

BELIEF AND KNOWLEDGE

A. D. NAIK

In (1) I show that belief and knowledge are distinct epistemic states. This is necessary for (2) in which I show that knowledge in principle cannot be defined in terms of justified true belief as has been the current tendency. This means that there can be complex epistemic states which contingently combine the two. In (3) then I distinguish seventy three epistemic states many of which combine the two epistemic states. At one level (3) is an exercise to enhance one's analytical consciousness. Belief being a form of ignorance no matter how strongly held the distinctions enable one to see how not to confuse the two. It leads to greater understanding of one's complex epistemic states.

1. The following considerations, it seems to me, show that belief and knowledge are not identical epistemic states :
 - 1.1 When a person believes that p it is possible that not-p and when a person believes that not-p it is possible that p. Whereas if a person knows that p then it is not possible that not-p and when a person knows that not-p it is not possible that not-p.
 - 1.2 A person may believe that p at t1 and then come to know that p at t2.
 - 1.3 A person P1 may know that p while another person P2 may not know that P1 knows that p. P2 may however believe that P1 knows that p.
 - 1.4 A belief may be rational or irrational. That is, it may be held after adequate deliberation and/or presentation of evidence or without much deliberation and/or presentation of evidence. In either case the belief could be true. This means that even an irrational belief could be true. But then there is no condition for a belief's being true. On the other hand for there to be a case of knowledge there has to be certain conditions, no matter how difficult to ascertain, which would have to have been fulfilled.

- 1.5 Belief is a disposition. Knowledge is a capacity. Presence of knowledge may be shown by exercise of the relevant capacity. Exercising a capacity is not possible for a belief (though of course the presence of a particular belief may be indicated by a certain sort of behaviour).
 - 1.6 Contradictory beliefs (belief that p and belief that not-p) may be unknowingly held simultaneously by a person, but contradictory knowledge state (knows that p and knows that not-p) cannot exist simultaneously in a person knowingly or unknowingly.
 - 1.7 While it is possible to neither believe nor disbelieve that p it is not possible to neither know nor not know that p.
2. The current approach to defining knowledge is to try and find further conditions to (i) that the proposition in question is true and (ii) that one believes that the proposition in question is true. This is fundamentally misguided because the second condition is not valid. Belief that p implies that p or that not-p. Knowing can only imply that p, not that p or that not-p. But defining knowledge in terms of belief reduces the state of knowing that p to believing that p since it implies that p or that not-p, and so possibly that not-p when in fact it is being asserted that p in the knowledge state. This is a contradiction. It shows that where there is knowledge belief is no longer present because it has been transformed into knowledge. Belief then is a form of ignorance no matter how strongly held. As evidence gathers the scepticism may decrease but ignorance remains. Basically any attempt then to define knowledge from a sceptical epistemic mode is self-defeating. What this shows is that in principle it is not possible to define knowledge in terms of justified true belief no matter how well justified the belief. This is because it is still being made by using belief which is essentially a sceptical epistemic mode no matter how strong the conviction due to the amount of evidence. It is only where there is necessary and sufficient evidence that belief is transformed into knowledge. Where there isn't it remains belief.

This shows that knowledge is something different from justified true belief, consequently the approach of defining knowledge by qualifying additions to conditions of justified true belief is misguided.

When a person knows that p the person can also feign that he knows that p or feign that he disbelieves that p, but a person cannot know that p and believe that p.

3. A belief state which is not combined with any other belief state, or any disbelief, knowledge or ignorance state I call a simple and pure belief state. Similarly for disbelief, knowledge and ignorance states. In 2.1, I list these simple and pure epistemic states. Complex pure belief states only combine beliefs. Similarly for the other three states. There are many complex mixed states.

Let 'P' stand for any particular person and 'p' for any proposition :

2.1 P believes that p

P does not believe that p

P knows that p

P does not know that p

2.2 P knows that P believes that p

P believes that P knows that p

P knows that P knows that p

P believes that P believes that p

P does not know that P knows that p

P knows that P does not know that p

P does not believe that P believes that p

P believes that P does not believe that p

P does not know that P believes that p

P does not believe that P knows that p

P knows that P does not believe that p

P believes that P does not know that p

P does not know that P does not know that p

P does not believe that P does not believe that p

- 2.3 P knows that P believes that P does not believe that p
 P does not know that P believes that P does not believe that p
 P knows that P believes that P believes that p
 P does not know that P believes that P believes that p
- 2.4 P knows that P cannot not know that P knows that P knows
 that p
 P believes that P cannot not know that P knows that P knows
 that p
- 2.5 P knows that P neither believes nor disbelieves that p
 P believes that P neither believes nor disbelieves that p
 P does not know that P neither believes nor disbelieves that p
 P does not believe that P neither believes nor disbelieves that p
- 2.6 P knows that P believes that P neither believes nor disbelieves
 that p
 P does not know that P believes that P neither believes nor
 disbelieves that p
 P believes that P knows that P neither believes nor disbelieves
 that p
 P does not believe that P knows that P neither believes nor
 disbelieves that p
 P does not know that P knows that P neither believes nor
 disbelieves that p

Let 'P1' stand for one person and 'P2' for another person :

- 2.7 P1 believes that P2 believes that p
 P1 believes that P2 does not believe that p
 P1 believes that P2 knows that p
 P1 believes that P2 does not know that p

P1 knows that P2 believes that p

P1 knows that P2 does not believe that p

P1 knows that P2 knows that p

P1 knows that P2 does not know that p

2.8 P1 believes that P2 believes that P1 believes that p

P1 believes that P2 does not believe that P1 believes that p

P1 believes that P2 knows that P1 believes that p

P1 believes that P2 does not know that P1 believes that p

P1 knows that P2 believes that P1 believes that p

P1 knows that P2 does not believe that P1 believes that p

P1 knows that P2 knows that P1 knows that p

P1 knows that P2 does not know that P1 knows that p

2.9 P1 does not believe that P2 believes that P1 believes that p

P1 does not believe that P2 does not believe that P1 believes that p

P1 does not believe that P2 knows that P1 believes that p

P1 does not believe that P2 does not know that P1 believes that p

P1 does not know that P2 believes that P1 believes that p

P1 does not know that P2 does not believe that P1 believes that p

P1 does not know that P2 knows that P1 knows that p

P1 does not know that P2 does not know that P1 knows that p

2.10 P1 knows that P2 knows that P2 knows that p

P1 does not know that P2 knows that P2 knows that p

P1 believes that P2 knows that P2 knows that p

P1 does not believe that P2 knows that P2 knows that p

- 2.11 P1 knows that P2 knows that P1 knows that P1 knows that p
P1 does not know that P2 knows that P1 knows that P1 knows that p
P1 believes that P2 knows that P1 knows that P1 knows that p
P1 does not believe that P2 knows that P1 knows that P1 knows that p
- 2.12 P1 knows that P2 cannot not know that P2 knows that P2 knows that p
P1 does not know that P2 cannot not know that P2 knows that P2 knows that p
P1 believes that P2 cannot know that P2 knows that P2 knows that p
P1 does not believe that P2 cannot not know that P2 knows that P2 knows that p
- 2.13 P1 knows that P neither believes nor disbelieves that p
P1 does not know that P2 neither believes nor disbelieves that p
P1 believes that P2 neither believes nor disbelieves that p
P1 does not believe that P2 neither believes nor disbelieves that p

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