

## 26. Skepticism review

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### Stroud 1984:

- Introduces the **Closure Argument** for skepticism:
  - P1 If you know you have a laptop, then you know you're not in a laptop-less Matrix.
  - P2 But you *don't* know that you're not in a laptop-less Matrix.
  - C So you don't know you have a laptop.

Since all your evidence would be exactly the same if you were.

### Gettier 1963 & Nozick 1981:

- Gettier gives cases to show that knowing  $p$  is not the same as having a justified, true belief that  $p$ .
- Nozick: "So what *is* the right theory of knowledge?" Proposes the **tracking theory**: you know  $p$  iff:
  - 1)  $p$  is true;
  - 2) You believe  $p$ ;
  - 3) (Sensitivity:) if  $p$  were false, you wouldn't believe  $p$ .
  - 4) (Adherence:) if  $p$  were true (in a slightly different way), you'd still believe  $p$ .
- The tracking theory responds to the Closure Argument by denying P1.

Smith JTing that the person who gets the job has 10 coins in their pocket. But he doesn't know it.

Your belief that you have a laptop is sensitive and adherent, even though your belief that you're not in a laptop-less Matrix is not sensitive.

### Stine 1976:

- It's implausible to deny Closure (P1), for doing so licenses *abominable conjunctions*.
- "Know" is a context-sensitive term. Knowing  $p$  requires ruling out the *relevant alternatives* to  $p$ ; what those are depends on the context.
- In skeptical contexts, P2 is true and so C follows. In non-skeptical ones, *not-C* is true (you *do* know you have a laptop), so P2 is false.

"I know it's a zebra, but I don't know it's not a mule disguised to look like a zebra."

Thus in non-skeptical contexts, you can know without any evidence that you're not in a laptop-less Matrix.

### Lewis 1996:

- You know that  $p$  iff your evidence<sup>1</sup> rule out all the possibilities in which *not-p* (psst—except the ones we're properly ignoring).
- Much of epistemology turns on the rules of proper-ignoring. In most contexts, we properly ignore skeptical possibilities and so we know a lot. But the **Rule of Attention** says that any possibility you're not ignoring is also one you're not *properly* ignoring. This explains why the skeptical argument seems so compelling.

<sup>1</sup> Experience + memories

In any context in which they give it, P2 and C are true. Only when we're ignoring the laptop-less Matrix is one in which P2 and C are false.