THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

The question I am concerned to answer is: What must a person's use of a word be like if that word is to express the concept of knowledge? This seems to me the best way to approach the philosophical question: What is knowledge?

The motivation behind the asking of this question is not just to give an analysis of the concept of knowledge. By investigating the concept of knowledge I hope to throw some light on the general problems of skepticism and epistemology. In particular, I hope to show that the problems of epistemology are not to be seen in their best light if they are taken to be problems concerning the nature and application of the concept of knowledge.

The central problem in giving an analysis of knowledge is to distinguish knowledge as one distinct kind of true belief - to distinguish knowledge from lucky guesses. The way I do this is by maintaining that if a person knows that S, then he is a person of a sort such that if he says that S, S will be true; or that he is in circumstances such that, if a person in such circumstances says that S, S will be true.

The problem is then to extend this account to take in the first person application of the concept of knowledge. I do this by connecting the concept of knowledge with the use of some statements as evidence for other statements. If a person uses some statements as evidence for others, then he must have a tendency to use the truth of certain statements as grounds for rejecting apparent counter-evidence to the truth of those statements themselves. The
statements which a person has the greatest tendency to use to reject apparent counter-evidence, are the statements which he thinks he knows to be true. In these conditions we may say that he thinks the circumstances in which he is to be found are such that, a person in such circumstances would nearly always be right about the truth of S.

It follows from this account of knowledge that the skeptic will almost inevitably meet the conditions for having the concept of knowledge. Yet in various cases where he meets all the requirements for saying that he knows something he will deny that he does have knowledge. His denial involves a misuse of the concept of knowledge, since the conditions in which a person must use a word if that word is to express the concept of knowledge, are just those conditions in which the skeptic denies that he has knowledge. The skeptic may be correct in many of the contentions he uses to support his position. He may be right in holding, for example, that it is logically possible that we are dreaming, the external world is illusion, and so on. However, the skeptic is mistaken when he makes the inference to the claim that the concept of knowledge should not be applied.
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I. Introduction

There are three motives behind the discussions in this thesis. The primary motive is to throw some light on the nature of the concept of knowledge. I have tried to do this by finding what conditions would have to be satisfied if we were to say someone was using a word to express the concept of knowledge.

One point to note here is that I do not want the word 'word' to be taken too seriously. A language could have the means for expressing the concept of knowledge, without having a word which expressed it. Intonation, suffixes, or whatever could be used to replace the word 'know' in English. However, my discussion is intended to encompass such languages. The question I am concerned with could be put more generally in the form: What must a person's use of an element of his language be like if that element is being used to express the concept of knowledge? However, to make the discussion easier, I will assume that the means of expressing the concept of knowledge will be by use of a particular word, 'k'.

By "the concept of knowledge" I mean the following. For a person to have the concept of knowledge is for that person to have thoughts about what we call "knowledge": as, for example, thoughts about whether or not various people know various things. A person may be said to be using a word to express this concept if he uses the word to make statements about what we call "knowledge".

One point which might be argued is whether or not a
person could have the concept of knowledge without ever expressing this concept in a language. I will only be examining the conditions for the expressing of a concept in a language, and if the concept of knowledge does not need to be expressed in a language then more would have to be said about the conditions in general for a person's having the concept of knowledge. However, I will not examine the connection between having the concept of knowledge and having a language.

This problem is part of the more general problem of the connection between having concepts and having a language, and it would take us too far from our main topic.

The second motive behind the discussions in this thesis is to throw some light on more general philosophical problems which concern the concept of knowledge. In particular, I hope to find a more sympathetic way of treating philosophical skepticism, while nevertheless maintaining that the concept of knowledge does have application.

My third motive is to throw some light on the general question of the relationship between thought and language. It is essential to something's being a part of a language, that it be used according to certain rules. While this seems to be a true account of language, one thing which it leaves unclear is how the use of a word according to rules leads to that word's being used in utterances which express a thought - in making statements which are true or false. The account I give of the concept of knowledge throws some light
on this problem.

I try to show that unless a person applies a word when he thinks that certain conditions are satisfied, he cannot be speaking of what we call "knowledge". That is, the rules I give for the concept of knowledge take the general form: "If you want to use the word 'k' to express the concept of knowledge, apply that word when you think that such-and-such is the case".

Now it is not very difficult to see why following rules of this sort enables one to communicate thoughts. If people find out that you always use the word 'k' when you think that such-and-such is the case, then they can take your use of that word to be an indication that you think that such-and-such is the case.

II. Concepts.

"What is knowledge?" In asking this question philosophically, we are not wanting to find out new empirical facts about knowledge. We do not want to be told, for example, about the sociological and psychological effects of advances in knowledge. Nor do we want to be given a list of examples of things which are known. Rather, we want to find out what it is to know something. We want to find out what things are essential to the concept of knowledge.

We are asking what conditions must be satisfied if a person is to know something. What does the word 'must' mean here? We are not asking what conditions must, as a matter of empirical necessity, be satisfied if a person is to know
something. We do not want an answer such as: "If a person is to know something his brain must be supplied with oxygen". It is not essential to the concept of knowledge that a person's brain be supplied with oxygen, since one does not have to know about the existence of oxygen in order to have the concept of knowledge.

Given a condition, C, how are we to determine whether C is essential to the concept of knowledge? One way to find out is to suppose a person were to apply a word, 'k', when he knows perfectly well that condition C is not satisfied. If we would be willing to admit that the person might be using 'k' to express the concept of knowledge, then C is not essential to the concept of knowledge. If, on the other hand, we say that the person cannot be using 'k' to mean "know", then condition C will be essential to the concept of knowledge. If a condition is essential to the concept of knowledge, it will be one which a person must think to obtain whenever he applies a word which expresses the concept of knowledge.

(I use the word 'apply' to refer to the use of 'k' in stating that someone does know something - as opposed, for example, to its use in stating that someone does not know something. Similarly, the "application" of the word 'blue' is normally taken to be the use of 'blue' in stating that something is blue, rather than in stating that something is not blue, that blue is a cool colour, and so on.)

Another way of finding out what is essential to a con-
cept is to test that concept in "all possible worlds". If we can find a possible world in which a person could be said to know something, even though condition C is not satisfied, then C is not essential to the concept of knowledge.

The method I will be using is actually very closely related to the method of "possible worlds". In pursuing the method of "possible worlds" the way we proceed is by giving a description of a situation, real or imagined, in which we find a person. Then we ask, "Would we say that that person has knowledge?"

In asking this question we are not wanting an empirical prediction of whether we would use the set of sounds or letters which make up the word 'knowledge' if we were to come across the situation described. Moreover, even given that we would use the word 'knowledge' in describing such a situation, the crucial question is whether we would be using the word in the same sense as that which it now has.

Another point to note is that we are not asking for an opinion, or a conjecture as to whether the person described has knowledge or not. If there is room for an empirical disagreement, then the case must be more fully described in such a way as to resolve that disagreement. What is needed is a description of a "possible world" which makes it a conceptual question whether the person described has 'knowledge' or not. That is, the case must be described in such a way that, if someone is to use 'knowledge' to express the concept of knowledge, he will be committed to giving one answer rather than another to the question, "Does the person described have
Thus the method of "possible worlds" essentially revolves around the question, "Would a person be using the word 'knowledge' to express what we express by the word, if he were to use it in describing such-and-such a case?" The method I will use aims at providing a theory of what conditions must be satisfied if a person is to be using a word to express the concept of knowledge. Such a theory will supply us with an answer to the above question; and if the answer implied by our theory seems to be obviously false, this will serve as grounds for rejecting the theory.

The importance of the descriptions we would give of imaginary cases - or "possible worlds" - is connected with the importance of finding out how we would go about conversing with people whose use of language differs from our own.

Suppose that we hold that whenever a person does know something a condition, C, will be satisfied. And suppose that someone applies a word 'k' when he thinks C is not satisfied. Suppose, that is, that someone does not think that C is satisfied and yet (without lying, telling a story, joking, and so on) he states that a person k's something.

If we hold that C is essential to the concept of knowledge, we will be committed to saying either that he is making a verbal slip, or conceptual error in applying the word 'k', or else the word 'k' means something other than what we mean by "knowledge". If, on the other hand, we admit that he might be using 'k' to mean "know", we will be admitting the
possibility of a world in which a person had knowledge though condition C is not satisfied. We must admit that if the world were the way he thinks it is, a person would have knowledge though condition C was not satisfied.

Thus, a decision about when we should interpret other people's use of language as expressing the concept of knowledge, will commit us to one way of using the concept in describing "possible worlds".

III. True Belief

1. Consciousness

Knowledge is something which is to be had only by members of the class of conscious beings. I take this to be essential to the concept of knowledge. If a person applies the word 'k' to such things as trees, stones, and teeth, then either he is personifying inanimate objects, or else he is using 'k' to mean something other than what we mean by "know". If a person is to be using 'k' to mean "know" he must only apply 'k' to what he thinks is a conscious being.

There is a danger of circularity here. How do we tell whether he thinks a given thing is a conscious being? One way is by seeing whether he applies the concept of knowledge to it.

In order to see whether a person uses 'k' to mean "know", we must see whether he applies it to what he thinks is a conscious being. But in order to see whether he thinks something is a conscious being, we must see whether he applies
the concept of knowledge to that thing. The way we can avoid this circularity is by taking a broader view. We can tell in the following way whether a person is personifying inanimate objects.

Suppose a person applies a large class of words to people in much the same ways that we apply words like 'know', 'think', 'hope', 'hear', 'pain', and so on. But suppose he also applies these words to inanimate objects; and the way he applies them to inanimate objects has a more or less remote analogy to the way he applies them to people. For example, he says the trees are speaking to each other only when the trees are making a noise which sounds vaguely like human speech.

If the general pattern of a person's use of words follows the above account, it will be clear that he is personifying inanimate objects. If he then applies the word 'k' to those objects which he personifies, it is possible that the word 'k' may express the concept of knowledge. If he applies the word 'k' to objects which he does not personify in the above manner, then he is not using 'k' to mean "know".

2. Assertions

The word 'know' has a large number of uses in English. We can be said to know how to skate; we can know a person, or a place; we can know of a person, or of a novel; we can know to be polite to guests; we can know that the earth moves around the sun; and so on. I am concerned with only one sort of usage of the word 'know' - its use in statements of the form: "So-and-so knows that such-and-such is the case".
That is, I am concerned with the concept of 'knowing that something is the case', or 'knowing the truth of an assertion'.

I am concerned primarily, therefore, with the use of the word 'know' in sentences in which it is followed by the conjunction 'that', and an indicative clause. It may be that the word 'know' is being used in one distinct sense when it is used in sentences of this form. That is, it may be that the word 'know' is used in different senses in each of the sentences: "I know that roses are red", "I know Brenda", and "I know how to drive". If this is so, then I am concerned with just one sense of the word 'know'.

However, it will suit my purposes equally well if 'know' turns out to be unambiguous. In that case, I will be concerned with one kind of knowledge: knowledge of the truth of an assertion. I will not attempt to give a general account of the conditions which must be met if a person is to be speaking about any of the various sorts of knowledge. I will attempt only to give an account of what a person's use of a word must be like, if he is to be using it to speak about the knowledge which people have of the truth of assertions. In this thesis "the concept of knowledge" will be an abbreviation for "the use of a word to make statements about knowledge of the truth of assertions". Similarly, to use a word "to express the concept of knowledge" will be to use the word "to make statements about knowledge of the truth of assertions".

If a word is to express the concept of knowledge in this sense, it must, therefore, sometimes be used in assertions which specify (i) a conscious being, and (ii) an
assertion. If the verb 'to k' is to express the concept of knowledge, it must sometimes be used in statements of the form: "Person X k's that S" (where 'S' stands for any statement).

This is not the only sort of statement in which we may use a word expressing the concept of knowledge. We can also say, for example, "Knowledge does not lead to happiness". This statement does not specify either a conscious being or an assertion, but the word 'knowledge' is being used to speak about knowledge of the truth of assertions. Thus we cannot require that if 'k' expresses the concept of knowledge, it must only be used in statements of the form: "X k's that S". However, we can require that if a person uses 'k' to express the concept of knowledge, he must admit that statements of that form make sense, and are either true or false. He must be willing either to assert or to deny statements of the form, "X k's that S".

3. Truth

The next requirement we will place on the use of a word expressing the concept of knowledge is this. If a person asserts that S, then he may not say of any person, X (including himself):

"X k's (k'd, will k) that not-S".

Similarly, if a person says someone k's (k'd, will k) that S, then he may not assert that S is false without contradiction.
That is, if a person is to use 'k' to mean "know", then it must be clear from his use of 'k' that he believes that:

"If person X k's (k'd, will k) that S, then S".

It is essential to the concept of knowledge that if a person knows that S, then it must be the case that S.

One can say ironically, "And I just knew the Russians would be first on the moon! It just shows how little you can be sure of." However, given the concept of knowledge which I am investigating, no one who now knows that the Americans were first to the moon could seriously contend that they had known that the Russians would be first on the moon. In the sense of 'know' which I am concerned with, if you know something, then what you know must be true. Of course, what you think you know may turn out to be false; but that would just show that you did not know it after all.

If someone is willing to seriously contend that in 1200 A.D. everyone knew that the world was flat, even though he himself thinks that the world has always been round, then he is using the word 'know' to express a different concept from the one I am investigating. When he says, "X knows that S" what he means is more or less the same as what I would mean by saying "X thinks he knows that S". A person who uses 'know' in such a manner will have to translate any statement I make of the form "X knows that S", into the form, "X knows that S, and S is true".

4. Belief
If a verb 'to k' is to express the concept of knowledge, we have so far required that:

1. the person using the word 'k' must sometimes use the word in assertions which make reference to (i) a conscious being, and (ii) an assertion.

2. a person saying "X k's that S" must believe that S is true.

Those restrictions are not enough. All that rules (1) and (2) tell us is that 'k' refers to some sort of relationship between a person and a true assertion. The word 'k' could be used according to these rules, and yet be used to assert that someone mistakenly thinks that S is false.

We need to add a condition which embodies something like the contention that knowledge entails belief. There is a controversy about whether or not knowing that S entails believing that S; but I will not try to settle this controversy here. To decide this question would require not only an account of the concept of knowledge, but also of the concept of belief. The difficulties encountered arise largely because the concept of belief is as badly in need of clarification as the concept of knowledge, and we cannot decide whether knowing entails believing until both of these concepts are sufficiently clarified.

However, although I will not try to give any definite answer to the question of knowledge and belief, I will suggest that we need some concept approximately like the concept of belief as a complement to the concept of knowledge.
If it is concluded that knowing does not entail believing, then we should examine the alternative account: that "X knows that S" entails "X thinks that S". There may be a subtle distinction between thinking that S and believing that S. If this attempt were to fail also, we would have to invent a concept which captures whatever it is of thinking or believing that is bound up with the concept of knowledge. We need some way of saying what we have left when we subtract the truth of S from "X knows that S".

To illustrate this, imagine a case which might be described as one of "knowing but not believing". Suppose a doctor tells a patient that the patient has cancer, and the patient is unable to face the truth of this statement. Consequently most of the things which normally go along with belief will be absent: the patient will not live his life as though he believed that he had cancer - he will not act, speak, or think as though he believed that he had cancer. For this reason it might be suggested that the doctor should say that the patient knows, but does not believe, that he has cancer.

However, if the patient knows that he has cancer, this fact must have registered in his mind in some way. Even if the patient does not believe that he has cancer, he must be in some way aware of the fact that he has cancer. I would suggest that it would be appropriate to say that the patient thinks he has cancer, even if he does not believe
that he has cancer.

To see this, imagine the situation of a technician who performed the crucial tests for cancer, and intentionally gave the doctor a false diagnosis.

The doctor may say the patient "knows but does not believe"; but how is the technician to describe the case? He cannot say the patient knows he has cancer, since he does not think the patient has cancer. The technician would have to say the patient "thinks but does not believe" he has cancer.

Examples might also be constructed in which the subconscious mind becomes involved. It might be argued, for example, that there may be cases where a person knows something (subconsciously), but never (consciously) thinks it. However, the problem that arose above for the technician could arise here also. The subconscious mind is not infallible, and so there may be cases where, although some people would say a person "knows but does not think" that S, there are other people who think S is false. Those who think S is false could not say the person knows that S; so they would have to say something like "he subconsciously thinks that S, but does not consciously think that S". A notion like that of subconscious knowing requires a notion of subconscious believing, or thinking, to function in its analysis.

5. Lucky Guesses
Suppose, then, that we add the following to our account of the concept of knowledge. Suppose we say that if the word 'k' is to express the concept of knowledge, it must be used according to the rule that:

a person saying "X k's that S" must think X thinks that S.

I think this would bring us nearer to an analysis of the concept of knowledge. However, it would not complete the analysis. It is essential to the concept of knowledge that knowing is something more than just happening to be right. If 'k' is to express the concept of knowledge, the conditions in which the word is used must make it clear that "X k's that S" means more than "X thinks that S, and he is right".

Not just any distinction will be the right sort of distinction to make between "X k's that S" and "X thinks that S, and he is right". Suppose a person chooses to say "X k's that S" whenever he thinks X is right about the truth of S, but the truth of S is of no importance. In this case "X k's that S" means "X is right about the unimportant fact, that S". Or, a person might use "X k's that S" to mean "X is in the unfortunate position of realizing that S". In neither of these cases would 'k' be used to mean "know". The circumstances in which a person chooses to say "X k's that S" must be analogous to the way in which we choose to say X knows that S.

The problem of distinguishing "X k's that S" from "X thinks that S, and he is right" is what I will call the
problem of distinguishing knowledge from "lucky guesses". A lucky guess is to be taken as any case where a person thinks that S, and S is true, but he does not know that S.

However, I will attack the problem of distinguishing knowledge from lucky guesses indirectly. I will not ask what must be added to believing or thinking in order to get knowledge. Instead, my aim will be to try to find what conditions on the use of 'k' must be added to conditions (1) and (2) mentioned in section 4 above. What I hope to do is to by-pass the problem of knowledge and belief, and to find a condition which takes in both whatever is needed of the concept of belief, and also whatever is needed to distinguish knowledge from lucky guesses. However, I will refer to this problem rather loosely as the problem of distinguishing knowledge from lucky guesses.

IV. Confidence

We are looking for an account of the conditions in which a person should choose to make a statement of the form, "X k's that S", if he is to be using 'k' to express the concept of knowledge. So let us consider some of the conditions in which we normally choose to say "X knows that S".

Consider in particular the first person judgment, "I know that S". When we claim to know something we are usually confident that what we think is true.
To be confident of something is to be willing to rely on it, to be willing to risk something on its not turning out to be false. What sort of risks might he be willing to take? First of all, he could be said to be risking something on the truth of S if he acts on the assumption that S is true. If he acts on the assumption that S is true, in circumstances where S is false, his action will lead to unexpected and usually unwanted results. Secondly, he could be said to be risking something on the truth of S, if he decides to think on the assumption that S is true. If he develops theories based on the assumption that S is true, then his theories will collapse if S turns out to be false.

Suppose, then, that a person will say "I k that S" when he is confident that S, and is willing to risk something on the truth of S. Is he using 'k' to express the concept of knowledge? Before we can answer this question, we must also give an account of the use of 'k' in third person judgments.

An adequate account of the conditions required for the first person use of 'k' should be capable of being generalized to cover the third person use of the word as well. If X says, "I k that S" then he must think that the conditions are satisfied not only for the truth of his first person judgment, but also for the truth of other people's third person judgment, "X k's that S". We should then be able to generalize the conditions required for the judgment that X k's that S, to obtain conditions which must be
satisfied for anyone to use 'k' in saying any person k's that S.

All we have so far given as conditions for the first person use of 'k' are that X should say, "I k that S" when he thinks that (i) S is true, and (ii) he is confident that S. From these conditions alone, the only account we could derive of the conditions for the use of 'k' in third person judgments would be: a person will say of a person, Y, "Y k's that S" when he thinks that Y is confident that S, and S is true.

However, this would not be enough to ensure that 'k' expresses the concept of knowledge. There are cases where we would admit that a person was confident, and that he happened to be right, but we would want to deny that he knew he was right. For example, he might turn out to be right, but for all the wrong reasons; or he may have only insufficient reasons for reaching his conclusion. In neither of these cases would we say he knew he was right, even if he happened to be confident that he was right.

Suppose a person, X, is confident that S is true, but his only reason for thinking that S is true is that he is confident of the truth of some other statement, T. Now another person, Y, agrees that S is true, but thinks that T is false. So Y thinks that X's confidence in the truth of S is solely based on a false belief. If Y still says, "X k's that S", then Y is not using 'k' to mean "know". Since X bases his claim that S on faulty evidence, he has just
made a lucky guess. If Y is willing to include lucky guesses as knowledge then "X k's that S" means no more than "X is confident that S, and S is true". If 'k' is to mean "know" Y must think there is something more to 'k-ing' than just being confident and being right.

It is not necessary for a person to agree with us on whether any particular case is a case of knowledge, or a lucky guess. But I think it is necessary for a person to make some sort of distinction between knowledge and lucky guesses. He must realize that not all confidently held true beliefs will necessarily be cases of knowledge.

There is one more point I would like to raise about the account of the concept of knowledge which I have been discussing. I said that the word 'know' is used in first person judgments when a person is confident of the truth of a statement. The natural extension from first person to third person judgments would be to suppose that one should say a person knows that S only when that person is confident that S. However, this would be a doubtful thesis.

A person might think that S, and he might have the right to be confident that S, and yet he might not realize that he has the right to be confident. Consequently he might not be confident about it. Since he has the right to be confident, we might want to say that he has knowledge, even though he is not confident. In this way, a person
might satisfy the conditions for knowing something without realizing that he does satisfy those conditions. He may know something without knowing that he knows: in the way that a dog may know where to find his bone without holding opinions about what he knows and what he does not know.

If a person thinks he knows something, he will be confident of it. But he does not decide whether he knows it, simply by seeing whether he is confident. A person should first of all decide whether he has the right to be confident of something. If he does decide that he has the right to be confident, he will say he knows; and he will also be confident — unless he is a person with neurotic doubts.

Thus it is not essential to the concept of knowledge that a person must be confident of something, if he is to know it to be true. Confidence normally does go along with knowing something, for the following reasons. If a person knows something, he will probably realize that he does know it; and if a person knows that he knows something he will normally be confident of it. Nevertheless, I think that confidence is a consequence of knowing, and not what knowing consists in: that is, provided by 'confidence' we mean no more than the willingness to risk something on what one believes. If we are to say that confidence is part of what knowing consists in, we will have to use a different notion of 'confidence' from that involving a willingness to bet on something, to act on it, or to build theories on it.
What is to be meant by the distinction between knowledge and lucky guesses? What is it that gives us the right to be confident of something? This is the central problem which I will go on to investigate. One suggestion which springs to mind is to say that if a person knows something, he has the right to be confident because he has a justification, or evidence for his claim. However, before I investigate this suggestion, I will look into another possible account which might be put forward - an account which might be derived from some of Austin's remarks on the concept of knowledge.

V. Giving Your Word

If a person knows something, then you can take his word for it that it is so. If he makes a lucky guess, then it so happens that you would not be misled if you took his word for it; but it would be just a matter of luck that you were right. You should not take a person's word for something unless he knows that it is so.

Here, then, is one way of distinguishing between knowledge and lucky guesses: a person may be said to know something if you can take his word for it that it is so. Therefore, let us consider the following account of the use of a word, 'k'. Suppose that a person will choose to say of a person, X, "X k's that S" when he would be willing to
take X's word for it that S is true.

The next question to ask is when a person should choose to make the first person judgment, "I k that S". If a person says, "I k that S" he will think that, if others are to speak the truth, they should say of him "He k's that S". This means that they should be willing to take his word for it that S. If he expects others to take his word for it, he may be said to be giving his word. The problem now is to give some content to this notion of 'giving one's word'.

1. Confidence and Responsibility

Suppose that a person, X, will say of another person, Y, "Y k's that S" when he is willing to take Y's word for it that S. Then if Y is not confident of the truth of S, x will not be likely to say that Y k's that S. If a person is not confident of something, then he is likely to change his mind about it. This gives us one reason why it will not be very safe to take his word for it.

Thus, we may be able to connect taking a person's word for something, with our thinking that they are confident. If we are to give an adequate account of the use of the word 'k' in terms of giving and taking one's word for things, then we must also connect giving one's word for something with one's being confident.

Giving one's word may relate knowing to being confident in the following way. If a person claims to know something,
then he is willing to give his word that it is so. One thing which often goes along with giving one's word is a certain sort of responsibility. If someone takes his word for it that $S$, and $S$ turns out to be false, he is liable to be blamed for having misled that person. He will be obliged to find some sort of excuse for having claimed to know that $S$. Therefore, when someone claims to know something, he needs to be confident enough in the truth of his claim to risk social disapproval if his claim turns out to be false and he does not have an adequate justification, or excuse for having claimed to know.

A person would also be taking some degree of responsibility in just stating that $S$, without claiming to know that $S$. However, in claiming to know that $S$ it might be argued that he will be taking responsibility in a special sort of way. For instance, it might be argued that in claiming to know something, a person may be intending to get people to take his word for it that $S$, by virtue of their recognizing that he is intending to let them know that he is willing to accept responsibility for the truth of $S$.

There may be many results which could be derived from an examination of the sorts of responsibility which go along with claims to know, and from a Gricean examination of the sorts of intentions which may be involved in claiming to know something. However, we could not derive a necessary condition for a person's having the concept of knowledge. A being could have the concept of knowledge without ever having blamed anyone, or having been blamed by anyone for anything.
Confidence, in the sense of a willingness to take risks, is only indirectly connected with knowledge. It does not enter into an analysis of what is essential to the concept of knowledge.

A person may claim to know something even though the question of being willing to give his word does not arise. For example, he may claim to know something when he will not count anything as evidence against it. Take, for instance, a simple mathematical truth like, "12 times 12 equals 144". Of course, I would be willing to give my word that this is so; but the question of giving one's word is not essential to the claim to know the truth of mathematical statements. There could be a being who knew that 12 times 12 equals 144, but who was totally unfamiliar with the procedure of 'giving one's word'.

Imagine, for example, a person, X, who was raised by computers. The computers never need to conclude that something is true from the fact that X says it is true. Such a person might claim to know that 12 times 12 equals 144, distinguishing this case from the question of whether or not 173 times 24 equals 4152 - a question he cannot answer without doing long multiplication. In claiming to know that 12 times 12 equals 144 he is not concerned at all with the question of whether he would be willing to give his word about it. Not having met with the phenomenon of taking a person's word for something, such considerations cannot enter into his decision about whether or not he knows that 12 times 12 equals 144.
2. Causation

I suggested earlier that we might try to distinguish between knowledge and lucky guesses by saying that when someone knows something, you can take his word for it that it is so. The problem is to give content to the notion of being able to take someone's word for something. The idea that a certain sort of responsibility is involved in giving one's word was found to be inadequate for an analysis of what is essential to the concept of knowledge.

However, let us look again at the idea that if a person knows something, you can take his word for it that it is so.

If a person has always given reliable information in the past, then we will be inclined to believe what he says. If he says something is so, we will be inclined to take his word for it. Or, it may be that a person has always given reliable information in a given field. Then if that person is talking within that field, we will take his word for it that things are the way he says they are. We may not believe what he says with the same assurance when he is speaking about some other field.

Another possibility is that whenever a particular person is confident of something, whenever he claims to know something, it will be safe to take his word for it. That is, it may be that when he claims to know something, he usually does know it.

One way of finding out about things is through other people. We may find out about a traffic accident by observing
the effects which the accident had on the cars, on the road, and so on. One effect the accident will have is on the behaviour of the people who witnessed it. We should proceed with caution, compare different people's testimonies, examine their possible motivations, and so on. But provided we do proceed with caution, we can determine a good deal about the accident by looking at the effects it had on the sorts of things the witnesses say.

The behaviour of the witnesses was caused, in part, by their having witnessed the accident. What is important is that we are able to infer things about the cause (the accident) by observing its effects (on the witnesses).

Thus one way of inferring the truth of the statement, "If X says that S, then S", is by inferring that one of the causes of his saying that S, is the truth of S itself. Part of the cause of my thinking that the earth goes around the sun, rests on the fact that the earth does go around the sun. The earth's going around the sun leads to various observable phenomena, and these phenomena led people to conclude that the earth moves around the sun. The people who came to this conclusion passed on this information until it was told to me.

Therefore, we might attempt to give the following sense to the idea of "being able to take a person's word for something". It might be suggested that a person is a reliable source of information about the truth of S, if there is a causal connection between the truth of S and his thinking that S.
This leads to the following account of knowledge. (A theory along parallel lines to this one has been put forward by Alvin Goldman in "A Causal Theory of Knowing", The Journal of Philosophy, 1967). It might be suggested that the word 'k' will express the concept of knowledge if a person, X, will say of a person, Y, "Y k's that S" when X thinks there is a causal connection between Y's thinking that S and its being the case that S. This account would cover both third person judgments and first person judgments (if 'X' and 'Y' in the above formulation refer to the same person).

The question I am considering is slightly different from that which Goldman is considering. Goldman claims to be concerned to give, not the meaning of the word 'knowledge', but only the truth conditions of the judgment that a person knows something. I am not concerned to give the truth conditions of the judgment, "X knows that S". I am concerned, rather, with the meaning of the word 'know' - with the conditions which must be met if a word is to be used to express the concept of knowledge.

What I would like to argue is that even if Goldman gives an adequate account of the truth conditions for the judgment, "X knows that S", his account cannot be extended to give an adequate answer to the question I am concerned to answer. It is not necessary for a person to have the concept of knowledge, that he should base his applications of the concept on causal connections.

For instance, it is possible to believe in astrology, to
Ascribe knowledge of the future to astrologers, and to think that one can take the astrologer's word for it that the future will be as he predicts, without ascribing any causal connections between the movements of the stars and the affairs of men. It may be held that there is only a purely coincidental correlation between the movements of the stars and the affairs of men. In the same way, it may be thought that, purely by coincidence, 13 is an unlucky number. In his introduction to the *I Ching* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2nd ed., 1966), C.G. Jung puts forward just such an account of the *I Ching*.

Another view similar to Goldman's is put forward by Peter Unger (in "Experience and Factual Knowledge", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 1967; and in "An Analysis of Factual Knowledge", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 1968). Unger argues (in the latter article, page 157) that: "For any sentential value of p, a man's belief that p is an instance of knowledge only if it is not an accident that the man's belief is true".

It seems that, like Goldman, Unger is concerned to give the truth conditions of "X knows that S" - not to discover what conditions must be met if a person is to be using a word to speak about whether someone knows the truth of an assertion. However, I would suggest that even if he does give a true account of the truth conditions of "X knows that S", his account cannot be extended to give an answer to the question of what conditions are essential to someone's having the concept of knowledge. In the case of superstitious belief in astrology, for example, a person may say "X knows that S",
even though he does think that it is an instance of a vast, cosmic accident that X is right in thinking that S. A person may have an irrational belief in astrology before he even thinks he has accumulated good inductive evidence for the validity of astrology.

3. Finding out that you can take his word for it.

The question I have been considering, is whether we can distinguish lucky guesses from knowledge by saying that if a person knows something then "you can take his word for it that it is so". It is, I think, a mistaken analysis to connect the concept of knowledge with the idea of a causal connection between one's claiming something and the truth of what one claims. However, the notion that "you can take a person's word for something" need not involve such a causal connection. If we can find a weaker interpretation of "being able to take a person's word for something" we may be able to use this notion in our analysis of the concept of knowledge.

If a person thinks he can take X's word for it that S, this means that he will think that S even if only because X says that S. That is, he believes that X is a person of a sort such that, or that the circumstances in which X is to be found are such that, if X says that S then S will be true. If you can take X's word for it that S this means that you could predict the truth of S from the fact that X said that S. Or, alternatively, you could predict that X would not say that S if you were given that S was false.

If we were to use the notion that "you can take a per-
son's word for something" in analyzing the concept of knowledge, it might seem to follow that for a person to have the concept of knowledge, he would need to actually take other people's word for things. It would seem that he must sometimes arrive at the belief that $S$, by arguing: "If $X$ says that $S$, $S$ will be true; $X$ did say that $S$ (and he was not lying, being sarcastic or whatever); therefore $S$ is true".

If the notion of one's being able to take a person's word for something involved one's actually taking a person's word for things, we could not use it in the analysis of the concept of knowledge. A person could have the concept of knowledge even if he never took anyone's word for anything. He might only say another person knows that $S$ when he has already decided for himself that $S$ is true.

However, I think we can separate the notion of being able to take a person's word for something from actually taking a person's word for something. Hence we may be able to make the required distinction between knowledge and lucky guesses by saying that if someone knows that $S$, then you can take his word for it that $S$.

Suppose a person, $X$, will say another person, $Y$, $k$'s that $S$ only after $X$ has already decided for himself that $S$ is true. After deciding that $S$ is true, he may then find independent grounds for saying what $Y$ says will be true. He may find independent grounds for the truth of the statement, "If $Y$ says that $S$, then $S$ will be true".

$X$ will say "$Y$ $k$'s that $S$" when he thinks that $S$ is true, and when he believes that "If $Y$ says that $S$, $S$ will be true".
Now it is a law of logic that if S is true, then anything will imply S (S entails that Q implies S, for any statements Q and S). Thus X could infer that "If Y says that S, then S" just from the truth of S alone. If all he required for applying 'k' to a person was the truth of a statement of that form, then he should apply the word 'k' to everyone.

What is required is clearly that X should have more grounds than just the truth of S for saying "If Y says that S, then S will be true". He should have reasons to support his claim that what Y says will be true.

This account enables us to extend our account of how X uses the word 'k', in order to include his first person uses of the word. We can say that X will claim to k something, when he can give independent reasons to support the claim, "If I say that S, then S will be true". He could say, for example, "I should know how many molars a man has, since I am a dentist".

The account I have given so far of the use of the word 'k', is that a person will say "X k's that S" if he thinks that "If X says that S, then S will be true". There are two extremes which the use of 'k' may be extended to, while still falling under this account. On the one hand, we have the case of the man, X, who does not take anyone's word for anything. X will say a person, Y, k's something when he has reasons to support the claim that what Y says will be true. On the other hand, we have the case of the man who believes that what astrologers predict will be true. He can give no reasons why what the astrologers say will be true, but it is clear that
he thinks that what the astrologers say will be true, because he will take the astrologers' word for things. He will believe things even if only because they were what the astrologers predicted. For this reason he says that the astrologers $k$ what will happen in the future.

Neither of these extremes would represent a sensible way to apply the concept of knowledge. We should not, on the one hand, believe in what a person says, unless we have some grounds for believing that what he says will be true. On the other hand, we should not be so skeptical that we never take anyone's word for anything. Any reasonably adequate theory of what people will say in various circumstances will result in statements of the form: "If $X$ says that $S$ (in certain sorts of circumstances) then $S$ will be true". If we then find that $X$ does say that $S$, we will be able to conclude from our theories about people that $S$ will be true.

However, although neither of the extreme ways of applying the word 'k' would be sensible ways of applying the concept of knowledge it might be suggested that they would nevertheless be possible ways of applying the concept of knowledge. It would seem that a person could apply the word 'k' in either of these extreme ways, and still be using 'k' to express the concept of knowledge.

We might therefore suggest the following account of the concept of knowledge: a person will be using a word 'k' to express the concept of knowledge if he will say "$X$ k's that $S$" when he thinks that, "If $X$ says that $S$, $S$ will be true".
Yet this account will not do as it stands.

On the one hand we have the case of a person, X, who only says "Y k's that S" when he has independent grounds for the truth of S, and when he also has independent grounds for the truth of the statement, "If Y says that S, S will be true". We can easily extend this account to include X's first person use of the word 'k': he says, "I k that S" when he has independent grounds for the truth of the statement, "If I say that S, S will be true".

However, if we move to the other extreme way of applying the word 'k' it will not be so easy to extend our account to the first person use of the word. In this way of applying the word, the only way to tell that a person, X, thinks that what a person Y says will be true, is by finding that X will take Y's word for things - X will conclude that S given only that Y says that S. What, then, are we to say of X's first person applications of 'k'? We cannot say that he says "I k that S" when he takes his own word for it that S - or when he will conclude that S given only that he himself says that S.

We will, therefore, abandon the approach we have been using so far, and we will turn to a consideration of the attempt to distinguish knowledge from lucky guesses, by saying that if a person knows something then he has evidence, or a justification for his claim. What will, I hope, emerge will be an account which reintroduces something of the notion that when a person knows something, you can take his word for it that it is so.
VI. Evidence

When someone claims to know something, he lays himself open to the question: "How do you know?" If he expects other people to take his word for it, they will want to know why he thinks they can take his word for it. For example, they may expect him to produce a justification, or evidence for his claim.

Suppose a person, X, holds the following beliefs:
(i) if $S_0 \ldots S_k$ are true, then $S$ will be true;
(ii) $S_0 \ldots S_k$ are all true;
(iii) $S$ is true.

In this situation, X may claim to have evidence for the truth of $S$. Suppose, then, that X claims to know that $S$ whenever he has evidence for the truth of $S$. Does he then have the concept of knowledge? Before we can answer this question, we must complete our account of how X uses the word 'know'. We must also give an account of how X uses 'know' in third person judgments.

When X says "I know that $S$" he will think that others should believe him. If other people are to speak the truth, they must say of him, "He knows that $S$". Thus, when he claims to know that $S$, he must think that the conditions are satisfied for others to make the third person judgment, "X knows that $S$".

The condition which he does think is satisfied is that he has evidence for the truth of $S$. Therefore, the condition which must be satisfied for a person to make the third person judgment "X knows that $S$" is that X must have evidence for the truth of $S$. Provided that the conditions for making third person
judgments with the word 'k' are to be the same for X as for other people, X will have to make the third person judgment "So-and-so k's that S" when he thinks that that person has evidence for the truth of S.

Suppose, then, that a person applies the word 'k' to a person when he thinks that that person has evidence for a claim. Is this use of the word 'k' one in which the word is being used to express the concept of knowledge?

Suppose that a person claims that statements (i), (ii), and (iii) are all true. Suppose also that all of these claims are, in fact, correct; but that claims (i) and (ii) are just lucky guesses. And suppose also that (i) and (ii) are all the evidence he has for the truth of S. Then his claim that S was based on even more shaky grounds than either (i) or (ii) were— it is even more of a lucky guess than they were. Thus, he cannot be said to have known that S was true.

If a person is to know something on the basis of evidence, then what he uses as evidence must be more than lucky guesses. He must know that (i) and (ii) are true, if they are to constitute grounds for saying he knows that S is true. If a person is to have the concept of knowledge, he must realize that what a person bases on lucky guesses is no more 'knowledge' than the lucky guesses are.

Hence if a person uses the word 'k' to mean "know", and he claims to k that S because he has evidence, S0...Sk, then he must claim that (i) he k's that if S0...Sk are true, S will be true; and (ii) he k's that S0...Sk are true.

It follows from this that we cannot give an account of
the concept of knowledge in terms of evidence. Suppose we say: if 'k' means "know", then a person should claim to k that S when he k's that certain evidence holds. This will not give us an account of how the word 'k' is used unless we already have an account of when he claims to k that evidence holds. We must eventually complete our account of how 'k' is used; and we can only have a complete account if we cease to assume that we already have an account of how 'k' is applied to certain other, evidential claims.

The classical account of the concept of knowledge is that knowledge is justified true belief. This account has been derived from Plato (Theaetetus, 201; Meno, 98); it is discussed in Russell's The Problems of Philosophy (1912); and it received its classical statement in Ayer's The Problem of Knowledge (1956). It has received a great deal of discussion recently in periodical journals, especially Analysis and The Journal of Philosophy between 1962 and 1970.

The point I have been arguing is that we cannot give an account of the concept of knowledge in terms of evidence, since this leads to an infinite regress. This point has been generally recognized in the literature. The definition of knowledge as true justified belief usually involves a notion of justification which is supposed to avoid the infinite regress. That is, being justified in asserting something, unlike having evidence for the assertion, does not need to involve knowledge of the truth of any further assertions. One can be justified in holding certain beliefs, not because one has evidence, but (it may be suggested) because one is in a
position to know, or because one has direct knowledge, knowledge by direct acquaintance with the objects of one's knowledge, and so on.

In much of the literature it is not clear whether the goal of a 'definition' of knowledge is to give an answer to the question I am concerned to answer. That is, it is not altogether clear whether what is being attempted is to give an account of the conditions which have to be met if a person is to be said to have the concept of knowledge. Some of the time the writers seem, like Goldman, to be concerned only with giving the truth conditions of the judgment "X knows that S". Much of the time it is left unclear whether the writer is concerned with the truth conditions of "X knows that S", or with what is essential to the concept of knowledge.

If an account of what is essential to the concept of knowledge is to be given in terms of justified true belief, it would take the following form: "If a person is to be using the word 'k' to express the concept of knowledge, he must make the judgment, "X k's that S", when he thinks that X thinks that S, S is true, and that X is justified in thinking that S. If this account is to enable us to determine whether a person has the concept of knowledge, we must give a more extensive account of the notion of justification. How do we determine whether a person thinks that X is justified in thinking that S? Before attempting to answer this question I will investigate further the relationship between knowledge and the use of evidence. I hope that what will emerge is a clarification of the notion of justification, and also the
VII. Counter-evidence

Suppose a person, X, claims that S, though he has no evidence for the truth of S. Then he is presented with a set of statements $S_0 \ldots S_k$. He is then persuaded that if $S_0 \ldots S_k$ were true, S would not be true.

X may react in one of several ways. On the one hand, he may be unwilling to commit himself to claiming that $S_0 \ldots S_k$ are true, or that they are false. In consequence, he will no longer be willing to commit himself to the truth of S.

On the other hand, he may be inclined to think that $S_0 \ldots S_k$ are true: and he will, therefore, relinquish his belief that S is true. Or, he might have independent reasons to think $S_0 \ldots S_k$ are false, so he may go on thinking that S.

There is one more possibility. He might argue in the following manner: "$S_0 \ldots S_k$ imply that S is false. So therefore, if S is true, $S_0 \ldots S_k$ will not be true. Now clearly S is true; so therefore $S_0 \ldots S_k$ are not all true." If he makes this response, it seems clear that he thinks that he knows that S is true.

We did not find an adequate account of the use of 'k' by looking at the evidence a speaker has for an assertion. However, we may look instead at the reactions a person may have towards evidence which seems to tell against his claim. Suppose we offer the following account. A person chooses to say "I k that S" when he has an inclination to reject anything which would tell against the truth of S. If he has no
independent grounds for rejecting apparent counter-evidence to S, then he will use S itself as evidence for rejecting the counter-evidence.

If X tends to use S as being itself adequate grounds for rejecting apparent counter-evidence, what condition does he think is satisfied? The answer is, he thinks he should use S as grounds for rejecting apparent counter-evidence. When X says "I k that S", he will think that the conditions are satisfied for others to make the third person judgment, "X k's that S". Thus the conditions for making third person judgments "Y k's that S" are that Y will use S to reject apparent counter-evidence, and that Y should use S in this way.

The problem is now to give sense to the idea that a person should use a statement to reject apparent counter-evidence. However, let us leave this question aside for the moment, while we look more closely at the use of a statement to reject apparent counter-evidence.

Suppose one statement, S₁, functions as evidence against another statement, S₂. If S₁ is true, S₂ will be false. It follows from this by logic that if S₂ were true, S₁ would be false. Whenever we have an evidential relation between two statements, there will be two ways of wielding this relation. We can use S₁ as evidence against S₂, or we can use S₂ as evidence against S₁.

Suppose that we are inclined to assert that S₁ is true, but we are also inclined to assert that S₂ is true. We then have a problem. One thing we can do is to leave it an open question whether we should assert S₁ or S₂. We may wait for
independent confirmation of either \( S_1 \) or \( S_2 \). If we have more or less equal inclination to believe \( S_1 \) as to believe \( S_2 \), then this would be the only sensible course of action.

However, if we have a greater inclination to believe one of \( S_1 \) or \( S_2 \), this will lead us to wield the evidential relation one way rather than the other. If we are inclined to accept \( S_1 \) then we will use \( S_1 \) as grounds for rejecting \( S_2 \). And if we are to use \( S_1 \) as grounds for rejecting \( S_2 \), then we must have a stronger inclination to accept \( S_1 \) than \( S_2 \).

An evidential relation by itself does not tell us what we should think is the case. It is only given that we hold some beliefs more firmly than others, that we can wield the evidential relation one way rather than the other. Otherwise we would not be able to choose between retaining a statement and rejecting the evidence against it, and retaining the evidence and rejecting the statement.

What is true of evidence against statements we were inclined to accept will also be true of evidence for statements we were inclined to reject. This may be seen to be so, since evidence against the statement "\( S_2 \)" will be evidence for the statement "not-\( S_2 \)". Thus, if we are to use evidence to establish something we formerly thought to be false, we must have a stronger tendency to hold to the truth of some statements, than to hold to the falsity of the other.

If a person is to assert anything at all he must have a greater inclination to assert some statements than others: for the simple reason that if he asserts that \( S \), he must not always be equally inclined to assert that not-\( S \). However,
provided we are considering statements which are not logically connected, it is still doubtful whether it would be possible for a person never to have a greater inclination to accept some statements than others. Such a being would at any rate be very odd indeed. However, even if such a being could exist, it could not have the concept of evidence - it could not accept or reject statements on the basis of evidence. For, suppose a person is to base one statement on evidence - the statement not being logically connected with the evidence. This person would have to have a greater tendency to assert the truth of the evidence, than to assert the falsity of the statement.

What is required for a person to have the concept of evidence is only that he should have two levels of confidence in the truth of statements: on the one hand, having an inclination to assert a statement, and on the other hand, having no inclination either to assert or to deny a statement. That is, a person might only use evidence to support those statements which he was formerly inclined neither to accept nor to reject.

However, the concept of knowledge requires more than this very restricted use of evidence. What is required is that a person should use evidence to reject a statement which he was formerly inclined to accept, or to support a statement which he had been inclined to reject. This use of evidence requires many levels of confidence in the truth of different statements.
It is an almost unavoidable progression from the barest possible notion of evidence, to the more fully fledged use of evidence— the use of evidence to reject a statement which a person had formerly accepted. Inevitably, a person will find himself presented with the dilemma of being inclined to assert that \(S_1\), and that \(S_2\), and also that if \(S_1\) is true, \(S_2\) will be false. The only way this dilemma can be resolved is by rejecting one of the three things which he was inclined to assert: either he rejects \(S_1\), or \(S_2\), or the implication "\(S_1\) implies \(S_2\)"; or he rejects all of them but one, or he rejects them all. If he just rejects any one of the three, he has used evidence to reject a statement which he had been inclined to accept. The only way to avoid this course is, therefore, either to ignore the dilemma, or to reject two or three of the statements. Any of these latter alternatives would be arbitrary courses, since there would be no reason for rejecting one pair rather than another, or for rejecting two rather than three, or three rather than none (assuming that he has an equal inclination to assert all three of them). It would be possible for someone to avoid the dilemma without using evidence to reject something he formerly asserted, but I think it is also natural to progress to the more fully fledged use of evidence—the advantages of such a step are fairly obvious.

Suppose, then, that a person does hold certain statements more firmly than others. Suppose that he will use a statement, \(S\) say, as evidence for rejecting other statements
which he had been inclined to accept. Then this person is doing what I have called "using the truth of $S$ to reject apparent counter-evidence". Thus, all that is required for the concept of knowledge so far, is that a person should use some statements as evidence for rejecting other statements which he had formerly been inclined to accept.

The next requirement for the concept of knowledge is that a person should distinguish between times when a person should, and times when he should not use the truth of a statement to reject apparent counter-evidence.

If a person knows that $S$, then he should use the truth of $S$ to reject apparent counter-evidence. If his belief that $S$ only amounts to a lucky guess, then he should not use his belief that $S$ to reject apparent counter-evidence. If he makes a lucky guess, he is in a situation such that, when one is in such a situation one often turns out to be mistaken. Thus, if one is in such a situation, one should relinquish the belief in question if evidence is produced against it.

A person may not realize that he is in such a situation, and hence it may be sensible from the point of view of his own beliefs, to think he has knowledge. However, what decides whether he has knowledge is not whether he is taking the most sensible alternative, given the situation he thinks he is in. What decides whether he has knowledge is the situation in which he is, in fact, to be found.

For example, a large proportion of the things one reads in detective magazines are false. Therefore, if the source
of a person's belief was a detective magazine, even if his belief turns out to be true, he could not be said to have knowledge. If we are to say he has knowledge we must find something more about his situation, which would put him in a situation such that people in such a situation are usually correct in holding a belief like the one in question. For example, if the statement which he believes to be true was also a statement which he read in an encyclopedia, then he could claim to have knowledge.

For a more complicated case, imagine the following. Suppose a person, X, obtains the information that S, say, from an encyclopedia. However, I know that the contributor who supplied this information had been bribed to put that information in the encyclopedia. By an amazing coincidence, the information he put in the encyclopedia turned out to be correct; but both the contributor, and the man who bribed him thought they knew the information to be false.

Now X is following a sensible policy in claiming to know that S. He is following a policy which will nearly always keep him in line with the truth. The statement is one which he read in an encyclopedia; and most statements falling under that description are true. However, the statement in question is also one which someone thought was false and was bribed to tell him. Most statements which fall under this description will be false. If one uses statements of this sort to reject apparent counter-evidence, one will not keep in line with the truth. Therefore X does not really
know that S, even though he did read it in the encyclopedia.

One sort of situation in which a person should use the truth of a statement to reject apparent counter-evidence, is when he can give supporting evidence for the statement. Another sort of situation in which a person should use a statement in this way, is when the statement asserts something which, we might say, he is in a position to know. Examples of statements asserting what a person is in a position to know are: statements about what he is thinking or feeling; statements about what he is observing, or remembers observing; and statements which he has heard, or read, from reliable sources.

In general, a person should use a statement, S, to reject apparent counter-evidence when he is in a situation such that, a person in such a situation is nearly always right in holding a belief in the truth of the statement in question. That is, given the situation a person, X, is in, we can derive the statement, "If X says that S, S will be true".

Here we find ourselves back with the formula which emerged from the consideration of the notion of being able to take a person's word for something. The problem which was left over from the consideration of that notion, was the problem of giving content to the idea that a person should make the first person judgment, "I k that S", when he thinks that, "If I say that S, S will be true". We cannot, on analogy with third person judgments, imagine him taking his
own word for it that S.

However, the statement, "If I think that S, S will be true", may be given content by looking at a person's reaction to apparent counter-evidence. If in certain circumstances a person uses the truth of S to reject apparent counter-evidence, he thinks that the circumstances he is in are such that any person in similar circumstances would nearly always be right about the truth of S. That is, he thinks that his circumstances are such as to ensure the truth of the statement, "If I think that S, S will be true".

VIII. Scepticism

The account I have given of the concept of knowledge is this. A person, X, is using a word 'k' to express the concept of knowledge if:

1. when he applies the word 'k' he will make reference to (i) what he believes to be a conscious being, and (ii) an assertion;

2. he believes that, for any statement, S, "If a person k's that S, then S is true";

3. X will say a person, Y, k's that S when (i) he thinks Y will tend to use S to reject apparent counter-evidence to the truth of S, and (ii) X thinks that in doing so, Y is following a policy which will keep him in line with the truth.

Given this concept, we may now ask when such a concept should be applied. This question reduces to the questions of what we count as conscious beings, what we count as assertions,
what assertions we think to be true, and what sorts of assertions we should use against apparent counter-evidence. The last of these questions is the one which is of the most immediate relevance to the problem of skepticism.

The skeptic is one who questions whether we do, in fact, know various things which we claim to know. On the account I have given of the concept of knowledge, what the skeptic will be questioning is whether we ought to tend to use various statements to reject apparent counter-evidence.

In its most extreme form, skepticism is the claim that we do not know anything. This claim could be taken in two ways. I showed earlier, that if a person uses some claims as evidence for others, then he must hold some beliefs more firmly than others. And if he is to use evidence to reject statements he formerly held to be true, then he must have some tendency to hold certain beliefs despite some apparent counter-evidence. This is a very weak claim, but it is all that is required for the speaker to have the concept of knowledge. If he applies the word 'k' to those beliefs which he has the greatest tendency to hold onto, and if he will apply 'k' to other people when they are in similar situations to those in which he would claim to k something, then 'k' means "know".

It would seem, then, that the skeptic who claims that we do not know anything is denying us the right to use some beliefs as evidence for rejecting others; and this claim is obviously unacceptable. However, the skeptic might not be
meaning to say anything as extreme as this. The skeptic might
agree that we ought to use some claims as evidence for others,
but he may add that there should always be a willingness to
accept counter-evidence to any of our claims. This by it-
self does not mean we cannot apply the concept of knowledge,
since in order to apply the concept of knowledge we only need
some tendency to reject apparent counter-evidence - not an
absolute unwillingness to accept anything as counter-evidence.
However, the skeptic may go on to say that when we claim to
know something, we have too strong a tendency to reject
counter-evidence. He may say that claiming to know something
usually does go along with a more or less absolute unwilling-
ness to accept anything as counter-evidence. Therefore, the
skeptic suggests that we should not apply a concept like the
concept of knowledge: we should not use any one term like
'know', but we should speak of degrees of assurance. Using
a single term like 'know' for one class of beliefs tends to
make us think there is a difference in kind between these
beliefs and other beliefs. We then tend to give special
treatment to the things we think we know. We tend to treat
the things we think we know as if they were altogether dif-
ferent from the other beliefs we hold.

The skeptic who argues in this way does have a point to
make. The skeptic is opposing excessive dogmatism. However,
I would quarrel with him on two points. In the first place
I would deny that the use of one term, like 'know', is the
cause of dogmatism. At any rate, I would think that the use
of the word 'know' is only a minor factor in the production of dogmatism. It is partly for this first reason that I would also quarrel with the skeptic on his second point: that it would be a good thing to cease to use such a word as 'know' altogether. If we ceased to use the word 'know' this might help to ease some of the skeptic's discomfort, but this possible advantage is far outweighed by the loss of the many disadvantages which there are in having such a word. It seems to me obvious that there must be many advantages to having such a word: why else would so many different languages possess a word expressing the concept of knowledge?

Skepticism may also take a less extreme form. The skeptic may say that there are some things which we can truly be said to know; but many of the things which we think we know are not things we really know at all. That is, the skeptic may say that we should not hold certain sorts of statements with the amount of assurance that people normally have in them. He may say that statements about other minds, or about the external world, the future, the past, or whatever, should not be held with the degree of assurance that normally goes along with claiming to know something.

The skeptic may, for example, contrast statements about the future with statements in mathematics. We can hold statements in mathematics with a great deal of assurance. Suppose we are presented with a case in which we seem to have twelve rows of trees with twelve trees in each line, but when we count up the trees we always get 143. In such a case
we will always hold to the belief that 12 times 12 equals
144, and we will conclude that we miscounted somewhere, or
a tree vanished in the counting, or something of that kind.
We can always use the truth of a mathematical statement to
reject anything which would count as evidence against itself.

In contrast, consider statements about the future. I
believe that the sun will rise tomorrow; but it would be
possible to imagine experiences which would lead me to con-
clude that morning had come and the sun had not risen.

However, let us look more closely at the sorts of state-
ments we can make about the future. I believe that the sun
will rise tomorrow. I also believe that the cost of living
will rise in New Zealand. However, these two beliefs are
not on the same level. I would claim to know that the sun
will rise in the morning, but I would not be so bold as to
claim to know that the cost of living will rise in New
Zealand.

Suppose someone starts to propose counter-evidence to
my claim that the sun will rise tomorrow. His evidence would
have to be very impressive indeed, if he is to shake my
belief that the sun will rise tomorrow, or else I will be
almost certain to discount his evidence, if for no other
reason than simply that I know the sun will rise tomorrow.
If all the scientists in the world predicted that the sun
would not rise in the morning, this would be enough to con-
vince me; but it would not be so very easy to persuade me
that the scientists had predicted that the sun would not
rise in the morning. I would begin to suspect a plot to
deceive me before I would believe that other people were tell-
ing the truth when they said that the scientists had made such
a prediction.

In contrast, it would be much easier to convince me that
the economists had all predicted that the cost of living in
New Zealand would not rise noticeably in the near future. An
article in Time magazine would convince me of this. In
contrast, if a copy of what appeared to be Time magazine said
that the scientists had predicted that the sun would not rise,
I would conclude that what I was reading was a Harvard
lampoon of Time magazine, or something of that sort.

Consider also what would happen if I began finding
evidence which seemed to suggest that the morning had come,
and the sun had not risen. Suppose it seemed as though a
very great length of time had passed since sunset, and when
I checked the clocks they all said 10:00 a.m.. My first
conclusion would be that the clocks must be wrong. If every-
one began commenting on the fact that the sun had not risen,
I would wonder what was going on. I would wonder, at first,
whether I was dreaming, hypnotized, under the influence of
drugs, having my brain artificially stimulated, and so on.
Eventually, however, I might be forced to admit that the
sun had not risen.

In contrast, if I found that as time went on, the
prices of advertized items in New Zealand newspapers remain-
ed more or less constant, I would conclude without much
There is, therefore, a clear enough distinction between my belief that the sun will rise in the morning, and my belief that prices will rise in New Zealand. This distinction is marked by use of the word 'know'. The skeptic, however, will object that strictly speaking we do not even know that the sun will rise tomorrow. What reasons can the skeptic bring forward for this claim?

One way the skeptic might argue, is in the manner I have already discussed — by claiming that we should not use any term like 'know' which suggests a difference in kind between my belief that the sun will rise tomorrow, and my belief that prices will rise in New Zealand. I do not think this argument has much force in it. We have a distinction we need to draw, and we use the word 'know' to do so.

There is, however, another argument which the skeptic might produce. He might contrast my belief that the sun will rise tomorrow, with my belief that 12 times 12 equals 144. I would have a strong tendency to reject evidence which seemed to tell against my belief that the sun had not risen in the morning; but I could conceive of circumstances which would lead me to finally admit that the sun had not risen. In contrast, there are no conceivable circumstances which could overthrow the truths of arithmetic and prove, for example, that 12 times 12 equals 143. The skeptic might then say that, strictly speaking, we should only use the
word 'know' when we have a right to be unwilling to accept anything at all as evidence against our claim. The word 'know' should be reserved for mathematical, logical, and analytic statements.

One reason which seems to support this contention, is that it seems wrong to say, "I know that S, but I might be wrong". What I contend is that there is nothing wrong with saying "I know that S, but it is logically possible that I am wrong". If "I might be wrong" were being used to mean nothing more than "it is logically possible that I am wrong", then there would be nothing wrong with the statement, "I know that S, but I might be wrong". There is only something wrong with this statement if "I might be wrong" means something like, "I would not rely on the truth of it".

There certainly is a distinction between mathematical statements and statements like, "The sun will rise in the morning". However, I would reply to the skeptic by claiming that there is no good reason why we should use the word 'know' to mark this distinction. The word 'know' is, has been, and will continue to be used to mark a different distinction. If we wish to make a further distinction within the class of statements we claim to know, we should make such a distinction with words other than the word 'know' - say, 'analytic', or 'a priori' as opposed to 'synthetic', or 'empirical'.

I would want to argue against the skeptic, if he maintains that we should not apply the concept of knowledge at all. However, the questions raised by skepticism cannot be
dismissed so easily.

Consider the skeptic's question: "How do I know that I am not now dreaming?" If we do not know that we are not dreaming, then we do not know anything. So if I claim that the concept of knowledge has application, I must claim that we know we are not dreaming.

On the account of the concept of knowledge which I have given, we can say we know we are not now dreaming. We would take a good deal of persuading before we would admit that our lives up to now had been all a dream. What is more, we believe that by working on the assumption that we are not dreaming we will, in fact, be keeping in line with the truth. That is, we think that we know that we are not dreaming.

However, I believe that we can imagine experiences which would persuade us that our lives up to now had been a dream. Such experiences would involve a tremendous amount of counter-evidence to what we now believe, but they are nevertheless conceivable. This is the skeptic's real point. The skeptic tries to show that it is logically possible that certain sorts of beliefs which we hold are, in fact, false - or even that all of the beliefs we hold are false. However, admitting this logical possibility does not entail the claim that we do not know that these statements are true. I may still claim to know that I am not dreaming, even if I admit that it is logically possible that I am dreaming.

The skeptic will then ask, "But how do you know?" We can produce no evidence for the truth of the statement that
we are not dreaming - and this fact is another of the skeptic's valuable points. However, we cannot demand evidence for everything we claim to know, without involving ourselves in an infinite regress. Thus we need not be too worried by the fact that we can give no evidence that we are not dreaming. I can say I know I am not dreaming; and if it is true that I am not dreaming, then I am justified in claiming to know I am not dreaming, simply because I am not dreaming.

Similarly, I am justified in saying "I have a mental image of an egg" not because I can give any evidence to support this claim, but simply because I am having such a mental image. In addition, I am justified in saying "I exist" simply because I do exist; and I am justified in saying "There is a language" simply because there is a language. (These examples come from "Transcendental Arguments", Journal of Philosophy, 1968, by Barry Stroud). These examples differ from the problem of whether I am dreaming in the following way. It would be logically possible for a being to think he was not dreaming and yet be dreaming; but it would not be possible for a person to think he existed, and yet not exist. It is this difference which gives the "I think" an added assurance over "I am not dreaming". Nevertheless, I would claim that we should treat "I am not dreaming" in the same way that we treat such statements as "I am having a mental image". That is, we should say that we are justified in claiming to know that we are not dreaming, simply because we are not dreaming. That is, I am claiming that there are statements which we
should be inclined to hold onto, and to use against apparent counter-evidence - even though we can give no evidence to support them, and even though it is logically possible that they are false. I would claim that if a person holds to the belief that he is not dreaming, and rejects apparent counter-evidence, then he will be keeping in line with the truth.

What the skeptic does is to point out what we may not have known before - for example, that we have no evidence to prove that we are not dreaming, and that it is logically possible that we should have experiences which would persuade us that we had always been dreaming. These are the basic moves the skeptic makes, and they deserve more attention than I shall give them here. Up to this point, then, what the skeptic says is important, and, I believe, true. When he concludes, however, that therefore we do not know such things, then what he says is false. It may have a certain shock value to say something so obviously false, and it may thereby force us to recognize the important basis for the skeptic's position; but whatever heuristic value such a claim may have, it is false to say there is nothing we know, we cannot know what happened in the past, we cannot know what will happen in the future, and so on.

The skeptic will admit that he believes he is not dreaming. He will also reject apparent counter-evidence to this claim, if for no other reason than that he does believe that he is not dreaming. In doing so, he and I both think he is following a policy which will keep him in line with
the truth. Therefore, I think he knows he is not dreaming. However, the skeptic denies that he knows this. I can only conclude that the skeptic is misapplying the concept of knowledge.

The reasons which the skeptic gives for his position take the form: "Certain conditions must be satisfied if we are to count something as knowledge. These conditions are not satisfied for the claim that we are not dreaming. Therefore we do not know that we are not dreaming". However, the skeptic and I both agree that the conditions are satisfied which I claim to be necessary for the concept of knowledge. The reasons the skeptic gives for saying he does not know therefore rest on a mistaken account of the concept of knowledge.

The skeptic mistakenly thinks certain conditions must be satisfied if something is to count as knowledge. These conditions are, indeed, not satisfied for the claim that he is not dreaming. He, therefore, concludes that he does not know whether he is dreaming or not. But the skeptic has only succeeded in giving a mistaken analysis of the concept of knowledge which we always use, and which he uses when he is not doing philosophy. At best, he has constructed a new concept: but in that case there is nothing remarkable in his claim that we do not 'know' such things as that we are not dreaming.
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