Three solutions to the knower paradox

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Abstract: In this paper I shall present three solutions to the Knower Paradox which, despite important points in common, differ in several respects. The first solution, proposed by C. A. Anderson [1] is a hierarchical solution, developed in the framework of first-order arithmetic. However I will try to show that this solution is based on an incorrect argument. The second solution, inspired by a book of R.M. Smullyan [14], is developed in the framework of modal logic and it is based on the idea of interpreting one of the basic systems of the modal logic of provability in an epistemic way. I shall give arguments in support of this solution. The third solution, proposed by P. Egréé [8] attempts to connect the first and the second solutions. I will show that this attempt fails for philosophical and formal reasons.

Keywords: hierarchy solutions, Knower Paradox, self-reference, provability logic

Type de document: Article dans une revue


Domaine: Sciences de l'Homme et Société / Histoire, Philosophie et Sociologie des sciences

Liste complète des métadonnées

https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00775810
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Soumis le: jeudi 6 septembre 2018 - 16:15:24
Dernière modification le: vendredi 14 septembre 2018 - 14:00:36
Document(s) archive(s) le: samedi 8 décembre 2018 - 00:24:56

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Fichiers produits par l'(les) auteur(s)

IDENTIFIANTS

- HAL Id: halshs-00775810, version 1
- DOI: 10.13128/Annali_Dip_Filos-2840
After introducing Fitch's paradox of knowability and the knower paradox, the paper critically discusses the dialetheist unified solution to both problems that Beall and Priest have proposed. It is first argued that the dialetheist approach to the knower paradox can be justified. The lesson of the knower paradox, according to dialetheism, is that human knowledge is inconsistent. The paper also argues that this inconsistency has not been shown by dialetheists to be wide enough in its scope to justify their approach to Fitch's problem. The connection between the two problems is superficial and therefore the proposed unified solution fails.