

A Thomistic Approach to the Gettier Problem

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ABSTRACT

Epistemologists have been discussing the Gettier problem (GP) for 60 years. Numerous proposals have been suggested to solve it. In this article, I argue that the problem can be dismissed if we consider it in light of Thomas Aquinas's view of truth. According to Aquinas, there are two types of truth: 'ontological' and 'logical'. Unlike the latter, only God can possess the former. My argument is that the GP arises due to the implicit use of the former type of truth; the latter type, typically possessed by humans, would prevent the GP from arising.

1. Introduction

Since its publication in 1963, Edmund Gettier's article on the problem of justified true belief ([Gettier 1963](#)) has been the subject of much debate among epistemologists. Gettier challenged what he saw as the traditionally accepted view that belief, truth, and justification (JTB) are sufficient conditions for knowledge.¹ He offered examples that demonstrate how one can believe a true statement for which one can provide justification, yet the statement is only true due to fortunate circumstances.² To address the Gettier problem (GP), various suggestions have been put forward to

¹Roger Pouivet says that this is why Gettier's proposal has become the subject of so much debate: establishing all the criteria necessary for a justified belief to constitute knowledge is simply too difficult. See Pouivet (2019, 51).

²That knowledge is incompatible with luck seems to be an 'epistemic luck platitude', as Duncan Pritchard calls it. We owe it to this author to have first pointed out that, instead of accepting such a platitude, we need to investigate the relationship between luck and knowledge. See Pritchard (2005).

either redefine justification, one of the three aforementioned conditions, or to identify a fourth condition.³ Also, new approaches to epistemology have been proposed, including ‘virtue epistemology’, which shifts attention from propositions to the cognitive faculties or character traits of the person seeking knowledge.⁴ The so-called responsibilist version of virtue epistemology emphasises virtues such as intellectual humility, open-mindedness, intellectual courage, and intellectual patience. It highlights the importance of intellectual activity being connected to human flourishing, making a new contribution to epistemology. In this way, epistemology is interested not only in the attainment of knowledge but also in the attainment of overall human perfection. In any case, it is true that the GP has sparked many discussions without reaching a final solution.⁵

In this article, I argue that if we consider the view of truth that emerges from Thomas Aquinas’s epistemology, we can see that it is the mistaken assumption of a certain type of truth that causes the GP,⁶ an assumption that has been ignored in the existing literature. I first offer an analysis of Aquinas’s epistemology, from which emerge two types of truth, which scholars of Aquinas call ‘logical’ and ‘ontological’. I then argue that if the first type is adopted and the second is abandoned, the GP can be dismissed as unproblematic.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that attempts to dissolve the GP have already been made. As Juan and Manuel Comesaña point out in a 2022 introduction to the problem of skepticism, one could reject Gettier’s argument by denying the assumptions on which it is based—these assumptions include the closure principle or the view that

³Neither of the streams in question has found a definitive solution to the problem. It is unsurprising that Linda Zagzebski considers Gettier cases to be unavoidable (see Zagzebski 1994). Ian Church argues that ‘explicating knowledge in terms of a reductive analysis, in terms of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions’ has caused growing dissatisfaction. Therefore, he proposes a ‘non-reductive virtue epistemology’ (see Church 2023, 1).

⁴A recent presentation is offered by Carter (2023).

⁵As Stephen Hetherington says, the problem in question is still under way (see Hetherington 2019, 10).

⁶This is an example of ‘philosophising historically’, the usefulness of which John Haldane emphasised when introducing his reflections on realism and anti-realism, which I will discuss later in this essay. As he says, unlike scientific investigations, philosophical ones are often better conducted ‘by looking at what earlier writers have had to say about it or about a related issue’ (Haldane 1993, 15).

the subjects considered by Gettier do not have knowledge (see Comesaña and Comesaña 2022, 89).⁷ In any case, in 1973 Gilbert Harman had already observed that Gettier counterexamples involve false beliefs rather than true ones, which is contrary to what is often assumed (see Harman 1973, 120). More recently, Stephen Hetherington pointed out that the GP assumes a categorical concept of knowledge and a gradational concept of justification. However, if we view both knowledge and justification as gradational, the GP will disappear.⁸

I acknowledge that, like mine, these treatments tend to dissolve the GP rather than solve it. In other words, these approaches assume that there is an issue with the GP's formulation. However, unlike my approach, they do not question the underlying concept of truth on which the GP is based, nor do they do so from a historical-philosophical perspective.

2. Aquinas's Epistemology and the Two Concepts of Truth

According to Aquinas, truth is 'the conformity of thing and intellect (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*)' (Aquinas [1256–1257] 1952, q. 1, a. 1). This definition was coined by the Jewish philosopher Isaac Ben Israeli (ix-x century). But it was the elaboration offered by Aquinas, and thus the meaning he attributed to it, that imposed it on the epistemology of the following centuries.

Aquinas focuses on truth while considering how it is possible to identify and make explicit certain aspects of the simple concept of being (*ens*). He defines being as 'that which the intellect first conceives as, in a way, the most evident, and to which it reduces all its concepts'.⁹ When being is related to the human soul, two aspects of being can be identified

⁷However, as they say, the vast majority of epistemologists think that JTB is not sufficient for knowledge, as pointed out by Gettier. Therefore, many attempts have been made to address this issue and solve the GP.

⁸See Hetherington (2001, 72). According to the author's argument in another book devoted to the GP, it can be stated that JTB is sufficient even if we accept what Hetherington refers to as the 'Gettier datum' and reject what he calls the 'Gettier moral' (see Hetherington 2016, ix-xi).

⁹'Illud quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum et in quod conceptiones omnes resolvit' (Aquinas [1256–1257] 1952, q. 1, a. 1).

and made explicit, as the human soul has two powers. These are the knowing power and the appetitive power. When the human soul relates to being through the appetitive power, it makes explicit the *goodness* of being. That is, being appears to the human soul as that which is willed, insofar as it corresponds to the appetitive power. Goodness is therefore defined ‘correspondence of being to the appetitive power’.¹⁰ On the other hand, when the human soul relates to being through the knowing power, it makes the *truth* of being explicit. The cognitive power, or intellect, adapts itself to being, therefore truth is ‘the conformity of thing and intellect’, as already mentioned.

On the basis of what I have just said, only one aspect of truth emerges, which is the *conformity of the human intellect to being*. According to Aquinas, however, there is also a non-human intellect, the divine intellect. Does this also play a role in Aquinas’s view of truth? As an authoritative interpreter of Aquinas such as Leo Elders argues (see Elders [1993] 2001, 38), simply saying, as Aquinas says, that ‘the nature of the true consists in a conformity (*adaequatio*) of thing and intellect’, does not apply to the divine intellect (Aquinas [1256–1257] 1952, q. 1, a. 3). The divine intellect thus seems to be excluded from Aquinas’s view of truth. Only the judgement produced by the human intellect ‘is said to be true when it conforms to the external reality’ (Aquinas [1256–1257] 1952, q. 1, a. 3). In other words, only the human intellect, not that of God, adapts to the extramental reality.¹¹ Therefore, truth seems attainable only from the viewpoint of the human intellect.

In reality, for Aquinas, truth is not only that which is achieved by the human intellect. It also has to do with the divine intellect. In the first case we speak of *logical* truth, which is the adaptation of the human intellect to being. In the second case, we speak of *ontological* truth, which is the adaptation of being to the divine intellect—this intellect, according to the Christian theological view held by Aquinas, is God himself, who creates and at the same time knows all beings.¹² This is clear from Aquinas’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Peri hermeneias*. In this work, Aquinas argues

¹⁰‘Convenientia entis ad appetitum’ (Aquinas [1256–1257] 1952, q. 1, a. 1).

¹¹In metaphysical terms, Wippel says that for Aquinas ‘it is only through the operation of the intellect which grasps the *esse* of a thing as it is by becoming assimilated to that thing that the relation of adequation is completed’ (Wippel 2007, 67).

¹²Note that this does not mean that Aquinas’s claims about divine knowledge of creation only emerge from a religious viewpoint. His view incorporates the classical Greek

that truth can be seen as ‘truth of being’ or ‘ontological truth’ and ‘truth of the intellect’ or ‘logical truth’.¹³ According to Aquinas,

a thing is related to thought in two ways: in one way as the measure to the measured, and this is the way natural things are related to the human speculative intellect. Whence thought is said to be true insofar as it is conformed to the thing, but false insofar as it is not in conformity with the thing. . . . In another way, things are compared to thought as measured to the measure, as is evident in the practical intellect, which is cause of things. In this way, the work of an artisan is said to be true insofar as it achieves the conception in the mind of the artist, and false insofar as it falls short of that conception. Now all natural things are related to the divine intellect as artifacts to art and therefore a thing is said to be true insofar as it has its own form, according to which it represents divine art. (Aristotle, Aquinas, and Cajetan 1962 I, lectio 3)

Aquinas synthesises two aspects of the truth by considering that a thing is related to thought in two ways. First, ‘as the measure to the measured’, which is the way things are related to the human speculative intellect. Second, ‘as measured to the measure’, which is the way things are related to the human practical intellect as well as the divine intellect.

We now need to consider three specifications that Aquinas makes in relation to his definition of truth as ‘*adaequatio rei et intellectus*’ (see Aquinas [1256–1257] 1952, q. 1, a. 1; Aquinas [1265–1272] 1920, I, q. 16, a. 1).

The three specifications are:

- (A) conformity of thing and intellect;
- (B) true knowledge;
- (C) truth of things.

Regarding (A), it must be said that it allows one to consider truth *in itself*. Aquinas says that (A) is ‘that in which its intelligible determination is formally completed’. It can be said that (A) applies to both logical and

philosophical concept of the ultimate explanation of reality. As we will see below, this implies that the world is intrinsically intelligible because it is an expression of *logos*.

¹³See Wippel (2007, 65). As noted by Wippel, the terms ‘ontological’ and ‘logical’ were introduced by later scholastic interpreters of Aquinas (see 2007, 65, note 1). In this sense, ‘ontology’ is a neologism of modern rationalism, and ‘ontological truth’ is obviously an anachronism.

ontological truth. Indeed, (A) can be understood both as the conformity that the (human) intellect achieves with things, and as the conformity of things to the (divine) intellect.

Regarding (B), it must be said that (B) highlights the *effect* of *adaequatio*—Aquinas says, ‘according to the effect following upon it’. *Adaequatio* produces knowledge, which is to be understood precisely as the full conformity of the intellect with things. This conformity is fully realised when it comes to ontological truth. For God knows things fully as he created them. They are fully conformed to his intellect. In the case of logical truth, on the other hand, conformity must be *acquired*. The human intellect must adapt itself to things, but this requires an effort that sometimes produces only an approximation to knowledge. This effort and this approximation are based on what Aquinas calls the ‘cause of truth’.

The ‘cause of truth’ coincides with (C). It is what Aquinas calls ‘that which precedes truth and is the basis of truth’. It can be said that (C) is the conformity of things to the divine intellect. Its foundation is the creative act of all things, since that act causes created things to conform to the mind of God the Creator, i.e., to be as God intended them to be. Therefore, (C) is the foundation of logical truth, since our knowledge of things is the adaptation of our intellect to the way things were thought and created by God.

The knowledge attained by the human intellect is therefore an *adaptation*, sometimes approximate and then *incomplete*, to the reality of things. The knowledge proper to the divine intellect, on the other hand, is always the *full possession* of the truth about these things. The view that knowledge attained by the human intellect is an adaptation to the reality of things is confirmed by the fact that logical truth is first of all a quality of our *propositions*. But such truth is only truly attained, and we have full knowledge, when it fully corresponds to (C), i.e., how things are in relation to the divine intellect’s knowledge of them.

Aquinas refers to this correspondence between the truth of propositions and the truth of things when he says that we acquire knowledge in two ways—intuitively and demonstratively. He sets forth this distinction and states that the object of knowledge

is known (*cognitum*) either by itself (as in the case of first principles, which are held by the habit of understanding), or through something

else already known (*cognitum*) (as in the case of conclusions which are held by the habit of science). (Aquinas [1265–1272] 1920, II-II, q. 1, a. 4)

In this passage, Aquinas focuses on what he considers to be the object of knowledge. It is often maintained that, from Descartes on, knowledge has been considered to be ‘acquaintance with propositions’ and therefore is no longer seen as ‘acquaintance with the real’. This passage, which refers to ‘first principles’ and ‘conclusions’, induces one to believe that Aquinas too thought of knowledge as acquaintance with *propositions*. This is only partly true. Let us look at what Aquinas says in his *On Truth*: ‘The true is found primarily in the intellect rather than in things’ (Aquinas [1256–1257] 1952, q. 1, a. 3). For him,

truth is properly found in the human or divine intellect, as health is found in an animal. In things, however, truth is found because of some relation to intellect—just as health is said to be in things other than animals in so far as they bring about or preserve animal health. (Aquinas [1256–1257] 1952, q. 1, a. 4)

If knowledge is the attainment of truth, and truth is the adaptation of the intellect to things, then truth is *grounded* in a thing’s *esse* and is properly *found* in the intellect. As a result, knowledge is the achievement of something that is properly found in the intellect, although this does not imply, as some may think, that the knowing process does not enable things to be achieved as they are in themselves. On the contrary, as John Wippel says, for Aquinas, ‘the terminus of knowledge is in the intellect insofar as the intellect is conformed to a thing which is understood’, and ‘truth in the full and complete sense is assigned to the intellect insofar as the intellect’s grasp of a thing corresponds to that thing as it is in itself’ (Wippel 2007, 88 and 68).¹⁴

We can now see why this passage is important for the distinction between knowledge by adaptation through the human intellect and total knowledge through the divine intellect. For Aquinas, the truth that we humans can attain finds its foundation in things. More precisely, it is grounded in the knowledge that the divine intellect has of things

¹⁴This allows us to preemptively reject the objection that Aquinas’s two senses of truth should not be taken into account here because they are a completely different framework than we use today. In fact, the objection might go on, knowledge for Aquinas is not just propositional knowledge or ‘knowing-that-p’ but rather ‘knowing things’. What I have considered so far allows us to see that the two are closely related.

themselves. In this sense, to know means for us to fully attain the true, as Wipfel argues, to the extent that ‘the intellect’s grasp of a thing corresponds to that thing as it is in itself’, i.e., as it is known by the divine intellect. The fact that for Aquinas logical truth is found primarily in our intellect does not contradict, but rather implies, that it must be based on the adaptation of things to the divine intellect, i.e., (C), which Aquinas for this very reason calls the ‘cause of truth’.

For the purposes of this article, the question is whether the GP arises because Gettier implicitly uses ontological rather than logical truth. Unlike ontological truth, which is complete and unchanging, logical truth is always the result of a sometimes unattainable adaptation of the human mind to the reality of things. Unlike ontological truth, which, for Aquinas, is possessed only by God, logical truth is the only type that Gettier-style counterexamples should use.

3. Examining Gettier-Style Counterexamples and an Alternative Perspective to Consider Them

This section focuses on two well-known Gettier-style arguments. Firstly, I will consider a case that Gettier himself discusses in his article. He aims to support the view that the following conditions:

- (1) *S believes* that P;
- (2) *S is justified* in believing that P; and
- (3) P is *true*

are not sufficient for the truth of

- (a) *S knows* that P.

Suppose that Smith and Jones have both applied for a job at a company. Smith has evidence that

- (i) Jones will be successful—the President of the company told Smith that Jones will be hired—and Jones has ten coins in his pocket—Smith had the opportunity to count the coins in Jones’s pocket.

Furthermore, Smith sees that (i) entails

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

Consequently, Smith is justified in believing (ii). However, suppose that Smith himself, and not Jones, will get the job, and that Smith also has ten coins in his pocket, unbeknownst to him. As Gettier points out, it then follows that

1ⁱ: Smith believes that (ii) is true;

2ⁱ: Smith is justified in believing that (ii) is true; and

3ⁱ: (ii) is true.

However, according to Gettier's conclusion, Smith cannot be said to know that (ii) is true because he is not aware that he has ten coins in his pocket. Therefore, Smith's acquisition of the truth is attributed to luck, which implies that 1ⁱ-3ⁱ, i.e., JTB is not sufficient for Smith to have knowledge of (ii).

Another example similar to Gettier's counterexamples is Roderick Chisholm's scenario of a dog that resembles a sheep (see [Chisholm 1977, 105](#)). Janet observes an animal in the field, which she is justified in believing to be a sheep. Therefore, Janet believes the proposition 'there is a sheep in the field' and has justification to support it. However, the animal in question is a dog. Nevertheless, there is indeed a sheep behind the dog, which Janet cannot see. Therefore, it can be concluded that the proposition 'there is a sheep in the field', which Janet believes to be true and is justified in doing so (JTB), is actually true due to fortunate circumstances. This leads to the GP. It cannot be claimed that Janet has knowledge of the aforementioned proposition.

In my view, the GP arises from this example because, instead of assuming the logical type of truth, Gettier assumes the ontological type. The former can be attained from a specific viewpoint, which is *Janet's*, while the latter is attained from a broader perspective, which encompasses *everything*.¹⁵ Janet's limitations prevent her from seeing everything and knowing everything. Janet should limit herself to affirming only what she can see, using objective evidence. Stating 'I observe

¹⁵Regarding these two perspectives, it can be said that 'looking at the world through a scientific lens, the lens that scientists have developed over generations, means taking a look from nowhere and from everywhere at the same time. It is a disembodied look that contrasts the way in which I know and experience the world' (Roth 2006, 175).

an animal in the field and I think I am justified in believing it to be a sheep' instead of 'there is a sheep in the field' would be certainly true. This would ensure objectivity and precision in her statement. By doing so, Janet would have knowledge of the proposition in question, and the GP would be dismissed as no problem.

It might be objected that, according to this view, we cannot say that it is raining, but only that *we see that* it is raining. Similarly, we cannot say that $2+2=4$, but only that *we see that* $2+2=4$. This—the objection might go on—is implausible, given the way ordinary people make certain statements, statements that are objective and unqualified.

The answer should be twofold. First, the cases just reported (it is raining; $2+2=4$) are characterized by immediate evidence, and it is virtually impossible to be wrong about them. In contrast, Janet's cases, as well as Smith's, which we will see shortly, involve a more or less complicated set of circumstances, some of which simply escape Janet's (and Smith's) point of view. To ensure that Janet (and Smith) do not miss any of these circumstances, a point of view that allows for complete and unchanging knowledge is required. But that viewpoint is typical of ontological truth, and it is not possible for Janet (nor for Smith). Second, philosophy is different from what ordinary people think and say. In a philosophical debate, what seems obvious to ordinary people must be clarified in order to make it unassailable in terms of justification.

A counter-objection might be that an ordinary person like Janet is within her epistemic rights to believe that the animal she sees is a sheep. After all, she has been shown a sheep-like animal and has no chance of defeat that she knows of. I agree. I think that Janet enjoys an *implicit* justification. From an *externalist* point of view, she does not need to be aware of this justification. She is within her epistemic rights to believe that she sees a sheep simply because there is no disfavour. But if Janet says, 'I am observing an animal in the field and I think I am justified in believing that it is a sheep', then a form of *internalist* justification applies. The justification is *explicit* because the reasons for claiming that the animal in the field she sees is a sheep are internal to Janet's consciousness. Janet therefore has her epistemic justification in both cases. As an ordinary person she enjoys an implicit justification, whereas as a philosopher her justification is explicit.

The example of Smith presents an additional difficulty when compared to the example of Janet. This difficulty concerns the closure principle adopted by Gettier, which justifies Smith's belief in both (i) and (ii). In reality, justification does not seem to apply to (ii) because the President informed Smith that *Jones*, rather than *a man*, would be hired.

However, I am not concerned with this issue. My interest lies in the difficulty common to Janet's and Smith's examples. As mentioned above, the GP appears to stem from the idea that there is a type of truth that can only be understood by an external or ideal observer. Unlike Smith, this observer has comprehensive and unchanging knowledge.

Needless to say, the perspective just mentioned corresponds to ontological truth, which Aquinas distinguishes from the logical type of truth. Gettier makes no distinction between them. Instead, he seems to take it for granted that, although truth applies to a human intellect, it implies an ideal point of view which, for Aquinas, only a divine intellect can assume.

Incidentally, it could be argued that this ideal point of view—typically associated with an observer who can achieve a-perspectival objectivity and see everything from all possible angles—has been understood as characteristic of *metaphysical realism*, the thesis that reality exists independently of our minds. Consequently, it has also been considered characteristic of human knowledge. Does this imply that Aquinas's metaphysical realism is not limited by any particular perspective, even when referring to the knowledge that humans, and not God, have of things? In a 1981 book, Hilary Putnam famously rejected metaphysical realism, as well as the so-called 'God's eye point of view', which he also refers to as the 'No Eye View of Truth'. (This view is usually considered to coincide with the 'view from nowhere', which was rejected by Thomas Nagel.¹⁶) Putnam plausibly argues that our knowledge is always perspectival and that there is no 'God's eye point of view'. Instead, there are 'various points of view of actual persons reflecting various interests and purposes that their descriptions and theories subserve' (Putnam 1981, 50).

¹⁶Thomas Nagel argues that both subjective and objective perspectives are essential to our conception of ourselves and our world (see Nagel 1986, 4ff.). Among the latest authors who assimilate these viewpoints with each other is Thomas Zoglauer. According to him 'objectivity is often equated with an aperspectival view, a "god's eye view" (Putnam) or a "view from nowhere"' (Zoglauer 2023, 65).

John Haldane responded to Putnam during a lengthy debate (see Haldane 1988, 1992, 2002). Haldane did not need to refer to God's eye point of view in order to justify the realism that, according to Aquinas, characterises human knowledge. Instead, Haldane notes that this realism is justified by the view he calls 'no epistemology without ontology', which is endorsed by Putnam. However, Haldane claims that Putnam does not explicitly explain this view (see Haldane 2002, 102). This view states that the mind conforms to things because the world is intrinsically intelligible as an expression of the *logos*. In Haldane's words, there is a *formal identity* between my thought and 'which makes the object of my thought to be the kind of thing it is' (2002, 102). If Haldane is right—and I believe he is—then in Aquinas's philosophy, the non-perspectival view of knowledge can only be ascribed to God. This perspective characterises ontological truth.

Returning to Gettier's problem, I argue that he should have avoided any reference, even implicit, to the aforementioned a-perspectival view and the kind of truth that emerges from it. To put it another way, JTB should not include (3ⁱ) and should consequently turn into JB. Note that this by no means leads to the exclusion of truth from the definition of knowledge, which would arguably be considered unacceptable. Only the truth attained from the abovementioned a-perspectival viewpoint is excluded. In fact, the truth that can be attained from one's point of view is included in (1ⁱ), since to believe a proposition is to commit oneself to the *truth* of a proposition on the basis of justification, where justification is represented by (2ⁱ). Belief and justification respectively represent the search for truth and the reasons why one believes one has reached it. They stress the existence of a standpoint from which one seeks truth and believes one has attained it. To seek and attain truth, one must consider logical truth, not ontological truth, as is usually taken for granted when discussing GP. Once it is made clear that it is logical truth that must be assumed, it can be said that justification and belief are sufficient conditions for a human intellect to have knowledge (JB).

Can this view be confirmed from historical-philosophical perspectives other than those focused on Aquinas? Can it be assumed that in the discussions of the GP there was a tendency not only to take the three conditions of knowledge (JTB) outlined by Gettier for granted, but also, as Gettier claimed with reference to Plato, to assume that

they constituted the traditional understanding of knowledge? Can it instead be assumed that, precisely by referring to Plato, it is the view of knowledge as JB that has been traditionally held? In short, can one try to offer a confirmation of my thesis that Gettier erroneously assumes truth in its ontological form and equally erroneously attributes it to epistemology as it was configured in the footsteps of Plato? This is what I intend to focus on in the next section.

4. Is the Understanding of Knowledge in the Course of History JB Rather Than, as Gettier Suggests, JTB?

I now intend to focus on whether my view is consistent with Gettier's understanding of knowledge, which he seems to trace back to Plato (see Gettier 1963, 121 n. 1).

To explore this, let us examine a portion of the conversation between Socrates and Meno (see Plato 1892, 97d–99a), in which they wonder whether there is a distinction between *true opinion* (*alethes doxa*) and *knowledge* (*epistēmē*). While both *alethes doxa* and *epistēmē* are considered 'beautiful and fruitful', only the latter holds significant value, as it does not 'run away out of the human soul' (Plato 1892, 202b–c). Unlike true opinions, things known 'are fastened by the *tie of the cause*', where *tie* or *calculation of the cause* stands for *aitias logismoi*. Unsurprisingly, 'reasoning out explanations' plays a crucial role among the ways in which *epistēmē* can be rendered in English.¹⁷ This is why *epistēmē* can also be translated as *science*, which emphasizes the importance of reasoning out explanations and providing full evidence and justification.

Thus, *epistēmē* concerns only specific viewpoints, from which one gains knowledge of a proposition by believing in its truth and providing full evidence and justification to support it. In terms of Gettier, the knowledge view that arises from Plato's *Meno* seems to be JB, not JTB.

It should be noted that, like myself, some scholars reject the view that knowledge has usually been seen as JTB throughout the history of

¹⁷Other ways of expressing the word in English include 'ability to define or give an account of its object' and 'direct acquaintance with its object'. For more on this, see Moss (2021, 6).

philosophy.¹⁸ However, unlike me, they do not focus on the twofold view of truth that I have taken into account in the footsteps of Aquinas. Some of these scholars argue that knowledge and belief are fundamentally different, as proposed by the late Maria Rosa Antognazza. She points out that JTB contradicts what both modern and ancient philosophers, including Plato, have said about knowledge. Antognazza argues that there is a distinction in kind between belief and knowledge, as those who know *see* what those who believe *cannot* (see Antognazza 2015). However, I am not convinced by her argument. She quotes Aquinas, according to whom, she says, ‘in knowledge the assent is moved by the object itself’, whereas ‘in belief the assent is given for reasons external to the object’ (2015, 171). However, Antognazza fails to see that, for Aquinas, knowledge is attained not only when the intellect is ‘moved to assent by the object itself, which is known . . . through itself’, but also ‘through something else already known’ (Aquinas [1265–1272] 1920, II-II, q. 1, a. 4). In both cases, the object moves the intellect to assent. When this occurs ‘through something else’, the knower does not see immediately but only through the mediation of reasons external to the object, which is what Antognazza characterizes as belief. If my argument is correct, the only difference between belief and the kind of knowledge attained through external evidence, and not immediately, is that, unlike belief, knowledge is caused by *full* evidence. In the modern age, Locke seems to confirm this view when he recommends that one should not entertain ‘any proposition with greater assurance than the proofs it is built upon will warrant’ (Locke 1700, IV, xix, 1). Locke seems to mean that the distinction between belief and knowledge is based on the level of evidence supporting each. Belief is supported by *probable* evidence, while knowledge is supported by *full* evidence. Consequently, knowledge can be defined as JB, with justification fully achieved when full evidence is available.

Like Antognazza, I believe that, contrary to Gettier’s claims, JTB does not constitute the generally accepted model of knowledge in his time,

¹⁸When discussing *Meno* and *Theaetetus*, Carlo Cellucci observes that in the latter, Plato explicitly rejects JTB. Cellucci argues that ‘a justification would have to be knowledge itself’, which means that ‘saying that knowledge is true belief accompanied by a justification would amount to saying that knowledge is true belief accompanied by knowledge’. Cellucci reminds the reader that the definition in question had already been rejected by thinkers such as Meinong and Russell (Cellucci 2017, 66).

which he seems to trace back to Plato. Unlike Antognazza, however, I do not believe that there is a radical difference between belief and justification, but that the former is supported by probable evidence, while the latter is supported by conclusive evidence.

The comparison made so far with Antognazza's reflection brings to light at least two important considerations. First, she agrees that discussions of the GP have wrongly assumed that knowledge is traditionally understood as JTB. Second, and more importantly for the purposes of this article, the absence of a radical difference between belief and justification is consistent with my thesis that in both cases the human intellect tends towards truth, sometimes reaching it, sometimes not. In the case of belief, the supporting evidence is only probable, and this proportionately makes the intellect's adaptation to things equally probable. In the case of justification, at least sometimes, the evidence can be complete and conclusive. But even in this case, on closer examination, the intellect's adaptation to things may turn out to be only approximate, because, unlike the creator, who has complete and unchanging knowledge of all things because he does all things, humans do not do things and their point of view can change. The examples of Janet and Smith confirm this. In both cases, the justification appears *prima facie* conclusive, but is later refuted by further consideration.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I have set out a Thomistic approach to the GP. According to Aquinas, only logical truth should be considered when it comes to the knowledge that humans can attain. Logical truth is purely theoretical, whereas ontological truth is practical in that it relates to God, who knows and does everything. Unlike humans, God creates everything, which is why he is not limited by any particular perspective. Given this distinction, Janet's ability to gain knowledge is always relative to her point of view. This prevents her from seeing that there really is a sheep in the field. If Janet's belief that there is a sheep in the field is true, then the truth in question—(3)—is beyond her grasp. In fact, (3) can only be affirmed by someone who has complete and unchanging knowledge of all things, and for Aquinas, that is God. Janet can only believe that there is a sheep in the field because she has not properly considered her

justification. Had she done so, she would have achieved logical truth by simply saying, ‘I am observing an animal in the field, and I think I am justified in believing that it is a sheep’. In this case, Janet would have said something absolutely true, and the GP would not have arisen at all. If my argument is correct, then belief and justification (JB), as presented in (1)-(2), are sufficient conditions for knowledge. One can obtain knowledge by believing that the proposition in question is true and by providing a justification for that truth. Not surprisingly, Plato’s understanding of knowledge appears to be JB rather than JTB, contrary to the view of Gettier and others who have accepted his formulation of the GP. In conclusion, if we look at the GP from the point of view of Aquinas’s epistemology, which leads us to reject ontological truth, there seems to be no reason for the GP to arise.

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