23. Gettier & Nozick on knowledge

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I. Gettier Cases

What is knowledge?

Traditionally, you *know p* if and only if:

· *p* is true;
· You believe *p*; and
· Your belief in *p* is justified.

Gettier pointed out that this analysis of knowledge is wrong.

Spurred a literature trying to formulate the correct analysis.

<u>False-Lemma cases:</u>

Smith has been told that Jones will get the job, so he's justified in believing that. He also knows that Jones has 10 coins in his pocket, since Jones counted them in front of him.

From these (justified) beliefs he infers that *p = the person who'll get the job has 10 coins in their pocket.*

Unbeknownst to Smith, *he himself* will get the job and *he also* has 10 coins in his pocket (he hasn't counted them).

So Smith has a justified, true belief that *p*, without knowing it.

His belief that *p* is true by luck; it has no robust connection to the truth.

Upshot: more is needed for knowledge than JTB. What else?

II. The Tracking Theory

In addition to conditions (1) *p* is true, and (2) you believe *p*, Nozick adds two further conditions:

Sensitivity: If *p* were false, you wouldn't believe *p*.
Adherence: If *p* were true (in nearby possibilities), you would still believe *p*.

Sensitivity + Adherence = *Tracking*.

These use *subjunctive* conditionals, which talk about how things might have been.

A subjective conditional *If Q, then R* says that: in the *nearest* possibilities in which *Q* is true, *R* is true too.

Imagine the world *minimally changed* to make *Q* true. Ask: is *R* true there?

Example: if the match were struck, it would light. This is true. It doesn't require that in *all* possibilities in which the match is struck, it would light—after all if it were dunked in water and then struck, it wouldn't light. But in the nearby possibilities in which it's struck, it lights.

Smith's belief that *the person who will get the job has 10 coins in their*

pocket is not sensitive. The nearest possibilities in which this is false are ones in which Smith has fewer or more coins in his pocket—but in those possibilities, Jones would still have 10 coins in his pocket, so Smith would still believe *p*.

So Sensitivity gets correct verdict for Gettier's case. Why add Adherence?

Suppose you're a BIV[1] and scientists decide to prod your brain to make you believe you are. Still, you don't *know* that you are. Why not?

[1] Brain in a vat

Intuitively: again, true "by luck".

Your belief is true, and sensitive (if you weren't a BIV, you wouldn't believe that you were).

But there are all sorts of nearby possibilities in which you *are* a BIV but you *don't* believe that you are. (Ones where they decide to prod you in a different way.)

So your belief fails Adherence.

These examples constitute the core of Nozick's argument for his **tracking theory of knowledge**; you know *p* iff:

1) *p* is true.
2) You believe *p*.
3) Your belief that *p* is Sensitive. (If *p* were false, you wouldn't believe *p*.)
4) Your belief that *p* is Adherent. (If *p* were true in nearby possibilities, you'd still believe it.)

Now he wants to apply his theory to skepticism.

III. Skepticism

Nozick: goal isn't to convince the skeptic; it's to explain how we can know things even though the skeptical scenario (e.g. BIV) is logically possible.

Nozick: The skeptic is right that you don't know that you're not a BIV. After all, if you were, you'd still believe you weren't—so your belief isn't sensitive!

If *BIV*, then would still believe *not-BIV*.

But the skeptic's wrong about everyday beliefs. Your belief that there's a laptop in front of you *is* Sensitive and Adherent.

The false premise is **Closure**, the claim that knowledge is closed under known implication.

If Kp and $K(p \rightarrow q)$, then Kq.

Although (1) and (2) are true, (3) is false:

1) You know there's a laptop in front of you.
2) You know that if there's a laptop in front of you, then you're not a (laptop-less) BIV.
3) You know that you're not a BIV.