

Goldman on What is Justified Belief?

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Outline

Introduction to the role of causal elements in an epistemological theory

Goldman's Account of Justified Belief

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There are different roles that **causal elements** and notions like **reliability** can play in an epistemological theory.

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- ▶ For example, you may acquire evidence that your visual experiences are being produced by an evil neuroscientist.

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- ▶ One way of incorporating notions like reliability into your epistemological theory is to say that in cases like this one, the evidence that your experiences are unreliable will **defeat** your justification for believing that there is a clock on the mantel.
- ▶ This is the least controversial use of the notion of reliability.
- ▶ Pretty much everyone accepts something like this.

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2. By “classical solutions:” solutions that retain that idea that knowledge requires justified true belief, and try to find some extra **fourth condition** to block Gettier-type cases from counting as knowledge.
3. On these views, facts about reliability are what you have to add to justified true beliefs, in order to get knowledge.

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4. According to these views, reliability is what you add to true beliefs, perhaps instead of evidence or as an **account of justification**, in order to get knowledge.

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2. This is the view that, instead of replacing the notion of justification in an account of knowledge, reliability is what makes a belief justified.
3. Goldman came to hold such a view several years after he published "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge." He defends this view in "What is Justified Belief?"

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2. It says that the facts about your beliefs which determine whether or not they're justified are not "internally available" to you.
3. You can't tell by introspection and reflection alone whether your beliefs have those features.

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2. Call an account of some epistemological state **externalist** when it says that the presence or absence of the state depends on facts which aren't “internally available” to you. There can be internalist or externalist accounts of knowledge, of justification, and of various related notions.

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2. Traditionally, philosophers always thought that what it's reasonable or justified for you to believe was a wholly **internal** matter.
3. If you were justified in believing P, then all your **internal epistemic duplicates** would be justified in believing P, too. (Even many proponents of externalist theories of knowledge, like Goldman when he wrote "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge," still thought that justification was a wholly internal affair.)

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2. He has all the same **beliefs, thoughts, experiences, and memories** as you have.
3. Everything which you can tell about yourself on the basis of introspection and reflection, is also true of him (and like you, he can tell that it's true of him on the basis of introspection and reflection). Call such a person an **internal epistemic duplicate of you**.

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4. So on this view, there are other external features besides the truth-value of your belief which can make a difference to whether you know.

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2. The externalist about justification says that you and your **internal epistemic duplicates** can differ with respect to what you're justified in believing.

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2. There are several different kinds of externalist accounts of justification.
3. We're going to look at just one of these, **process reliabilism**.

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Goldman's Account of Justified Belief

Alvin Goldman

Cast of Characters



- ▶ Ph.D., Princeton 1965
- ▶ Board of Governors Professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Science Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
- ▶ Author of 12 books, including *A Theory of Human Action* (1977) and *Epistemology and Cognition* (1986);

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 2. self-evident.
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 4. infallible.
 5. incorrigible (that is, cannot be corrected).

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- ▶ After a Ill, indomitability, self-evidence, self-presentingness, infallibility and incorrigibility are all broadly epistemic notions.
- ▶ Goldman wants an account of justification that **reduces it to notions that are not themselves epistemic.**

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 1. If you have a justified belief that P, then you know that the belief is justified and you know what the justification is.
 2. If you're justified in believing P, then you can give a justifying argument for P.
 3. You can state or explain what your justification for believing P is.

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- ▶ Some belief-forming mechanisms yield beliefs as output only when they're given other beliefs as input.
- ▶ Belief-forming mechanisms of that sort count as conditionally reliable when they tend to produce true beliefs as output when the beliefs they're given as input are themselves true.

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- ▶ All beliefs produced by conditionally reliable processes that received beliefs as input which were themselves justified are justified.
- ▶ No other beliefs are justified.

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2. But when we’re defining “justification,” we say that if a conditionally reliable process takes a justified belief as input, that’s enough for the output belief to be justified, too.

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2. Suppose Jones has very good evidence that his beliefs about his childhood were formed unreliably.
3. If so, then it seems epistemically irresponsible for Jones to continue holding those beliefs—even if, as it happens, the beliefs were formed in a reliable way.
4. Regardless of whether the beliefs were formed reliably, if Jones has good reason to believe they weren't, then it ought to be unreasonable and unjustified for him to continue holding them.

Goldman's response

Say that a belief B of S's is "undermined" iff S believes (or "ought" to be using a process that would generate a belief) that belief B was formed in an unreliable way. Then:

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