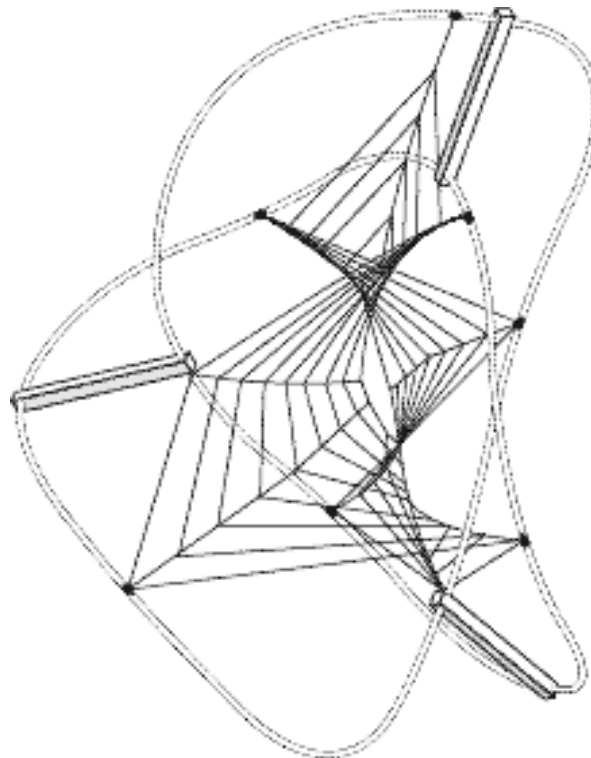# Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science

Discussion Paper Series

DP 63/03

Definite Descriptions and the Gettier Example

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DEFINITE DESCRIPTIONS AND THE GETTIER EXAMPLE [*]

ABSTRACT.

This paper challenges the first Gettier counterexample to the tripartite account of knowledge. Noting that 'the man who will get the job' is a description and invoking Donnellan's distinction between their 'referential' and 'attributive' uses, I argue that Smith does not actually believe that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket. Smith's ignorance about who will get the job shows that the belief cannot be understood referentially, his ignorance of the coins in his pocket shows that it cannot be understood attributively.
An explanation for why Smith appeared to have justified true belief is given by distinguishing between 'belief' and 'belief in truth'. Smith *believes* the sentence 'the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket' *to be true* (he mistakenly believes that Jones will get the job, of whom he knows that he has ten coins in his pocket) (hence his 'belief'), the sentence *is* true (hence 'truth'), and he has *sufficient reason* to assent to it (hence his 'justification'). But he does not believe the proposition expressed. Hence he does not know it either.

I.   INTRODUCTION.

The 'Gettier counterexamples' (Gettier 1963) represent a most interesting episode in modern epistemology. They redefined the boundaries and ground rules of what came to be known as 'post-Gettier' epistemology. In a three-page paper— to my knowledge, Gettier's only publication — the author presents counterexamples to a position labelled the 'tripartite' account of knowledge. This was said to hold that knowledge consisted of 'three parts', namely,

1) justification,
2) truth,
3) belief.

Knowledge is nothing but *justified true belief* (JTB), according to this account. Although it has never really become clear who the main proponents of this epistemological doctrine were supposed to be, and who precisely Gettier meant to attack, post-Gettier epistemology was founded by the — supposed — demonstration that not every instance of justified true belief constitutes knowledge. The three conditions of the JTB account of knowledge, therefore, were deemed to be insufficient and felt to need amendment.

The path epistemology has adopted since 1963 is surprising. The tripartite account, while ridiculed and rejected outright[1], is arguably still presupposed in some of the more recent accounts of propositional knowledge. The tripartite account, while clearly *insufficient*, is still considered to represent some of the *necessary* conditions for knowledge. In the years following the publication of Gettier's seminal paper, a variety of 'fourth' conditions were presented. Suggestions were that Gettier had put his finger on the importance of the *presence of relevant falsehood* in the chain of justification, or of the *defeasibility* of the justification, or of the *reliability* of the justification, or of the *causal connection* between knower and known, or some such (see Dancy 1985, 2.3). The charm of Gettier's paper consisted in the fact that after it, it seemed very clear indeed that *something* was missing, but it was utterly mysterious *what* was missing. The suggestions were as diverse as they could have been.

I want to examine Gettier's first example, leaving the second, and others, for a more comprehensive examination later. I argue that his example fails to establish the desired conclusion. Gettier's first example is *the* Gettier example, so a rebuttal of this ought to be considered more important than the rebuttal of any other similar examples. Another famous case, that of Lehrer's (1965) 'Nogot-Havit' scenario, will also be covered here.

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[1] For some notable exceptions, see the discussion in footnote 19 below.

Gettier's example is this:

Smith is justified in believing that Jones will get the job they have both applied for, and he also has a justified and true belief that Jones has ten coins in his pocket.[2] So apparently Smith's belief in the following would be justified:

(1)   The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.

But should, unexpectedly, Smith himself get the job, and should he himself coincidentally and unbeknownst to him have ten coins in his pocket too, (1) is true, even though one proposition from which it had initially been deduced is false.

Now apparently

1. (1) is true,
2. Smith believes it, and
3. Smith is justified in believing it.[3]

The three conditions for knowledge as justified true belief seem satisfied. Yet, Gettier continues, certainly this is not an instance of *knowledge* since Smith's belief "is true in virtue of the coins in Smith's pocket, while Smith does not know how many coins are in Smith's pocket, and bases his belief in [(1)] on a count of the coins in Jones's pocket, whom he falsely believes to be the man who will get the job."

My approach is conventional in that I hold that the conditions of the tripartite account are not in fact satisfied in this example; it is original in that I claim to show that the condition violated is the *belief* condition. If Smith does not *believe* that

(1)   the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket

it should not be surprising that he does not *know* it either (presuming that knowledge requires at least belief). Indeed, the apparent force and generality of the example is precisely derived from the fact that Gettier's stipulations already preclude *belief*, and therefore *true* belief. *A fortiori* they *also* preclude *justified* true belief. But this, of course, cannot refute the tripartite account, since for a refutation of that a case of justified true belief that is not knowledge would have to be presented.

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[2] Gettier nowhere affirms that Smith *believes* the conjunction of these beliefs:

(d) Jones is the man who will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his pocket,

although he asserts that Smith has "...strong evidence..." for it (contra the discussion between Thalberg (1969, 1974) and Hooker (1973), also Saunders (1972)). Nothing hangs on this here since the counterexample is based on another belief.

[3] The 'Principle of Deducibility of Justification' (PDJ) asserts that "for any proposition P, if S is justified in believing P, and P entails Q, and S deduces Q from P and accepts Q as a result of this deduction, then S is justified in believing Q." My argument does not need to question this principle. Deductive closure of beliefs is not required by the tripartite account. Also see Cohen (1992, §§5, 6).

My analysis fundamentally relies on the use of the distinction between 'attributive' and 'referential' uses of definite descriptions introduced by Donnellan (Donnellan 1966). The term 'description' was famously examined by Russell in his (1905) paper *On Denoting*. Russell argued that expressions such as 'the King of France' (more generally, 'the F') are not singular terms, even though they might appear thus. For instance, since Tony Blair is the present Prime Minister, using the singular term 'Tony Blair' instead of 'the present Prime Minister' will not change the truth value of any sentence. One could think that these expressions are essentially identical. Russell showed, however, that this grammatical similarity (the two expressions are interchangeable *salva veritate* – as far as truth is concerned) is not reflected in the *logical* structure of these sentences. He claimed that sentences such as 'the F is G' really need to be represented as a conjunction of *three* propositions:

1) there is something that is F,
2) nothing else is F,
3) this thing is G.

Symbolised in first-order logic (using the obvious symbolisation key) this becomes: '$\exists x$ (Fx & $\forall y$ (Fy $\rightarrow$ y=x) & Gx)' (there exists something such that that object is F, and for everything, if that object is F, then it is the first object, and that object is G) . This way of looking at expressions such as 'the F' gives statements containing such expressions fundamentally different truth *conditions* than subject-predicate statements such as 'Tony Blair is G'. Formally, the latter can be represented by a constant standing for Tony Blair, 't', say, and the predicate symbol G, i.e. 'Gt.' This is true if and only if Tony Blair is G, whereas the other statement is true if the following *three* conditions are satisfied: someone is Prime Minister, nothing else is Prime Minister, and that person is G. Although these two are both *made* true by Tony Blair, the latter *would* still be true had someone else than Tony Blair been Prime Minister and G. (For a more comprehensive introduction see Neale 1990).

Russell's analysis was challenged by Donnellan in 1966. According to Donnellan, 'the F' in a statement of the form 'the F is G' (here: (1) 'the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket') can be used in two different ways. First, it can be used *attributively* — in order to attribute the property of G-hood to *whatever* object satisfies the description (is the F); secondly, it may be used *referentially,* serving as one contextually adequate way of establishing reference to an independently identified object with the intention of making an assertion about that object, namely, that it is G. Yet Russell's analysis only applies to the *attributive* use. For instance, a sentence like 'the candidate getting the absolute majority of votes wins the election' displays an attributive use of the description 'the candidate getting the absolute majority of votes', since it is true, and meant to be true, irrespective of who this person is. Typically such a use supports the addition of 'whoever this may be' after the description, as this sentence does. By contrast, if at a cocktail party I exclaim that 'the man drinking martini is wanted at the telephone', I will be understood

to be using the description 'the man drinking martini' to pick out some particular person (I might in addition look in his direction). This is an instance of the so-called 'referential' use, in which the description is merely used to establish reference.

Donellan makes a number of assertions about these two uses which are not relevant here. For instance, my use of this distinction as a device to exhaust the range of possible readings of Smith's alleged belief does not commit me to accepting the well-disputed claim, that has its origin in Donnellan's paper, that descriptions are *semantically* ambiguous.[4] 'Russellians' claim that what is *expressed* by an utterance of a sentence containing a description is not ambiguous. It is always a general and never a singular proposition. However, to explain the undeniable phenomenon of the referential *use* of descriptions it is admitted that the speaker might have *meant* (to express) something different than what he actually did express. I take it that in such cases the speaker means what he believes; nothing more is required here since we are interested in what Smith actually believes rather than what he *would* express if he were to make an utterance.

Following this distinction, I take beliefs involving descriptions to have the following truth conditions:[5] if the description is intended referentially, the belief is singular, and the object referred to figures in it as 'constituent'. It is true iff this object is G.[6] Understood attributively, as in Russell's original account,[7] it

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[4] For analyses of these two uses of descriptions also see Bach (1981, 1987), Evans (1982), McCulloch (1989), Neale (1990), Recanati (1989), Reimer (1998a, b), Sainsbury (1979), Searle (1979).

[5] The attributes of 'referential' and 'attributive' primarily apply to utterances. In this context, I use 'referential belief' as shorthand for 'the belief Smith would have if his (hypothesised) utterance of the sentence involved a referential use of the description'. Analogously for 'referential proposition'. Some of this terminology will be revised later on.

[6] Donnellan (1966) controversially claimed that sometimes reference can occur to the object intended independently of whether it actually is the F. Kripke (1977) presented the argument that reference is a pragmatic rather than a semantic phenomenon in such cases. This debate is tangential to my argument – see section 2.

[7] Bach (1987, 99 n.12) claims that Russell himself "suggested that descriptions can be used as names..., i.e. referentially" in (1918, 246). The passage he quotes actually occurs in Russell (1919, 211 f. in Martinich (1996)). Russell says in discussing that in some contexts *names* ('Scott') can be *used* as *descriptions* ('the person named 'Scott"): "This is a way in which names are frequently used in practice, and there will, as a rule, be nothing in the phraseology to show whether they are being used in this way or *as* names. When a name is used directly, merely to indicate what we are speaking about, it is no part of the fact asserted...it is merely part of the symbolism by which we express our thought." Bach seems to suggest that, according to Russell, *descriptions* could analogously function as *names*, but no further evidence is given to support that claim. For a further discussion of this see Reimer (1993). Russell's (1957) reply to Strawson (1950) clearly shows that he did not see

has to be analysed as an existential statement (i.e. as: $\Box$x (Fx & $\Box$y (Fy $\rightarrow$ y=x) & Gx)), and that is true iff there *exists* some object that is both the unique F and also G. This *object*, however, does not enter the truth conditions of the thought that would also be true if in its stead some other object had been both the unique F, and G. In such cases the semantic contribution of the description to the utterance in which it occurs is not the object it denotes, but the quantificational structure.

Now, to *know* (or believe) that the F is G, as a referential proposition, is to know (believe) of the *object* that actually is the F that it is G.[8] To know (believe) an attributive proposition instead is to know (believe) that there *exists* some object — the identity of which one need not have any opinion about — such that this object is both the unique F and G.[9] Note that in the attributive case the agent sets up a mental relation between the two properties of F-hood and G-hood (the 'the' securing uniqueness). Both of these cases can properly be reported as 'knowing that the F is G'.

My methodological *leitmotiv,* finally, is the question *what exactly* it is that Smith *believes* but does not know. Given Donnellan's distinction, it is easy to see how Gettier's example is less explicit on this point than it might have been since 'the man who will get the job' — a description — may be used attributively or referentially with these readings expressing fundamentally different beliefs. What does Smith believe?

My argument for the conclusion that there is *no* belief that Smith entertains that could yield a counterexample to KJTB will proceed as follows. The next section records that the belief expressed in (1) cannot properly be understood as referential to Smith because of Smith's ignorance of both his new job and the coins in his pocket. Referential to Jones, the belief is irrelevant. Section III. is based on the intuition that Smith does not have to believe/know that *he* will get the job for him to be able to *believe/know* that *the man who will get the job* has ten coins in his pocket, even if that should turn out to be him. Hence his ignorance of *this* fact does not provide sufficient explanation for his

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Strawson's examples to pose any original problems to his account. Plausibly, 'the King of France is bald' is (meant to be) 'referential' rather than 'attributive'.

[8] This plausibly rules out knowledge of 'the F is G' in the Donnellan case where the object referred to is not actually the F.

To require that it is known *that* the F *is* the F seems too strong as in some contexts, knowledge could rightly be reported by using a description the knower is not aware of being applicable to the object; analogously with names. Also see Hornsby (1977).

[9] The attributive case still allows for knowing *of the F* that it is G, where *'of* the F' is understood to mean 'of the F *as such'*, i.e. of the object that is the F as satisfier of the description. To know *of* the candidate with the most votes that she will win does not imply that it is known who, which physical person, will win. Analogously is it possible to 'have that object in mind'.

ignorance of (1). This explanation is provided in section IV where I argue that Smith's ignorance about the coins in his pocket explains why he does not know (1), since it shows that he does not even *believe* it. In section V I further argue that if Smith were *not* thus required to know about the coins to believe (1), then he could also have known it — but we concurred with Gettier that Smith does *not* know. The counterexample is analysed in sections VI through VIII. I explain the reader's reasoning about what Smith could believe in section VI.

An intuitive distinction between *believing a proposition* and *believing a sentence to be true* is introduced in sections VII and VIII. This distinction is used to explain the mechanism of the 'counterexample': Smith has *sufficient* reason to believe the sentence (1) *to be* true (he has 'justified' 'belief' in its truth) and indeed (1) is true (his 'belief is true'), but Smith does not believe any of the propositions expressed by it. Yet this is what the tripartite account requires. The dissolution of the example concludes the paper. Lehrer's (Lehrer 1965) 'Nogot-Havit' case exhibits exactly the same confused use of a description (*'someone* in my office owns a Ford') and will be referred to in footnotes at the appropriate stages of the argument.

The scope of this paper is mainly critical rather than constructive. I am convinced that a number of Gettier-type examples can be helpfully analysed using the distinction between belief and belief in truth. However, as there is no hard and fast way of showing that some hypothesised agent *lacks* a belief he is *assumed* to have, a wholly general argument to the invalidity of Gettier-type cases along these lines is impossible. However, the most famous and seemingly most compelling Gettier example actually turns on this distinction, and, by also relying on the 'ambiguity' of a description noted by Donnellan, it provides a particularly neat point of entry for my argument.

II.   THE REFERENTIAL READING: SMITH DOES NOT BELIEVE IT.

Let us first look at the referential reading. Following Donnellan, 'the man who will get the job' could, in this context, be used either to refer to Smith, to whom it applies, or to Jones, to whom it does not apply. Only the former reading is interesting here.[10] Yet we are told that Smith has been informed that *Jones* is the person to whom the description applies, and that Smith neither believes that he himself will get the job, nor that he has ten coins in his pocket. That is, *ex hypothesi*, Smith does not believe *of* the man who will get the job (the

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[10] In the latter case (1) could be rendered as: *'Jones* has ten coins in his pocket', since Smith takes Jones to be the man who will get the job. This belief is justified and true, possibly even knowledge. However, we would not ordinarily want to report *this* belief using (1) since we know that Jones does not get the job – but a report of (1) will typically be understood to imply the adequacy of the description. Also see Hornsby (1977).

object) that he has ten coins in his pocket, since that is him. Surely, if the intended reading of (1) is such that it involves either the belief that *Smith* (the man) is the man who will get the job, or the belief that the man who *actually* will get the job (the object: Smith) has ten coins in his pocket, there could not be a counterexample to KJTB, as Smith does not even have any of these beliefs.

But note that this ignorance is already (part of) Gettier's explanation why Smith does not *know* (1) which is true "in virtue of the coins in Smith's pocket." This indicates that Gettier might have intended the description to be read as referential to *Smith*. But note too that Gettier also seems committed to attribute *knowledge* of (1) to Smith in case *Jones* would have got the job — the description thus being read as referential to *Jones*.[11] These observations will matter later.

III.   THE ATTRIBUTIVE READING: SMITH COULD HAVE KNOWN,
        IF ONLY HE HAD BELIEVED.

I hope the reader shares my intuition that Smith *could,* in principle, both *believe* truly, and also *know* (without prejudicing the relation between these two states) that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket *without* knowing or believing that *he* will be that man. In particular, he could truly believe/know this if either *someone else* were actually the man who will get the job, and Smith truly believed/knew of *this* man that he had ten coins in his pocket; or alternatively, he could truly believe/know this even if he himself should get the job (and were ignorant of this as here he is), in case he believed/knew that *whoever* will get the job has ten coins in his pocket. A possible, yet hypothetical, reason for this might be that *all* candidates had actually been asked to bring ten coins to the interview, and Smith knew of this. Such a belief can be represented as an *attributive* belief, which under a Russellian analysis (Russell 1905) is an existential statement of the form:
(2) $\exists x$ (x will get the job & $\forall y$ (y will get the job $\rightarrow$ x = y) & x has ten coins in his pocket)

We do not know of any evidence like the above in Gettier's case, a *prima facie* reason to think that Smith does not hold such a belief. On the other hand, it seems precisely such a statement that Smith deduces initially, and the 'Principle of Deducibility of Justification' (PDJ) granted, such a belief would be equally justified. But the fact, which I grant, that Smith *would* be justified in believing (2) by the PDJ does not suffice to show that Smith *does* believe (2). Nor does *Gettier* say or explicitly assume that Smith believes (2); the only thing Gettier says is that Smith believes (1). Do we have any further

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[11] You are right in objecting that (1) would no longer be "true in virtue of the coins in Smith's pocket" in such a case. See the subsequent argument.

evidence to determine whether Smith actually believes (2)? Would anything of interest follow from the supposition that he *does* believe it?

If Smith *could* believe or know (2) without believing that *he* will get the job, the fact that he *does not* believe that he will get the job is not conclusive evidence for his not knowing (2). (2), however, is just a way of reading (1) and thus Smith *could* know (1) despite this ignorance. But we said that Smith *does not* know (1). What follows is that the fact that Smith does *not* know (1) is not *sufficiently* explained by the fact that he is ignorant about himself satisfying the description, since independently of that he could still believe and know (2). Everyone of course agrees that Smith does not *know* (2) since if he did he would know (1) as well.

This is just to say that the candidate with the most votes (the actual person) does not have to believe/know that she herself is the candidate with the most votes in order to *know* that *the candidate with the most votes* wins the election. She knows this since these rules were adopted to select a winner — others might have been — and they apply to *whoever* will turn out to be the candidate with the most votes. Conversely, to be ignorant of the fact that the candidate with the most votes wins the election, it is not enough just to be ignorant about which *person* actually *is* the candidate with the most votes. That Smith has an additional and mistaken belief about who gets the job is irrelevant for this attributive belief;[12] and accordingly the answer to: 'of whom was Smith thinking *in believing (2)*?' would have *had* to be: 'of no-one in particular'. Existential statements, in the logical sense, never refer to any object. Most people, however, would add, hesitantly, that Smith does have *Jones* 'in the back of his mind' in some sense. This intuition is, to my knowledge, practically universal. This tends to push us back to the referential reading, for if we want to render these facts in a single belief, (1) cannot be understood as (2), but must rather be understood referentially — to *Jones*. On the other hand, Smith's ignorance about who gets the job would only have mattered had (1) been intended, first, referentially rather than attributively, and secondly, referentially *to Smith.* But Smith does not even *have* either of these beliefs (as shown in the preceding section). The reason for this presented above was, of course, this very ignorance.[13]

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[12] See Russell (1919, 213), Bach (1981, 220) or Wettstein (1981, 46) for examples. Russell (1918, 234) says that "... you sometimes know the truth of an existence-proposition without knowing any instance of it ... Existence propositions do not say anything about the actual individual ..."

[13] The Lehrer (1965) case is relatively weaker, as Thalberg (1974, 351) notes, since many people may own a Ford, but only one person can get the job: "Lehrer's evidence that Nogot owns a Ford in no way rules out the owning of a Ford by Havit; whereas in the Gettier situation, ... [Smith's evidence for the belief that Jones will get the job] counted *against* the hypothesis that Smith would be hired." Lehrer *could* easily have believed that Havit owns a Ford too, given that he believes that Nogot does, but Smith *could not*, at pain of

We have thus reached a situation in which both referential and attributive readings lead to an *impasse*. As of yet, there is no counterexample: Smith does not have the referential belief, and assuming he has the attributive belief his ignorance of who gets the job would not have mattered for knowledge of (1). It seems that the coins are required to resolve this problem. But let us first make sure that the three conditions of KJTB are indeed satisfied. Since we took for granted that (1) is true, that Smith would be justified in believing (1) (as (2), by PDJ), the natural next step is to ask whether Smith *actually believes* (2). I will argue that he does not.

IV.   THE ATTRIBUTIVE READING CONTINUED:
        BUT HE COULD NOT HAVE BELIEVED IT.

Smith quite uncontroversially does seem to hold belief (2) as he appears to perform an existential generalisation on his initial belief. On the other hand, a conclusive reason why Smith does *not* seem to hold such a belief is that he *does not know about the coins in his pocket.* This is the piece of the puzzle we neglected in the preceding section. It seems that in order for him to believe that *whoever* will get the job has ten coins in his pocket, knowledge of the coins is required since, logically, either of Smith or Jones *could* get the job. I want to argue that unless Smith believes of *himself* that he has ten coins in his pocket he cannot plausibly be understood to believe that *whoever* will get the job has ten coins in his pocket, given that he is well aware of the fact that he *could* get the job.[14] Since he does not know about the coins in his pocket, he does not believe (2), nor, thus, (1).

inconsistency, have believed that he will get the job, given that he believes that *Jones* will get it since there is only one job: the uniqueness of the *job* establishes the uniqueness of the object satisfying the description in the Gettier case. See Kuhn (2000) on embedded definite descriptions.

Thalberg continues: "we are not so reluctant to agree that Lehrer's evidence for [Nogot works in Lehrer's office and Mr. Nogot owns a Ford] carries over to ... [there is an x such that x is an officemate of Lehrer's and x owns a Ford]", i.e. the attributive reading. Thalberg is mistaken here, it is simply less counterintuitive to assign this attributive belief to Lehrer since there is little implicit information as to who this *someone* who has a Ford must be (a belief that *several* people in one office drive the same *type* of car seems more plausible to have than the belief that *whoever* will turn out to get some specific job has ten coins in his pocket). In the Gettier case, the asymmetry comes in with knowledge of the coins in Jones's pocket. Since Thalberg only questions the justification of the beliefs rather than the beliefs themselves, he is lead to weaken his position in order to accommodate for this intuition.

[14] I am not claiming that Smith *must not* have any view on who will get the job – clearly he is convinced that Jones will. But if *Gettier* wants to claim that his belief is true because *he* gets the job, and Smith himself would *say* that his belief was true because of *him* getting the job, then Gettier's argument equally requires that the possibility of Smith getting the job is not excluded by Smith. In that aspect our claims do not differ.

The argument for this claim will be further justified in the next section, but the underlying intuition is this. If you claim to believe something of some unspecified element of a set of things (but of no element in particular, i.e. 'attributively'), then, unless you think that what you know serves to *determine* this element (the coins serving to determine who will get the job), you will have to believe of all the elements whatever you claim to believe of this unspecified element for your claimed belief to hold up *as belief*, rather than just as a *claimed* belief, that is, a belief that you claim to have but do not actually have.[15]

A fresh example may help to illustrate this. Suppose I told you that I believe that the next person to leave the room we are both in has painful cavities. How would you determine whether I am not trying to fool you as to what I believe? You would reason as follows. Either he has have a belief about *who* (which person) is the next person to leave the room, and specifically believes of *that* person that she has painful cavities (the referential reading), or he believes that *whoever* will be the next person to leave the room has painful cavities (the attributive reading). In the latter case, either he believes that i) the next person to leave the room will be asked to leave the room *because* that person has painful cavities (the description picks out the object) — such a case may arise in a dental clinic which prioritises treatment according to pain — or he believes that ii) the next person to leave the room has painful cavities because *all* people in the room have painful cavities. Such a case may arise in a dental clinic which specialises in painful cavities.

In such situations my claim would be entirely plausible. But if I simply told you that I believe that the next person to leave the room has painful cavities and none of the above circumstances actually obtained (say we were sitting in a lecture theatre, following a course in epistemology, or maybe we are in a dental lab, but you *know* that I neither believe i) nor ii)), you may justifiably wonder *why* I should say that I have this belief, and *whether* I actually believe what I claim to believe. My insisting that I *really really* do believe this is not good enough for me to *actually* have this belief rather than just *claiming* to have the belief; nor should this be good enough evidence for you to ascribe this belief to me.

My argument here mirrors Gettier's (implicit) reasoning for his claim that Smith does not *know* (1). Just replace *know* for *believe* in what follows to get Gettier's version: in order to believe (2), that is, that *whoever will* get the job has ten coins in his pocket, Smith has to believe that whoever *could* get the job has ten coins in his pocket. Both Jones and Smith *could* get the job, but Smith only knows of *Jones* that he has ten coins in his pocket, thus, Smith

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[15] It is also possible to *believe* to have a belief (and thus claim to have that belief) without actually having the belief.

does not believe of whoever *could* get the job that he has ten coins in his pocket. It follows that he does not believe that whoever *will* get the job has ten coins in his pocket — he *could not*, since for that he would have to believe it of himself as well. Hence he does not believe that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket, whoever that may be.

So, that Smith does not know about the coins in his pocket is not the reason why he does not *know* (2) even though he does justifiably and truly believe it. It is the reason why he cannot even *believe* (2). The right explanation, then, of why Smith *does not* know (1) is *not* to be found in the insufficiency of the tripartite account of knowledge, it is simply that he does not even believe it, and belief is required for knowledge. In other words, what is wrong with (1) is that it cannot be read as a *(justified) true belief* of Smith, *not* that it cannot be read as *knowledge.* That follows trivially (presuming that knowledge requires belief).[16]

V.   THE ARGUMENT JUSTIFIED.

In this section I provide further independent justification for the above argument by showing that its essential premise must be presupposed in Gettier's story. So let us assume, for the purpose of the argument, that it were

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[16] Lehrer (1965, 170, and 1979, 74ff) relies on the similar ambiguity of 'someone' by having the belief

(*) 'someone in my office owns a Ford'

first derived from 'Nogot...owns a Ford', then from *both* the preceding and 'Havit...owns a Ford.' In the latter case the belief is more difficult to be read referentially since several instances are involved as basis of the belief. 'Someone' does not, as *'the* man...' does, imply uniqueness of the object satisfying the description.

Since Lehrer considers this belief *true* because *Havit* has the Ford it was not attributive (that would be false, and Lehrer does not believe it either) but referential. Lehrer, however, has "no evidence that [Havit]...owns a Ford" (1965, 170), and that was already supposed to be the counterexample to KJTB. If this is not evidence enough for the supposition that Lehrer does not *believe* that Havit owns a Ford (i.e. no counterexample since no referential belief), suppose that he *did* believe it – then he could also have known it despite of this ignorance (see below).

Ironically, Lehrer himself considers a similar scenario in his second case, where he believes, in addition to Nogot having the Ford, that Havit as well has a Ford, and his belief in (*) is true (and *knowledge*) by Havit having the Ford (again Nogot does not have it). However, since this time Lehrer has derived his belief from the two instances it surely would have had to be considered equally true (and knowledge) in case Nogot, instead of Havit, had had the Ford, i.e. it needs to be understood *attributively* ("*whoever* is in my office..."). Attributively, however, the belief is false since only Havit has the Ford, but both Havit and Nogot are in the office, and it is thus not an instance of knowledge at all, contrary to what Lehrer claims. It would have been knowledge had it been referential to Havit, but that is inconsistent with it being based on both of the above statements. Also see Almeder (1975, 59).

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not required that Smith had to know of the coins in his pocket to have the belief (2). And it seems indeed that without believing of himself that he has ten coins in his pocket it generally is still possible for Smith to believe that the man *who will get the job* has ten coins in his pocket (in the attributive sense) even if that should turn out to be him, contrary to what I have claimed above. One such scenario would be the following.

Suppose that this time the board consists of numerologists and Smith is told that they specifically decided to select the candidate who carries ten coins (they think ten is a magic number in business). Suppose further that, just as in Gettier's story, the person thus selected was Jones, and that Smith knew of this and of the coins in Jones's pocket too, but not, of course, of the coins in his own pocket. Smith comes to believe that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket (so far, this belief is as ambiguous as in the original Gettier story). Since he thinks he himself does not have ten coins in his pocket he is equally surprised when he learns that he will get the job. He also must have carried ten coins all along. What a surprise. The company used a metal detector.

In such a case Smith *could* believe (1) attributively despite ignorance of the coins in his pocket (as long as he is ignorant about who actually gets the job). But under these circumstances, one is not barred from saying quite literally: 'Smith *knew* that *the man who will get the job* has ten coins in his pocket', continuing with 'he just did not know that that man would be him', and/or with 'he just did not know that *he* had ten coins in his pocket' and thus to attribute *knowledge* of (1) to Smith. That is to say, by *not* requiring that Smith has to be aware of the coins in his pocket it is actually possible to attribute belief *and knowledge* of (1) to Smith. Of course *additional* knowledge of the coins in his pocket would not turn *that* piece of knowledge into ignorance either. So, in addition to the irrelevance of the ignorance about who gets the job, whether Smith knows about the coins in his pocket or not really does not matter for the attributive belief either, provided Smith actually believes (2) as here we assume he does. But clearly Gettier does *not* want to attribute knowledge to Smith under any circumstances *and* he requires Smith to know about the coins to have knowledge of (1). Even if Smith did know that he will get the job still he would not know (1) because of that.

The point is not that in scenarios as the above one *must* attribute knowledge to Smith.[17] Many things may still go wrong. The point is rather that whatever else could go wrong, the one thing that definitely would *not* matter is Smith's knowledge of the coins. For instance, one might continue the above scenario by letting the members of the board change their mind such that to have ten coins in the pocket would no longer even be a necessary condition to get the

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[17] Miso Polak suggested this perspective to me. This section was substantially revised due to searching criticisms of Ann Whittle.

job, although Smith is not told this and continues to believe (2), and that instead the best qualified person would be chosen (Smith, as it happens), who, by accident, carries ten coins too (as does Jones). Then arguably Smith need not be said to *know* that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket, although of course this belief is still true since whoever could be chosen does carry ten coins.

That such examples can be fabricated *ad nauseam* is well known. But these do not jeopardise the present argument since such cases can occur *regardless of whether Smith knows of the coins in his pocket or not*. In such examples, Smith does *not* know (1) whether he initially knew about the coins in his pocket or not. This, of course, is just the reverse side of my above argument where I said that he *could* know (1) independently of whether he knows about the coins in his pocket or not. The point is that ignorance of the coins is not a guarantee for his *not* knowing (1), just as knowledge of the coins does not by itself *entail* his knowing (1). However, in Gettier's example it is undoubtedly the ignorance of the coins in his pocket which precludes Smith from knowing, since if he did know about the coins he could know (1) too. But given the preceding analysis the fact that the coins do matter for Smith's attributive belief in Gettier's story is entirely mysterious so far unless you accept my interpretation.

If you accept that ignorance of the coins does not show that Smith necessarily does not know (2), nor that knowledge of them implies knowledge of (2), as surely you have to, then it can no longer simply be *stipulated* that Smith does believe (2) and would know (1) in case he knew about the coins. Independent argument is now required to establish that Smith does believe (2) in the first place since we know that ignorance of the coins in his pocket does not suffice to show that he does *not know* (2) if he *did* believe (2), as Gettier wants us to believe. (Ignorance about who will get the job does not matter anyway since the belief is attributive). We need a good reason to think that *in this case*, ignorance about the coins in his pocket suffices to establish that Smith does not know, as we all want to say, since it does not do so generally (given belief in (2)).[18] My analysis provides this reason, whereas Gettier's story provides none.[19]

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[18] This is not the same thing as finding a fourth condition for knowledge which could *explain* this ignorance. Gettier needs some argument prior to this (which should not beg the question against KJTB) supporting the claim that Smith *is* ignorant *because* of his ignorance of the coins.

Of course, Smith might *in addition* violate some fourth condition. Yet it always seemed that Smith's ignorance of job and coins were meant to be *symptoms* of the violation of the fourth condition.

[19] New (1965, 1968) was the first to doubt Gettier's story and got abrasive replies from Harman (1966) and Smith (1966). Thalberg (1969) sees the ambiguity of 'the man who will get the job', but questions Smith's justification only, and is criticised by Coder (1970),

To recapitulate, my claim is not that in all those cases in which Smith actually has the attributive belief (2) he also knows (1). My claim is that in all those cases in which he does *not* know (1) *because* of ignorance of the coins, as in Gettier's story, Smith does not have the attributive belief which, if he *did* know of the coins, he could have, and which could (but need not) be knowledge. The reason is that this ignorance would be irrelevant to knowledge of (1) either way if he actually did have the attributive belief. Gettier's reasoning here might have been something like this. If Smith had not been ignorant, he could have had the justified true belief, which could have been knowledge, if Smith had not been ignorant. But since he is, it is not. *QED*. But this is fallacious.

VI.   HOW THE EXAMPLE WORKS.

The counterexample proceeds in two steps. To fully explain this two further beliefs need to be introduced. Supposing that Russell's theory of descriptions has not entered the subconscious of most readers of this example the description in Smith's alleged belief (1) will usually be understood as applying 'referentially' to either Jones or Smith in the first instance. The reader is thus faced with two possible readings of (1) representable as:

(3) Jones is the man who will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his
      pocket, or
(4) Smith is the man who will get the job, and Smith has ten coins in his
      pocket.

Note that (1) can be taken to *paraphrase* (3) from Smith's perspective (who "...sees the entailment [of (1) from (3)] ... and accepts [(1)] ..."), and to paraphrase (4) from the reader's perspective, *but not vice versa*. Unlike Smith, the reader has the correct information about who will get the job, and also knows that Smith has ten coins in his pocket. Smith himself clearly does not believe (4) while he seems to believe (3).

So Smith neither has *justified true belief* in (3) (which is false) nor in (4) (which he does not believe). But then, the reader rightly wonders, how *could* he have justified true belief in (1)? Thus in the second step the attributive belief (2) enters the scene as the third and last possible reading of (1) and is then adopted by elimination. The common understanding is that Smith believes (2) but does not know (1), the reason for this ignorance being that he

Saunders (1972) and Hooker (1973), also see Richman (1975) and Fitch (1976). Hooker (1973) first mentions Donnellan (1966) in this context. Thalberg (1974) replies, and is further criticised by Shope (1983, 31), who refers to Donnellan in the construction of other examples (1983, 67, 107). Another critic of some of the assumptions underlying the Gettier example is Almeder. See in particular his (1974), Hoffmann's (1975) comment and Almeder's reply (1976), and a further restatement of his position in his (1985) and (1992).

neither knows about his ten coins nor about the job he is about to get. But if Smith actually *did* believe (2), I argued above, none of this need matter for knowledge. But clearly here it does. My conclusion was that Smith, for the same reason for which he does not believe (4), does not believe (2) either — the coins in his pocket. This explains *why* his ignorance matters and the counterexample is dissolved.

The rationale behind the common reading is somewhat twisted, deriving from the overriding desire to attribute *some* belief to Smith, and preferably a justified and true one at that. From the possible *true* beliefs (2) and (4) on offer (2) has major advantages over (4). As we saw above, Smith does not have to know that he gets the job to believe (2), but he has to in order to believe (4). That by itself would eliminate (4). Furthermore (2), unlike (4), is *justified by assumption* (PDJ), and, the reader goes on to think, clearly it cannot be *contradictory* to attribute a belief to Smith which he is *justified* to hold. Clearly, if already he is *justified* in believing (2) at the very least he *might* believe it. Nonetheless a contradiction arises from the supposition that Smith *does* believe (2). Thus it is concluded that Smith cannot know (1) despite (the possibility of) justified true belief in (2). What is more, the ignorance about the coins also affects (4) so there is really no reason to believe that Smith knows either of these. This conclusion is not doubted since it is anyway expected.

VII.   BELIEF AND ACCEPTANCE.

The strong intuition of most people that Smith does have justified true belief in (1) can be explained by distinguishing *belief* and *acceptance.* Belief (involuntarily) relates people to *propositions,* while acceptance (voluntarily) relates *sentences* to people.[20] Typically, sentences are accepted because they *express* propositions one believes. In such a case one accepts a sentence because one believes it *to be true;* but the proposition expressed is simply believed. The proper objects of propositional knowledge are propositions, not (the purely syntactically characterised) sentences. Thus a distinction must also be drawn between *knowing* simpliciter (a proposition) and *knowing* (a sentence) *to be true.*[21] The latter is intuitively analysable into

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[20] In this aspect my account differs from earlier ones of e.g. Cohen (Cohen 1989, 1992, 1993). His reliance on propositions for both belief and acceptance leads to obscurities since it is recognised that for acceptance linguistic representation is required, cf. Moore (1992). Clarke (1994, 146) points out that the philosophic usage of 'acceptance' diverges from ordinary language.

[21] At one stage Gettier writes "... Smith believes *that (e) is true* ...", later that "Smith ... bases his *belief in (e)* ..." (emphasis added). This illustrates that Gettier does not draw this distinction.
Similarly in Shope (1983) as representing the Gettier literature: "*the second condition* either states that ... S *believes* p, or states that S *accepts* p ..." (1983, 10, second emphasis added)

knowing the proposition the sentence expresses *and* knowing that it expresses that proposition (of course the sentence has to be true too).

Epistemology itself has nothing to do with sentences except insofar as they express propositions and are therefore needed to *talk about* knowledge. Whenever one attributes states of knowledge or of belief, in conversation or in print, there is hardly a way of doing this other than using sentences. This may immediately create an ambiguity but often the context will leave no room for misunderstandings as to whether one talks about attitudes towards propositions or towards the truth of sentences. When the attitude is found to be directed at the truth of a sentence there is the further problem of determining which proposition was supposed to be expressed since the relation of sentences to propositions need not be one-to-one. But whenever possible a heuristic *principle of charity* eliminates false sentences and deviant associations of propositions to sentences. The problem of ambiguity rarely arises on the way from propositions to sentences since everyone chooses his own words to express thoughts.

Now, belief of a proposition expressed by some sentence and acceptance of that sentence (belief in its truth) do not always come hand in hand. For some true sentence, to *believe* that that sentence expresses a proposition one believes, and thus to believe that that sentence *is true* does not by itself guarantee that one believes the proposition *actually* expressed by that sentence. One may simply be mistaken or even completely ignorant about what the sentence expresses, or not even understand the language in which the sentence is formulated at all. Such phenomena are quite common. Thus there cannot be a one-to-one relation between acceptance and belief, that is, the 'behavioural' counterparts of sentences and propositions. So even if it is known that someone accepts some sentence, this does not immediately allow us to identify what it is that she believes since first we need to settle which propositions *she* might have taken the sentence to express, and with the help of further evidence we may then subsequently be able to determine which one of these was believed, if any.

– but this distinction makes all the difference. For instance Lehrer (1979, 66, emphasis added) says that "a person may *believe* something for the wrong reasons, ... and, nevertheless, *know that it is true* because he *assents* to it for the right reasons" which seems backwards to me. Similarly Lehrer (1990, ch. 2). Lehrer's latest views on belief and acceptance are his (2000). This problematic is also well illustrated by the passages Gettier quotes at the beginning of his paper.

Acceptance here is derived from belief in truth, but they need not be so related. I use 'acceptance' because this word may sound familiar in epistemology, but the point relies on the difference between belief and belief in truth. See De Sousa (1971), Perry (1980), Cohen (1989, 1992, 1993), Sturgeon (1991), Ullmann-Margalit and Margalit (1992), and Dummett (1999). Some of these issues were foreshadowed in Sesonske (1959).

Returning to the case at hand, my claim is that in the Gettier example there is an ambiguity between the propositions expressed by (2), (3), and (4) as possible propositions expressed by (1). The unearthing of this requires the intuition underlying the referential/attributive distinction. Understood to express (2) or (4), (1) is true, but false if understood as (3). It should now be apparent that Smith takes (1) to express (3) and that the reader takes (1) to express (2) or (4). Given these beliefs of Smith, for him, belief in the truth of (1) and hence its acceptance is perfectly legitimate (hence the J: he is 'justified'). So Smith *accepts the sentence* (1) because he *believes the proposition* (3) and believes (1) to express that proposition (he mistakenly thinks that the man who will get the job is Jones) — he believes (1) *to be true*. And indeed (1) is true (hence the T: his 'belief is true'). Given the beliefs of the reader, *her* acceptance of (1) is equally legitimate. When the reader accepts (1) she believes both (2) and (4) which she *knows* to be expressed (ambiguously) by (1) — she has better information than Smith about who gets the job (required for (4)), and she also knows about the coins in Smith's pocket (required for both (4) and (2)). Yet Smith's belief (3) is a sufficient reason for *his* acceptance of (1). It is due to rashly identifying this belief in the truth of (1) with belief in what (1) expresses that Smith was therefore thought to *believe* (1) too (hence the B: 'belief'), and thus (2) (since (3) and (4) are clearly out for him). But acceptance is not an infallible guide to belief. The whole point of the present paper is to provide arguments showing that, in this case, Smith does *not* believe (1), and that Smith does not have JTB. It is Smith's *acceptance* of (1) that is mistaken and based on the 'wrong reasons' (his *false* belief (3)) – these still help to rationalise the problem. But Smith does not have the 'wrong reasons' for his *belief in* (1) since he does not believe (1) at all,[22] even though he believes (1), the sentence, *to be true*.[23]

VIII.   JUSTIFICATION AND KNOWLEDGE.

This is how the counterexample drives a wedge between the tripartite account and 'full justification': for the refutation of KJTB Smith's justification in 'believing' (2) was taken to be *his* justification (what he would produce to justify himself if queried, i.e. his actual reason) for *accepting* (1). This is simply his *false* belief (3). The problem emerging then, and this is what gives rise to the air of paradox, is that *given the beliefs of the reader* Smith's

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[22] Of course Smith believes that there is someone who will get the job and has ten coins in his pocket, namely Jones; but it does not follow from that, nor is it true, that Smith believes that □x (x will get the job & □y (y will get the job → y=x) & x has ten coins in his pocket).

[23] It is possible to jokingly report Smith's mistaken belief by saying: 'Smith believes that 'the man who will get the job' has ten coins in his pocket', but note the inverted commas. This amounts to saying that 'Smith believes that the man whom Smith believes to be the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.' Of course inverted commas are sometimes difficult to detect in belief reports, but anyway this is not the belief Gettier was talking about.

acceptance of (1) (which was identified with his *belief* in (1)), while understandable, does not appear altogether legitimate:[24] it lacks 'full justification' since it 'does not stand up to the relevant set of facts' (Sturgeon 1993) in some way that was (indeed, *is*) yet to be discovered. This manoeuvre provided some sort of evidence for the claim that the 'subjective' justification Smith had, while itself fine (that is to say, subjectively sufficient for *acceptance* of (1)), was not 'objectively' sufficient for *full* justification to *know* (1) because there clearly were relevant facts Smith simply had no idea about.[25] Moreover Smith relied on falsities.

The reader, of course, knows *both* (1) (the proposition) since she knows (2) and (4) (the propositions), *and* she knows (1) (the sentence) *to be true* since she also knows that (1) is true if taken to express (2) and (4). And, more to the point, she *knows* (1) (the sentence) to be true precisely *because* she knows (2) and (4) *and* knows that (1) expresses (2) and (4). Smith however thinks that (1) expresses (3), which is false; hence he merely believes the sentence to be true without believing what it expresses. Essentially the belief in the truth of (1) is the only thing Smith is right about.[26]

The mythical 'full justification' Smith is lacking, I suggest, would only have been provided by the justification *the reader* has for accepting (1), i.e. the justification she would produce if queried (which is always undefeated) for her belief in the truth of (1). In this case, this would actually be *knowledge* of (2) and (4). But Smith, as we have already seen, does not even believe (2) or (4), let alone know them. Thus it is true that he does not have 'full justification' because he "does not know how many coins are in Smith's pocket, and [because he] bases his belief in [(1)] on a count of the coins in Jones's pocket, whom he falsely believes to be the man who will get the job". That much we can accept. But we should not believe that this constitutes a counterexample to the tripartite account of knowledge.

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[24] Compare the analysis of Richman (1975, 438).

[25] By identifying acceptance with belief it also becomes understandable why this subjective justification was nonetheless held to be *necessary* for a full analysis of knowledge: unless Smith actually had *some* reason to accept (1) he would not have been thought to *believe* (1) at all.

[26] When Gettier asserts that condition ii) is satisfied by saying that "Smith believes it", it is ambiguous what the reference of 'it' is: typically it was read to refer to the preceding clause which states *that (1) is true.* Under this reading, Gettier's assertion is true, but irrelevant: Smith indeed believes *that (1) is true* – but to have JTB he should *believe* (1), which he does not. 'It' could also refer to (1) itself, as it should. Then, however, Gettier's assertion is false – Smith does not believe (1). Oddly enough, nowhere does Gettier literally say that Smith believes that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.

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