

Epistemology II

Topic 6

What is required is the determination of the checklist of the conditions that an expression must meet in order to be 'knowledge'. What common conditions are an expression 'knowledge' when it is met, and when these conditions are not met, the expression is left out of 'knowledge'?

A clear definition (philosophical definition) gives the necessary and sufficient conditions for something, event, situation, process or feature to be an example of the term defined.

Sufficient and Necessary Conditions

A necessary condition is a condition that must be present for an event to occur. A sufficient condition is a condition or set of conditions that will produce the event. A necessary condition must be there, but it alone does not provide sufficient cause for the occurrence of the event.

So we are looking for a set of necessary and all together sufficient conditions for an expression to be 'knowledge'.

In that case,

For the knowledge (episteme), there is a set of sufficient conditions with sub-branches:

S should believe P.

P must be in the proposition form.

P must be true.

The accuracy of P must be justifiable.

The justificative proposition (G1) must be true.

The accuracy of G1 must be justifiable.

Sufficient and Necessary Conditions of the knowledge (episteme)

(a) S knows that P IFF (i) P is true,
(ii) S believes that P,
and (iii) S is justified believing that P

P

P1

(b) S knows that P1 IFF (i) P1 is true,
(ii) S believes that P1,
(iii) S is justified believing that P1

or

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- (c) S knows that P IFF (i) S accepts P,
(ii) S has adequate evidence for P, and
(iii) P is true.

Discussion Text:

Source: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology/>

[You can see the references in the text from the relevant web page.]

What is Justification?

Whatever precisely is involved in knowing a fact, it is widely recognized that *some* of our cognitive successes fall short of knowledge: an agent may, for example, conduct herself in a way that is intellectually unimpeachable, and yet still end up thereby believing a false proposition. Julia has every reason to believe that her birthday is July 15: it says so on her birth certificate and all of her medical records, and everyone in her family insists that it is July 15. Nonetheless, if all of this evidence is the result of some time-keeping mistake made at the time of her birth, her belief about her birthday could be false, despite being so thoroughly justified. Debates concerning the nature of justification^[20] can be understood as debates concerning the nature of such non-knowledge-guaranteeing cognitive successes as the one that Julia enjoys in this example.^[21]

Deontological and Non-Deontological Justification

How is the term “justification” used in ordinary language? Here is an example: Tom asked Martha a question, and Martha responded with a lie. Was she justified in lying? Jane thinks she was, for Tom’s question was an inappropriate one, the answer to which was none of Tom’s business. What might Jane mean when she thinks that Martha was justified in responding with a lie? A natural answer is this: She means that Martha was *under no obligation* to refrain from lying. Due to the inappropriateness of Tom’s question, it wasn’t Martha’s *duty* to tell the truth. This understanding of justification, commonly labeled *deontological*, may be defined as follows: *S* is justified in doing *x* if and only if *S* is not obliged to refrain from doing *x*.^[22]

If, when we apply the word justification not to actions but to beliefs, we mean something analogous, then the following holds:

Deontological Justification (DJ)

S is justified in believing that *p* if and only if *S* is not obliged to refrain from believing that *p*.^[23]

What kind of obligations are relevant when we wish to assess whether a *belief*, rather than an action, is justified or unjustified? Whereas when we evaluate an action, we are interested in assessing the action from either a moral or a prudential point of view, when it comes to

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beliefs, what matters may be something else,^[24] e.g., the pursuit of *truth*, or of *understanding*, or of *knowledge*.

Exactly what, though, must we do in the pursuit of some such distinctively epistemic aim? According to one answer, the one favored by evidentialists, we ought to believe in accord with our evidence.^[25] For this answer to be helpful, we need an account of what our evidence consists of, and what it means to believe in accord with it. Other philosophers might deny this evidentialist answer, but still say that the pursuit of the distinctively epistemic aims entails that we ought to follow the correct epistemic norms. If this answer is going to help us figure out what obligations the distinctively epistemic aims impose on us, we need to be given an account of what the correct epistemic norms are.^[26]

The deontological understanding of the concept of justification is common to the way philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, Moore and Chisholm have thought about justification. Recently, however, two chief objections have been raised against conceiving of justification deontologically. First, it has been argued that **DJ** presupposes that we can have a sufficiently high degree of control over our beliefs. But beliefs—this objection alleges—are akin not to actions but rather things such as digestive processes, sneezes, or involuntary blinkings of the eye. The idea is that beliefs simply arise in or happen to us. Therefore, beliefs are not suitable for deontological evaluation (see Alston 1985 & 1988; also, see Chrisman 2008). To this objection, some advocates of DJ have replied that lack of control over our beliefs is no obstacle to thinking of justification as a deontological status (see R. Feldman 2001a). Other advocates of DJ have argued that we enjoy no less control over our beliefs than we do over our intentional actions (see Ryan 2003; Sosa 2015; Steup 2000, 2008, 2012, 2017; and Rinard 2019b).

According to the second objection to **DJ**, deontological justification cannot suffice for an agent to have a justified belief. This claim is typically supported by describing cases involving either a benighted, culturally isolated society or subjects who are cognitively deficient. Such cases involve subjects whose cognitive limitations make it the case that they are under no obligation to refrain from believing as they do, but whose limitations nonetheless render them incapable of forming justified beliefs (for a response to this objection, see Steup 1999).

Those who reject **DJ** think of justification not deontologically, but rather as a property that that a belief has when it is, in some sense, sufficiently likely to be true.^[27] We may, then, define justification as follows:

Sufficient Likelihood Justification (SLJ)

S is justified in believing that *p* if and only if *S* believes that *p* in a way that makes it sufficiently likely that her belief is true.

If we wish to pin down exactly what the likelihood at issue amounts to, we will have to deal with a variety of tricky issues.^[28] For now, let us just focus on the main point. Those who prefer SLJ to **DJ** would say that sufficient likelihood of truth and deontological justification can diverge: it's possible for a belief to be deontologically justified without being sufficiently likely to be true. This is just what cases involving benighted cultures or cognitively deficient subjects are designed to show (for elaboration on the non-deontological concept of justification, see Alston 1988).

What Justifies Belief?

What *makes* a belief that p justified, when it is? Whether a belief is justified or unjustified, there is something that *makes* it so. Let's call the things that make a belief justified or unjustified J-factors. Which features of a belief are J-factors?

According to "evidentialists", it is the believer's possession of evidence for p . What is it, though, to possess evidence for p ? Some evidentialists (though not all) would say it is to be in an experience that presents p as being true. According to these evidentialists, if the coffee in your cup tastes sweet to you, then you have evidence that the coffee is sweet. If you feel a throbbing pain in your head, you have evidence that you have a headache. If you have a memory of having had cereal for breakfast, then you have evidence about what you had for breakfast. And when you clearly "see" or "intuit" that the proposition "If Jack had more than four cups of coffee, then Jack had more than three cups of coffee" is true, then you have evidence for that proposition. On this view, evidence consists of perceptual, introspective, memorial, and intuitional experiences, and to possess evidence is to have an experience of that kind. So according to this "experientialist" version of evidentialism, what makes you justified in believing that p is your having an experience that represents p as being true (see Conee and Feldman 2008 and McCain 2014 for defenses of such a view). Other versions of evidentialism might identify other factors as your evidence, but would still insist that those factors are the J-factors.

Evidentialism is often contrasted with reliabilism, which is the view that a belief is justified by resulting from a reliable source, where a source is reliable just in case it tends to result in mostly true beliefs. Reliabilists, of course, can also grant that the experiences mentioned in the previous paragraph can matter to the justification of your beliefs. However, they deny that justification is *essentially* a matter of having suitable experiences. Rather, they say, those experiences matter to the justification of your beliefs not merely by virtue of being evidence in support of those beliefs, but more fundamentally, by virtue of being part of the reliable source of those beliefs. Different versions of reliabilism have been defended: some philosophers claim that what justifies a belief is that it is produced by a process that is reliable (for instance, see Goldman 1986), others claim that what justifies a belief is that it is responsive to grounds that reliably covary with the truth of that belief, other claim that what justifies a belief is that it is formed by the virtuous exercise of a capacity, and so on.