

The Gettier Literature: Some Counterexamples

Several representative (alleged) counterexamples to the proposed analyses of knowledge on the other sheet:

1. *Nogot Case (Lehrer)*: Smith and Nogot work in the same office. Smith knows that Nogot is driving a Ford, has Ford ownership papers, is generally honest, etc. On this basis Smith comes to believe:

P. Nogot, who works in my office, owns a Ford.

Smith hears on the radio that a local Ford dealership is having a contest. Anyone who works in the same office as a Ford owner is eligible to enter a lottery, the winner receiving a Ford. From P, Smith deduces the following:

Q. Someone in my office owns a Ford.

So Smith enters the contest, thinking himself eligible. As it turns out, Nogot is a faker and doesn't really own a Ford, so P is false. However, Q is true because some other person unknown to Smith, Haveit, works in Smith's office and owns a Ford. (Cribbed from Feldman (2003), p. 26.)

- *Intuitive verdict*: Smith has a justified true belief in Q, but Smith does not know Q.
- Two principles Gettier appeals to in motivating cases of this ilk:

fallibilism: It is possible for one to be justified in believing a falsehood.

deductive transfer: If S's belief in P is justified, and P entails Q, and S deduces Q from P and believes Q as a result of this deduction, then S's belief in Q is justified.

2. *Sheep in Field Case (Chisholm)*: Having won a Ford in a contest, Smith goes for a drive in the country. He looks off into a nearby field and sees what looks exactly like a sheep. On this basis he believes:

A. That animal in the field is a sheep.

Smith's son is in the back seat reading a book and not looking at the scenery. The son asks if there are any sheep in the field they are passing. From A, Smith deduces the following:

B. There is a sheep in the field.

So Smith answers, "Yes, there is a sheep in the field." As it turns out, A is false: what Smith sees is a large dog bred and groomed so as to resemble a sheep. However, B happens to be true, because there really is a sheep in the field they're passing, only it's out of sight behind a grove of trees. (Cribbed from Feldman (2003), pp. 26–27.)

- *Intuitive verdict*: Smith has a justified true belief in B, but Smith does not know B.

3. *Existential Nogot Case (Feldman)*: Same set-up as before: Smith knows that Nogot is driving a Ford, has Ford ownership papers, etc. The difference is, on this basis Smith instead comes to believe:

P'. There is someone in my office who I've seen driving a Ford, who has shown me a set of Ford ownership papers, etc.

From P, Smith infers the following:

Q. Someone in my office owns a Ford.

So when Smith hears about the Ford dealership's contest, he enters it, thinking himself eligible. As before, Nogot is a faker, and it turns out that another person in Smith's office (Haveit) owns a Ford.

- *Intuitive verdict*: Smith has a justified true belief in Q, but Smith does not know Q.

4. *Overdetermined Nogot Case (Lehrer)*: Smith works in the same office as Nogot and Haveit. Smith knows that Nogot is driving a Ford, has Ford ownership papers, is generally honest, etc. Smith also knows that Haveit is driving a Ford, has Ford ownership papers, is generally honest, etc. (Maybe Smith even accompanied Haveit when he bought his Ford.) On this basis Smith comes to believe:

P''. Both Nogot and Haveit work in my office, and both own a Ford.

From P'', Smith infers the following:

Q. Someone in my office owns a Ford.

So when Smith hears about the Ford dealership's contest, he enters it, thinking himself eligible. As it turns out, Nogot is a faker, but Haveit is not: he really owns a Ford.

- *Intuitive verdict*: Smith has a justified true belief in Q, and Smith knows Q.

5. *Social Gettier Case (Harman)*: Smith reads a true newspaper account of a political assassination. The reporter is known to be entirely trustworthy, and she was even an eyewitness to the event. But the victim's associates, wishing to forestall a panic, have blanketed the media with (false) reports that the assassination attempt failed and that the intended victim is alive. Nearly everyone has heard these other reports and believes them. However, by a fluke, Smith misses those reports and continues to believe that the victim is dead. (Cribbed from Lycan (2006), p. 157.)

- *Intuitive verdict (?)*: Smith has a justified true belief that the victim is dead, but Smith does not know that the victim is dead.

6. *Fake Barn Country Case (Ginet)*: Smith is still driving his Ford through the country. He looks to his right and sees a (real) barn in broad daylight, under good viewing conditions, etc. As a result, he comes to believe that he has just passed a barn. However, in the neighborhood there are a number of fake, papier-mâché barns, any of which would have fooled him into thinking it was a real barn.

- *Intuitive verdict (?)*: Smith has a justified true belief that he has just passed a barn, but Smith does not know that he has just passed a barn.

7. *Trash Chute Case (Sosa)*: Smith drops a trash bag down the chute in his apartment complex, and as a result forms the (true) belief that the bag is in the basement. However, if it were not true that the bag is in the basement, this would be because the bag got stuck in the chute (a very rare occurrence). But in that case Smith would still believe that the bag is in the basement.

- *Intuitive verdict*: Smith knows that the bag is in the basement, but if that hadn't been true, Smith still would have believed it.

8. *Modified Fake Barn Country Case (Kripke)*: Smith is driving his Ford through the country. He looks to his right and sees a (genuine) red barn in broad daylight, under good viewing conditions, etc. As a result, he comes to believe that he has just passed a barn, and also that he has just passed a red barn. However, in the neighborhood there are a number of fake, papier-mâché barns, any of which would have fooled him into thinking it was a real barn. One catch: all of the fake barns are yellow.

- *Intuitive verdict*: Either Smith knows *that he has passed a barn* and knows *that he has passed a red barn*, or Smith does not know *that he has passed barn* and does not know *that he passed a red barn*.

9. *Radio Case (Feldman)*: Smith is sitting in his study with his radio off, and he can clearly see that the radio is off, that no sounds are emanating from it, etc. At the time, Classic Hits 101 is playing the Neil Diamond song "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon." If Smith had the radio on and turned to that station, Smith would hear the song and immediately recognize it.

- *Intuitive verdict*: Smith knows that the radio is off.