

# IS KNOWLEDGE JUSTIFIED TRUE BELIEF?

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As Aristotle says, all men by nature desire to know. Knowledge is the ultimate aim of our investigations. But sometimes we cannot get it. Belief is a second best. It is not what we really want, but it is better than nothing. Thus belief is often contrasted with knowledge, as we say, for example, "I do not know where Kim went, but I believe he went to Korea."

It is evident that there are some basic differences between belief and knowledge. Let us take just one example. If someone (S) knows that Kim went to Korea (P), then P is true. Of course, it may be the case that S says he knows P (or other people say S knows P) and yet P is false. But if S does know P, then it follows that P is true. It is a contradiction to say, "S knows that Kim went to Korea and Kim went to the United States." On the other hand, belief does not entail the same consequence. There is no contradiction whatever in saying, "S believes that Kim went to Korea, but actually Kim went to the United States." No matter how many people believe that P is true, it may still be false.<sup>1)</sup>

Now one might argue that the differences between belief and knowledge are simply those of degree; there are many different degrees of belief, and knowledge is the highest degree of belief, i.e., an absolute or complete belief, so to speak. But it is clear that we

1. The difference between belief and knowledge can be also seen by the fact that sometimes we take back our knowledge claim by saying, "After all, I did not know P," whereas we never take back our belief claim.

cannot identify knowledge with belief, absolute or not. It still makes sense to say that what S believes is false.

If belief itself is not equivalent to knowledge, it may be something inferior to knowledge; belief, in order to be knowledge, needs some qualifications. Knowledge is compatible with belief, and knowledge as such is definable in terms of belief, but only with some qualifications.

Thus some philosophers argue that knowledge is justified true belief. S knows P if and only if (a) P is true, (b) S believes P, and (c) S is justified in believing P. For instance, H.H. Price holds that S knows P if and only if (a) P is in fact true, (b) S believes P with full conviction or S is completely sure that P is true, and (c) S has conclusive reasons for believing P.<sup>2)</sup> Ayer holds that S knows P if and only if (a) P is true, (b) S is completely sure that P is true, and (c) S has the right to be sure that P is true. Finally, Chisolm holds that S knows P if and only if (a) P is true, (b) S believes P, and (c) P is evident for S, or it is more reasonable for S to accept P.

There are two lines of criticism against the claim that knowledge is justified true belief. Some say that belief and knowledge are not only incompatible with one another but also mutually exclusive, and so we cannot define knowledge in terms of belief, or vice versa. Others say that they are compatible with one another, but the three qualifications mentioned above do not constitute necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge.

Among the first line of philosophers, Plato argues that belief and knowledge are essentially different from one another because they

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2. Price further holds that belief is *always* fallible: "Knowledge is by definition infallible...Knowledge is something ultimate and not further analyzable. It is simply the situation in which some entity or some fact is directly present to consciousness...Belief on the other hand is always fallible. Moreover, there is a certain 'indirectness' about belief. When I believe truly, there is a fact which makes my belief true. But this fact is not itself present to my mind." H.H. Price, "Some Considerations about Belief," *Theory of Knowledge*, ed. by John W. Yolton, The MacMillan Co., London, p. 76.

have different objects. The object of belief is a "proposition," whereas the object of knowledge is a "fact." Descartes also argues that belief and knowledge are very different from one another because belief as such does not amount to, or account for, knowledge. In a similar way, Kant makes a distinction between opinion, belief and knowledge. The ground of opinion is neither subjectively nor objectively adequate; the ground of belief is subjectively adequate, but objectively inadequate; and the ground of knowledge is both subjectively and objectively adequate.

Bolzano also argues that belief and knowledge are different from one another. But the difference depends, not on the degree of confidence we attach to our judgments, but on whether we are able to destroy such confidence. If I have belief, I can still destroy my judgments by critically examining the "reasons." But if I have knowledge, I will not look for any evidence to destroy it. If I know P, I am absolutely confident of it, being independent of my own will, whereas if I believe P, it is sustained by my own will.

Among the second line of philosophers, Gettier argues that there are cases where the three conditions are met and yet S does not know P. Suppose that S accepts P on the ground of another proposition Q and that S is justified in believing Q. Now P may be true, although Q from which S infers P is false, and in this case S in fact does not know that P is true.<sup>3)</sup> In order to remove the difficulty pointed out by Gettier, some philosophers add more qualifications to the definition of knowledge. For instance, Clark claims that S knows p if and only if (a) P is true, (b) S believes P, (c) S is justified in believing P, and (d) S's belief in P is fully grounded.<sup>4)</sup>

I think Gettier's counter-examples clearly demonstrate that knowledge as such is not justified true belief. But this does not mean that we must seek more qualifications. The "standard" analyses

3. Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis*, 23-6, 1963, pp. 121-123.
4. Michell Clark, "Knowledge and Grounds: A Comment on Mr. Gettier's Paper," *Analysis*, 24-2, 1963, pp. 46-48.

of knowledge, as done by Price, Ayer, Chisolm and others, are all based on an unwarranted assumption that knowledge implies belief and that there are necessary and sufficient conditions for constituting knowledge. It is indeed wrong to assume that "there is some essence of knowledge, some set of conditions which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for knowledge."<sup>5</sup> This is clearly expressed by Wittgenstein's conception of "family resemblances."<sup>6</sup>

It there can be any knowledge in religion, although may doubt it, it can never be justified true belief. First of all, it is nonsensical to suppose that we can judge justifiably whether a particular religious belief is true or false, simply because all religious beliefs are in themselves true or, in Kristensen's words, "always absolute."<sup>7</sup> To suppose otherwise is, first, to assume, as Aquinas does, a propositional interpretation of faith, i.e., that religious faith consists of a set of propositions whose truth-functions can be determined adequately by a logical analysis, and, second, to regard that religious belief under consideration as somebody else's belief, not as ours. But "religious knowledge is participating knowledge."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, religious belief can never be objectively justified, if it means an absolute objectivity, simply because there has not been, and cannot be, a universal definition of religion.<sup>9</sup> In this context, it is understandable why Wittgensteinian religious belief, although many doubt it, is called a "fideism," which means something like "sola fide."<sup>10</sup>

5. John Turk Saunders and Narayan Champawat, "Mr. Clark's Definition of 'Knowledge'" *Analysis*, 25-1, p. 9.
6. The "standard" search for the essence of knowledge is futile simply because there is no essence. But it has a negative value "as it reveals the multifarious nature of knowledge." *Ibid.*, p. 9.
7. W. Brede Kristensen, "The Menaning of Religion," Joseph Dabney Bettis, ed. *Phenomenology of Religion*, Harper & Row, New York, 1969, p. 37.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
9. Cf. Philip H. Hwang, "What is Religiology?" *Journal of Religion*, Vol. 1, p. 83.
10. This does not imply, of course, that every passing religious tendency to be found in history can make knowledge claim. But the criteria by which such claims can be made is beyond the scope of this paper.

## 知識은 正當하고 참된 信念인가?

信念과 知識이 同一한 것이 아니라는 사실은 쉽게 알 수 있다. 아무리 강력한 信念이라도 틀릴 수 있으며 또 틀렸을 때는 그 信念을 쉽게 취소할 수 있다. 그러나 완전한 知識의 내용은 언제나 참이며 信念의 경우와 같이 쉽게 취소되지 않는다.

信念과 知識과의 關係는 유사 이래로 철학자들의 관심사였다. 혹자는 그들이 相互排他的이며 상호모순적이라고 주장하며, 혹자는 信念에다가 몇가지 條件을 첨부하면 知識이 된다고 주장한다. 전자에 속하는 철학자로서는 플라톤, 네카르뜨, 칸트, 볼자노를 들 수 있으며, 후자에 속하는 근대의 철학자로서는 프라이스, 에어, 치솜등을 들 수 있다.

필자는 이 논문에서 후자에 속하는 철학자들의 일반적인 주장인 “知識은 正當하고 참된 信念”이라는 명제를 게티어(E. Gettier)가 명백히 反證했다는 것을 밝히고, 더 나아가서는 知識에 대한 이와같은 접근방법이 근본적으로 “보장되지 않은 假定”(unwarranted assumptions)에 근거를 두고 있음을 밝혔다. 끝으로 필자는 이상과 같은 필자의 주장이 宗教的인 知識——일부의 宗教人들은 宗教란 무조건 믿는 것이며 理性을 초월한 것이기 때문에 宗教的 知識이란 있을 수 없다고 주장하지만——에 어떤 의미를 부여하느냐를 고찰했다.

엄밀한 의미에서 宗教的인 知識은 모두 제나름대로는 “절대적”이기 때문에 참과 거짓을 구별할 수 없으며, 宗教的 知識의 眞僞나 正當性의 문제를 논하는 것은 어디까지나 “나의 종교”가 아니라 “남의 종교”의 입장에서 종교를 관찰하는 것이다. 이런 의미에서 비트겐슈타인의 宗教的 信念을 “fid-ism”이라고 부르는 데는 일리가 있다고 하겠다.