Strange things are happening in epistemology. In one well-known example, Mr. Smith thinks that one of his friends owns a Ford. This is because, some years ago, he had met a man who always owned a maroon Ford. Indeed Smith saw Mr. Nogot driving the maroon Ford just that day. Yet, in spite of this, a relative of Mr. Nogot has recently sold the Ford, and was only driving it somewhere for the new owner. Even so, Smith is certain that one of his friends owns a Ford, is true. For, as happens, another of Smith's friends, Mr. Havit, has just that morning bought a new Ford, though as yet Smith has no inkling of this.

The question is: does Mr. Smith know that one of his friends owns a Ford? If one takes the traditional epistemology, a true belief qualifies as knowledge if the believer is justified in believing it. Smith has a true belief. One of his friends owns a Ford. And he certainly seems to be justified in believing it. Didn't he just see Mr. Nogot driving the maroon Ford he's always owned? And if he didn't own it, doesn't this as well as Smith knows that one of his friends owns a Ford. An example like this is called "Gettier cases", because they were first brought to the attention of philosophers by Edmund Gettier in a 1963 article in the Journal of Philosophy.

For the second and longer part, "Assessing Our Cognitive Resources", is a survey of current theories and research in cognitive science. There are chapters on perception, memory, decision-making, and learning, each with an epistemological spin.

There is another incoherence about trying to distill an "everyday" conception of knowledge from intuitions about such examples. What is not so clear is why this enterprise should count as part of philosophy. Why suppose that the kind of knowledge thus identified will be philosophically significant? In particular, why suppose that it will have anything to do with the traditional epistemic concern to avoid error? Error.

A Few Carats of Pain

The shadows were roaring
With pain on the other side of the mirror,
She pushed the glass up against the optic
But called the barman to draw my beer,
Yonder your grip is with my fingers
In the honeycomb, which is
Stone in the garden of the joints!
She explained, and in the east wind
As if in the air were condensing on this stone,
Black ice; 'Verglas?' She agreed.

Welding in the glass,
Immovable joints under construction
On the other side of the mirror,
Shadowless, they weight on the face.
She served me chaser whisky anodyne
And the barman drew my beer in his firm grip.
That's a handsome stone, my dear ...
'It's my life-savings, lover-boy,
Small as it is ...' among the calcite flowers
Like an arch in the garden, refracting pain!
You lose your grip at first,
And no sign can be seen except the pain,
So I bought the diamond
To wear on my arthritic hand: It was like
A folded window into the skin,
It was like a point of pain
Hold on to a point of concentration,
Its interior shadowless.

Her hand, she says, is a garden to this star
Which is precipice when the east wind blows
And you lose your grip; you know your bones
In this disease, she says, outlined by pain,
'I've crowned this one like a King
With my life-savings ...'
She pushed
My glass up into the whisky-sprink, and smiled;
Her perfume filled the bar, her story gripped us.

PETER REDGROVE

Questions become particularly pressing once it turns out that our everyday concepts of justifi- cation and knowledge are incorrect. The reliability or unreliability of the mechanisms causing our beliefs isn't in general amenable to analysis in order to make sure our beliefs are justified by doing some extra thinking. But to assume that the project is not that naive to think that error is what makes us "rightly believe, the result is usual only to adopt the traditional point of view. From a more general perspective, any- thing that leads to your belief-forming mecha nisms becoming reliable will help you to avoid error. Sometimes mere creature introspec tion will help achieve reliability. But in other cases, you might need actively to train yourself to make perceptual discrimina tions that were previously beyond you. You might train yourself to stop falling into conclu sions in certain kinds of unfamiliar circum stances, which might be hard to do. But even if you never have to get rid of unreliable mental habits and acquire reliable ones.

Goldman discusses the study of our actively revising our belief-forming processes to increase their reliability right at the beginning of his book. But in between, he seems to take it back. Early in his argument he explains that he is going to concentrate on "processes", in the sense of particular cognitive states that are distinguishable from "methods", in the sense of the further mental skills and tech niques that humans can acquire. But he pro vides no account of such methods. Perhaps (though I doubt it) there is a principled way of dividing mental habits into natural and unnatural processes, just as there is no such division for epistemic considerations. On the other hand, one might wonder if it would be a mistake to conclude, as Goldman often seems to, that the processes comprise a basic list of the sorts of things we can get rid of, whatever more elaborate devices we later acquire.

One of the psychological experiments Gold man discusses is the well-known case of Linda, the feminist bank-teller. In this experiment subjects are told a story along these lines: Linda is thirty-one years old, single, outspoken, bright, a philosophy graduate, and deeply involved in the feminist and civil rights and social justice. The subjects are then asked which is more probable: (a) Linda is a bank-teller; or (b) Linda is a bank-teller and active in the feminist movement, and this is clearly not the case.

Goldman has a theory, involving "represen tativness routines", about what makes people prefer (b) to (a), and he argues that such routines might be a reliable route to the truth in general, even if they go wrong in this particular case. But is there some point at which you might want to take a different approach and make the Linda experiment. It doesn't work with people who have had the error pointed out to them. In the same way, in one case, this kind of example will opt for answer (a) without blinking. "Representativeness routines" are standard belief-forming pro cesses, but it is clearly possible for people to stop using them.

Human beings are so smart not because their native intelligence is exceptional, but because processes are especially reliable, but rather because all their habits of thought, whether innate or acquired, can alter in the course of reflection about their reliabil ity. What philosophers ought to be asking psychologists is how this happens, and in particular, what are the general conditions on our ability to transcend our natural endowments in the pursuit of truth. Goldman promises us a second volume in which he will turn from processes to methods, and examine the more general question of "sociocognitive epistemology". It is a pity that he so circumscribes his project in this volume that he does not ask them here.