to universals instantiated in objects rather than corresponding to a true universal. Through this interpretation, we can see how Russell and Plato's ontology converge.

E. Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge', *Analysis*, Vol. 23 (1963), pp. 121-123

As seen in Copleston's review of Plato's Theory of Knowledge, what constitutes belief is a difficult topic. The beginning of the Tri-Partite Theory of knowledge can be seen as having its origins in Theaetetus, whereby 'true opinion, combined with reason, was knowledge'.⁴¹ (201d). In Gettier's paper, two examples are offered which follow the rules for knowledge according to justified True Belief. However, we find ourselves with the problem that although they follow the necessary rules of justified True Belief for knowledge, we clearly do not have knowledge. Therefore, the Tri-Partite rules seem necessary, but not sufficient for providing for knowledge. As a result, the Tri-Partite Theory of knowledge is undermined as a whole.

Before we examine the two cases that Gettier⁴² brings against justified True Belief as a theory of knowledge, we will establish the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge according to justified True Belief:

- S knows that P IFF 1) P is true,
2) S believes that P, and
3) S is justified in believing that P.

In the first of Gettier's⁴³ cases, Smith and Jones have applied for the same position. Smith has strong justification for believing the following proposition:

(i) Jones will get the job and he has ten coins in his pocket.

Smith's justification believing (i) is that the president of the company told him that Jones would be selected. Furthermore, Smith has counted the ten coins in Jones's pocket moments earlier. (i) entails (ii), whereby (ii) is:

³⁸ Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 56.
³⁹ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, p. 155.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 157.

⁴¹ Plato, *Theaetetus*, p. 201.

⁴² Edmund Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge', *Analysis*, Vol. 23 (1963) 121-123 (p. 121).
⁴³ Ibid, p. 122.

(ii) The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket. Smith acknowledges and accepts (i) entails (ii). Therefore, Smith is justified in believing that (ii) is true. However, it is Smith who gets the job. Additionally, Smith is unaware that he has 10 coins in his pocket. Therefore proposition (ii) is true, but proposition (i) which Smith inferred (ii) from is incorrect. The first Gettier examples fills all the requirements for knowledge:

Smith knows that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket IFF:

- 1) The man who has ten coins in his pocket will get the position is true
- 2) Smith believes that the man who has ten coins in his pocket will get the position is true, and
- 3) Smith is justified in believing that the man who has ten coins in his pocket will get the position is true.

However, we have a dilemma as Smith does not know that 2) is true based on the number of coins in his pocket, but his belief on the number of coins in Jones's pocket, whom he incorrectly believes to be the man who will get the job. To this extent, Smith's knowledge comes from epistemic luck.

In the second case presented by Gettier⁴⁴, Smith has strong justification for the following proposition:

(i) Jones owns a Ford.

The justification for Smith believing (i) is that Jones' is always driving or being seen with a Ford. Smith also has a friend called Brown and he is unaware of his location. Smith selects three places randomly and constructs the following three propositions:

- (ii) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Boston.
- (iii) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona.
- (iv) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Brest-Litovsk.

(i) entails each proposition. Smith acknowledges and accepts (i) and the corresponding entailment of (ii), (iii), and (iv) based on (i). Smith is justified in inferring the subsequent propositions based on the strong evidence for (i). However, the subsequent propositions are chosen randomly and not on any real evidence or justification.

At this point Gettier introduces further conditions. Firstly, the car driven by Jones is not a Ford, but a rented vehicle. Secondly, Brown is in Barcelona and Smith is correct in believing that Brown is in Barcelona (iii) even if he has no evidence. With these two conditions, Smith does not know that (iii) is true, but the conditions for Justified True Belief have been met.

Smith knows that either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona is true IFF:

- 1) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona is true,
- 2) Smith does believe that either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona is true, and

3) Smith is justified in believing that either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in

Barcelona is true.

via the rule of disjunction introduction

When reading Gettier's paper, we should pay particular attention to his use of Modus

Ponens.

Modus Ponens states that:

(i) If A then B

(ii) A

(iii) Therefore B.

In each case, the resulting justified True Beliefs were inferences made using modus ponens that were a result of justification behind the false beliefs, Smith seemed to have support for the truth of the belief in question.⁴⁵ However, despite the apparent strength of the justification, we are left with the problem that any belief whose justification is not beyond doubt is potentially false. As a result, must our justification for knowledge be infallible in order to make any inference and, if this is the case, is it possible to know whether justification beyond the most basic of beliefs is infallible? In the first example, Smith has good evidence for believing the consequent producing justified knowledge regarding Jones. However, we could argue that the consequent does not produce knowledge in this case as there is no clear cause between the knowledge and the evidence that preceded it. The issues with epistemic luck producing apparent knowledge are far more evident in the second example, whereby the resulting knowledge for Smith was not the result of use of evidence of either of the disjunctions. Jones does not own a Ford and there is no reason why Smith selected any of the locations where Brown might be. Consequentially, when one of the disjunctions is proven to be correct, it is out of epistemic luck and not as a consequence of a justifiable link between the disjunction and Smith's apparent knowledge. Gettier has demonstrated that if the conditions of justified True Belief are applied as is, then we have necessary but insufficient criteria for knowledge. While adopting a causal condition to caveat the justification criteria of justified True Belief would appear to be a solution, we must ensure the solution addresses the issues identified in Copleston when "giving an account"⁴⁶ of true judgment.

In conclusion, we have had Copleston provide a concise delivery of Plato's ontology and epistemology. The exploration of Plato's theories has exposed the reader to a number of issues that inform the debates on ontology and epistemology. These include the issues regarding subjectivity of experience and the problem of change. From there we explored Russell's developments and explanation on the theory of universals first seen in Plato. Russell can be seen as a Neo-Platonist in regards to universals. The arguments suggested by Russell were refreshing and Plato's Analogy of the Divided Line can be seen in examples given by Russell in The World of Universals. Finally, Gettier provided two counterexamples as to the problem of justified True Belief as knowledge that were first seen in Plato. Epistemic luck continued to be problem with the theory. However, the Causal-Theory of Knowledge allows for hope to remain in justified True Belief if a modified justification clause is workable. Overall, we can see how the works of Plato continue to underly much of philosophy still being read today.

⁴⁵ Stephen Hetherington, *Gettier Problems* (2010) <<https://iep.utm.edu/gettier/#H5>> [accessed 19 November 2017].

⁴⁶ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, p. 148.

✓ Excellent conclusion for an annotated bib.

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✓ well laid out