

Knowledge in and about Situations: Edgington's response to Fitch's Paradox

Jeremy Seligman
The University of Auckland

In 1963, Frederick Fitch famously showed that the principle

$$(VT) \quad \forall p (p \rightarrow \Diamond Kp)$$

interpreted as stating the verificationist thesis that every truth is knowable, entails

$$(O) \quad \forall p (p \rightarrow Kp)$$

which states the apparently much stronger thesis that every truth is known, a form of omniscience with obvious counterexamples, such as, for example, whichever of the propositions (even) or (odd) happens to be true:

(even) the number of leaves on that tree is even

(odd) the number of leaves on that tree is odd

Subsequently, there have been many attempts to rescue verificationism from this all-too-quick refutation. One of these, by Dorothy Edgington, distinguishes between knowledge in a situation and knowledge *about* a situation. True but unknown propositions, such as (even) or (odd) above, are unknown in the current situation, but that there are unknown in this situation is something that we may come to know, and in that case, we would gain knowledge about this situation by moving to another one.

The aim of this paper is to represent this idea precisely in a formal language that is sensitive to this situation parameter. In so-doing we will encounter a number of ideas from both situation theory and epistemic logic.