
Justification and Truth

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JUSTIFICATION AND TRUTH*

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I

Epistemologists generally agree that two components of knowledge are justification and truth. If *S* believes that *P*, then *S* knows that *P* only if *S* is justified in believing that *P* and it is true that *P*. A central issue in epistemology concerns the connection between justification and truth. While one could view them as conceptually distinct components of knowledge, a variety of philosophers from Descartes to the present have presupposed the view that justification and truth are conceptually related — that there is an internal connection between a belief being justified and being true. The appeal of this view is no doubt rooted in the conviction that knowledge does not arise when a belief merely happens to be true. The motivation for requiring that a true belief be justified in order for it to count as an instance of knowledge just is, in some sense, to provide a connection to truth.

A further consideration that supports this view is the fact that justification is a generic notion. In addition to being epistemically justified, a belief can be pragmatically or morally justified. The belief of a defense attorney who, in order to provide a better defense, convinces himself that his client is innocent may be said to be justified in one of these latter senses. One might contend that the connection to truth is what distinguishes *epistemic* justification from these other senses of justification.

The burden of this view is to characterize the nature of the connection between epistemic justification and truth. One connection that is immediately apparent is that *S* is epistemically justified in believing that *P* only if *S* is epistemically justified in believing that *P* is *true*. But this trivial connection does not distinguish epistemic justification from moral or pragmatic justification. For one is morally or pragmatically justified in believing that *P* just in case one is morally or pragmatically justified in believing that *P* is *true*. This is not surprising since this trivial connection seems to be more a point about belief than justification. To believe that *P*, just is to believe that *P* is true. The

connection between epistemic justification and truth must amount to something beyond this trivial connection.

One might classify theories of epistemic justification according to how they construe the truth connection. In what follows, I propose to do this, and to consider some of the problems that might arise for the various classifications. I will argue that the issues concerning the truth connection present epistemology with a dilemma.

II

The strongest view one could take regarding the truth connection is that taken by Descartes. The Cartesian view is that justification logically entails truth. To put it schematically: It is a conceptual truth that, if conditions *C* justify belief *B* for subject *S*, then *C* logically entails that *B* is true.¹

The legacy of the Cartesian view is skepticism. Descartes demonstrated in the first meditation that no such connection is forthcoming (the arguments of the later meditations notwithstanding). Given any plausible specification of *C* for any *S*, it will always be logically consistent to suppose that not *B*. This is what the evil demon argument shows. Where, e.g., *C* comprises facts about sensory data, and where *B* is a belief about the truth of some empirical proposition, it is always logically possible that the evil demon has arranged for *C* to obtain where *B* is false. Not wishing to be saddled with this skeptical result, most contemporary philosophers have rejected the Cartesian view and have opted instead for a fallibilist theory of justification. A fallibilist theory allows that where *C* makes *B* justified for *S*, it is still possible that *B* is false.

While fallibilism does seem to avoid skepticism, one might still inquire as to what the truth connection comes to on a fallibilist view. A natural proposal would be to construe the connection as probabilistic. This tack has been taken by several philosophers (Goldman, Swain, *et al.*) whose theories can be grouped under the general heading of Reliabilism. For purposes of exposition, I focus on Goldman's view.²

Goldman's brand of Reliabilism explicates the connection between justification and truth in terms of the truth-frequency of the justified belief. There is no logical guarantee that a justified belief is true on this view. What is guaranteed is that a justified belief is produced by a cognitive process that is reliable, i.e., by a cognitive process that tends to produce true beliefs. Gold-

man leaves it open just how reliable a cognitive process must be in order for it to confer justification on the belief it produces. However, he is explicitly a fallibilist.³ Since reliability is a probabilistic notion, for our purposes Goldman's position amounts to: It is a conceptual truth that, if *C* justifies *B* for *S*, then *C* makes it probable that *B* is true.⁴ So, for example, if the belief "There is something red before me" is justified in virtue of its being produced by a perceptual process, then the fact that the belief was so produced makes it probable that it is true.

It is clear that Reliabilism avoids the skepticism of the Cartesian conception of the truth connection. For the evil demon hypothesis only demonstrates the possibility that there are belief forming processes which are not reliable. The fact that this is consistent with their actual reliability obviates any skeptical conclusion. But skepticism aside, I think the evil demon hypothesis (or its contemporary neurophysiologist version) uncovers a defect in the Reliabilist position. We can see this by supposing the hypothesis to be true. Imagine that unbeknown to us, our cognitive processes (e.g., perception memory, inference) are not reliable owing to the machinations of the malevolent demon. It follows on a Reliabilist view that the beliefs generated by those processes are *never* justified.

Is this a tenable result? I maintain that it is not. Of course, we are not here supposing that we know that the demon hypothesis is true. Certainly if we were to know that our cognitive processes are unreliable then the beliefs they generate would not be justified. What we want to suppose is the mere truth of the demon hypothesis. Now part of what the hypothesis entails is that our experience is just as it would be if our cognitive processes were reliable. Thus, on the demon hypothesis, we would have every reason for holding our beliefs, that we have in the actual world. Moreover since we actually have reason to believe that our cognitive processes are reliable, it follows that in the demon world we would have every reason to believe that our cognitive processes were in fact reliable. We might even imagine that a brilliant philosopher had seemingly demonstrated (*à la* Descartes of the later meditations) the falsity of the demon hypotheses, to the extent that anyone who could follow the reasoning was (intuitively) justified in accepting the conclusion.

It strikes me as clearly false to deny that under these circumstances our beliefs could be justified. If we have every reason to believe e.g., perception, is a reliable process, the mere fact that unbeknown to us it is not reliable

should not affect its justification – conferring status (*a fortiori* if we have good reason to believe that the conditions which in fact make perception unreliable do not obtain).^{5, 6}

My argument hinges on viewing justification as a normative notion. Intuitively, if *S*'s belief is appropriate to the available evidence, he is not to be held responsible for circumstances beyond his ken. Goldman can be viewed as having illustrated this when he discusses a possible counter example to his analysis. He considers whether wishful-thinking would be a justification – conferring process in world *W*, if it were a reliable process in *W*. In a footnote he points out that “if people in world *W* learn inductively that wishful-thinking is reliable, and regularly base their beliefs on this inductive inference, it is quite unproblematic and straightforward that their beliefs are justified”.⁷ Goldman's point is that in this case, the inductively inferred reliability of wishful thinking can be *sufficient* for beliefs produced by wishful-thinking to be justified in *W*. But if this is true, the picture should not change if wishful-thinking turns out, contrary to the inductive evidence, to be unreliable in *W*.

Now Goldman might contend that inductive inference is itself a reliable belief-forming process and that this fact explains the justifiedness of the beliefs in question. But again, I fail to see how the picture changes epistemically if as a result of infelicitous circumstances, beliefs produced in accordance with the canons of inductive inference turn out to be inscrutably false most of the time.⁸

An entrenched Reliabilist may be unmoved by this appeal to the normative character of epistemic justification. One might insist that a world where the evil demon hypothesis is true is a world where there are no justified beliefs. I will argue that a theory with this consequence fails to capture a central, perhaps *the* central distinction in epistemology. Moreover, I think it will be clear that the distinction is most plausibly construed as marking the difference between justified and unjustified belief.

When Goldman is marshalling data for his theory, he lists certain belief-forming processes whose outputs we would consider to be unjustified. He gives these examples: confused reasoning, reliance on emotional attachment, mere hunch or guesswork and hasty generalization. Goldman notes that these processes all share the feature of unreliability. He contrasts these with processes that intuitively issue in justified belief, e.g., standard perceptual processes, remembering, good reasoning, and introspection. Noting that these latter process all have reliability as a common feature, Goldman goes on to suggest,

“the justificational status of a belief is a function of the reliability of the process or processes that cause it” (p. 10).

I have argued that the evil demon case shows that reliability is not necessary for justification. This claim can be bolstered by considering the contrast between the two categories of belief-forming processes Goldman lists.

Since Goldman cites reliability as the relevant feature that distinguishes the class of justification-conferring processes from the class of non-justification conferring processes, he is committed to the view that in the evil demon world, the cognitive processes he lists are indistinguishable from the perspective of epistemic justification. Thus we can imagine two inhabitants of this world, *A*, who is a good reasoner, i.e., reasons in accordance with the canons of inductive inference, and *B*, who engages in confused reasoning, wishful thinking, reliance on emotional attachments, guesswork, etc. Since the beliefs of *A* and *B* are both produced by unreliable processes (the evil demon sees to this), a reliabilist theory of justification must render identical epistemic appraisals of both sets of beliefs.

Plainly, this cannot be correct. *A*'s beliefs are conditioned by the evidence whereas *B*'s beliefs are not. *A* is a good reasoner whereas *B* is not. *A*'s beliefs are reasonable whereas *B*'s beliefs are not. There is a fundamental epistemic difference between the beliefs of *A* and the beliefs of *B*. But the Reliabilist does not have the theoretical means to display this difference.

I would claim that the distinction between the beliefs of *A* and *B* is marked precisely by the concept of justified belief. Beliefs produced by good reasoning are paradigm cases of justified belief and beliefs arrived at through fallacious or arbitrary reasoning are paradigm cases of unjustified belief. Whether or not reasoning results in false belief, even if this happens more often than not, is irrelevant to the question of whether the reasoning is good. To maintain otherwise would be on a par with confusing truth and validity.⁹

The Reliabilist might acknowledge that there is a clear epistemic distinction between the beliefs of *A* and *B*, but that the distinction has nothing to do with their justificational status. Rather the difference is that *A*'s beliefs are *reasonable* or *rational* whereas *B*'s are unreasonable or irrational.

This maneuver would be of no help. First of all, 'reasonable' and 'rational' are virtual synonyms for 'justified'. But we need not quibble over semantics. If the Reliabilist wants to distinguish 'justified' from 'reasonable' or 'rational' he may do so. But clearly the important epistemic concept, the one epistemologists have been concerned with, is what the Reliabilist would call

'reasonability' or 'rationality.' The difference between the beliefs of *A* in the evil demon world and the beliefs of *B* in the evil demon world seems to capture the concept that epistemologists have been worried about rather than the difference between the beliefs of *A* in the actual world and the beliefs of *A* in the evil demon world. In effect, the Reliabilist would be changing the subject.

Another move open to the Reliabilist is to limit his theory to non-discursive belief. The above objection hinges on the role of reasoning in justification. We noted that one can be justified in holding a belief in virtue of having arrived at the belief through good reasoning even if the reasoning is unreliable. However this standard of assessment would not apply to non-discursive processes like perception. (We can assume for purposes of this discussion that certain processes like perception do not involve reasoning). Here one might claim that the only criterion available for assessing such processes is reliability. Thus the only way a perceptual belief can be appraised with respect to its justificational status is in terms of its reliability.

Suppose perception is a non-discursive process. It does not follow that perceptual beliefs can only be assessed in terms of their reliability. Again the evil demon hypothesis will help to clarify this. Consider again two inhabitants of the evil demon world, *A* and *B*. Both have unreliable perceptual processes. Suppose both *A* and *B* believe there is something ϕ before them on the basis of being appeared to ϕ -ly. While *A* has no evidence to the contrary, *B* is presented with strong evidence that owing to a clever deception there is nothing ϕ before him.

I think it's clear that there is a fundamental epistemic difference between *A*'s perceptual belief and *B*'s perceptual belief — a difference which again underscores the normative character of epistemic justification. Notice that we need not assume that *B* disregards the evidence as a result of any discursive process. He may just arbitrarily ignore it. But from an epistemic point of view, *B* ought not to have proceeded in the way he did. We might say that contrary to *A*, *B* has been epistemically irresponsible in accepting that there is something ϕ before him. As a result, while *A* is justified in his perceptual belief, *B* is not. Thus we see that even for beliefs generated by non-discursive processes, a reliability theory of justification cannot account for differences in their justificational status.

III

If my arguments are correct, then epistemic justification is not conceptually connected with objective truth-frequency. We need not conclude from this that justification and truth are in no way conceptually related. In fact, the foregoing considerations suggest an alternative account. The salient feature of those considerations seemed to be this: From the perspective of epistemic responsibility, a person *S*, can have an impeccable *belief* that certain conditions make the truth of a proposition, *B* likely. And under these circumstances *S* can be justified in believing *B*, even if those conditions do not in fact make the truth of *B* likely. As such, we might consider the possibility that the connection between justification and truth is to be found at the subjective or doxastic level. To put it schematically, one might propose that it is a conceptual truth that if *C* justifies *B* for *S*, then *C* entails that *S* believe that certain conditions obtain which make it probable that *B* is true.

This sort of account is congenial to coherence theories of justification.¹⁰ Although coherence theories vary considerably, it is not unreasonable to cite as a characteristic feature, the requirement that the justification of any belief be a function of its relation to other beliefs.¹¹ So if the justification of a belief *B* for *S* entails that *S* have some other belief that certain conditions obtain which make the truth of *B* probable, then any justified belief will owe its justification to a relation it bears to another belief.¹²

As a representative of this general approach, we can examine a theory of justification advanced by Keith Lehrer.¹³ For Lehrer, justification resides in the coherence of propositions accepted for the purposes of attaining truth and avoiding error. He analyzes the coherence relation in terms of probability.¹⁴ Ignoring certain sophistications, a proposition *B* is justified for *S* iff *S* accepts that given the system of propositions which he accepts in the interest of obtaining truth and avoiding error, *B* has a higher probability of being true than any statement with which it competes.¹⁵ Thus *S* is justified in believing *B* only if *S* accepts that certain conditions *R* (viz, those conditions described by the beliefs in *S*'s acceptance system) make it more probable that *B* is true than any proposition that competes with *B*. This entails that *S* accepts that *R* makes it more probable than not that *B* is true since one of the competitors of *B* is *not B*. Here then is a representative of the view that a connection between justification and truth lies at the subjective or doxastic level.

While this view would seem to give us some insight into the nature of epistemic justification, a major difficulty lies in its reliance on an *intellectualist* model of justification.¹⁶ Recall that on this view, in order for *S* to be justified in believing *B*, *S* must believe that certain conditions obtain which make the truth of *B* probable. One might object that these supporting beliefs are not always necessary for justification to arise. Cases involving perceptual knowledge are often invoked in behalf of this weaker claim. Suppose that *S* perceives something which is red and so comes to believe "There is something red." Some philosophers have maintained that it is sufficient for *S* to be (at least *prima facie*) justified in this perceptual belief that *S* merely be appeared to redly¹⁷ or that *S* merely believe that he perceives something to be red.¹⁸ The proponent of the intellectualist model would argue that the mere fact that *S* is appeared to redly cannot justify a belief for *S* that something is red. *S* must believe he is appeared to redly and moreover believe that his being appeared to redly makes it likely that there is something red. Similarly, the mere fact that *S* believes he perceives something to be red cannot justify the belief in question for *S*, unless *S* believes that his believing he perceives something to be red makes it likely that he does perceive something to be red. (i.e., *S* must believe that his perceptual beliefs are reliable.)

Although the claims of the intellectualist have some intuitive appeal, — one feels that something like this must be involved in justification — the strongest argument against them seems to be that they run the risk of skepticism. For in many cases of what we generally take to be e.g., perceptual knowledge, the psychological reality of the supporting beliefs required by the intellectualist model is questionable. There is no obvious sense in which most adult persons, not to mention children and animals have beliefs about how they are appeared to as well as beliefs about their reliability as perceivers, when they have perceptual beliefs.

To avoid skepticism, the defender of the intellectualist has two alternatives. He can argue that the relevant supporting beliefs are present unconsciously or he can argue that the beliefs are present dispositionally.

The first alternative is ambiguous between two ways in which beliefs can be said to be unconscious. According to psychoanalytic theory, beliefs are unconscious insofar as a certain psychological mechanism, e.g., a defense, blocks conscious access to them. If the mechanism ceases to operate, then the belief surfaces in consciousness. It would be peculiar to claim that the beliefs required by the intellectualist model are unconscious for this reason.

It may also be claimed that certain beliefs are unconscious by appealing to models of human cognition that posit unconscious inference. The premises of these inferences may be construed as unconscious beliefs.¹⁹

Could the beliefs required by the intellectualist model be unconscious in this way? Plainly an affirmative answer to this question cannot be based solely on the requirements of the intellectualist model. Cognitive psychologists currently view human cognition on the model of an information-processing mechanism. If the intellectualist seeks to appropriate a computational model of human cognition, he must provide some independent reason for supposing that such a model will be consonant with his own. At present, the details of these models are both sketchy and controversial. Thus, whether the intellectualist can forge a doxastic connection out of the states posited by these psychological models is not a matter that can be glibly assumed. Rather it is a matter for further empirical research.

The second alternative for the intellectualist is to argue that the requisite beliefs are psychologically real in some dispositional sense. The problem with this approach is the difficulty in determining just when a dispositional belief is present. The clearest cases of dispositional belief are those in which the belief was previously occurrent and is presently stored in memory. But, obviously this won't do in perceptual cases. This cannot be the sense in which beliefs like '*S* is appeared to redly' are dispositional.²⁰ It seems that the intellectualist must claim that the supporting beliefs are dispositional in the sense that if the subject were to consider the relevant propositions, he would assent to them. So if *S* is justified in believing that there is something red before him, *S* would assent to the proposition that he is appeared to redly (or the proposition that he believes he sees something red), and the proposition that this fact makes it likely that there is something red before him, if he were to consider these propositions.

Is this a psychologically more plausible picture? Again, it is not obvious that subjects have these required beliefs even in this dispositional sense. It is not always an easy matter to characterize the way in which you are appeared to. This is a skill that artists have to work at acquiring. But even if the required beliefs were present in this dispositional sense, it is easy to see that this sense of belief is too weak to subserve any epistemological end. Suppose it were true of *S* at (some time) *t* that *S* would assent to *P* if *S* were to consider *P*. This fact would not suffice for *P* to function as one of *S*'s reasons for holding some belief at *T*. For it may be that *S*'s assent to *P* would be

prompted by his consideration of *P*. By reflecting, people can *discover* reasons for beliefs they hold. Such reasons cannot be said to have justified those beliefs prior to their discovery. For example, *S* may believe that it is going to rain on the basis of the pronouncements of a ouija board. Now it may be that *S* is a skilled meteorologist who has neglected to consider the proposition that the present weather conditions portend the approach of a rainstorm. Even if it were true that *S* would assent to this proposition if he were to consider it, this does not constitute grounds for saying that *S* is justified in believing that it is going to rain.

At this point, the intellectualist may simply want to insist that in those cases where the relevant beliefs are lacking, the subject is not justified. If and to what extent this position yields skepticism depends on the empirical issue of the extent to which those beliefs are lacking in actual cases. As a last resort, the intellectualist model can be viewed as an ideal to which as a matter of empirical fact, we only approximate. To take this tack, the intellectualist would, to a certain extent have to impugn some of our common sense judgments about when our beliefs are justified. This position would involve a kind of "soft" skepticism. Strictly speaking, a lot of the beliefs we think are justified are not. But in some sense, the beliefs are justified insofar as they approximate the ideal model.²¹

Admittedly this is a vague position which places the burden squarely on the shoulders of the intellectualist. What is needed is an account of the sense in which our belief systems do approximate the ideal model and an explanation of how this can in some sense confer justification on those beliefs. I think this would prove to be a difficult task.

IV

To reject the intellectualist model is to reject the thesis that justification is connected to truth at the doxastic level. Since we have previously seen that there is reason to deny that any objective connection exists, we may wonder what remains of the thesis that justification and truth are connected. It can still be maintained that *S* is justified in believing that *B* only if *S* is justified in believing that *B* is true. But as we noted earlier, this trivial connection does not seem to capture the basic intuition that justification must be connected to truth. Can one build a theory of justification that employs only this trivial connection? In fact, this is how one might plausibly construe certain Founda-

tions theories. These theories typically start by sanctioning common sense judgments concerning when our belief are justified. They then proceed to posit a series of epistemic principles which validate these judgments by specifying just how those beliefs are justified. It is important to see that epistemic principles do not specify any connection between justification and truth beyond the trivial one.

Consider an epistemic principle proposed by Roderick Chisholm:²²

- (C) For any subject *S*, if *S* believes without ground for doubt, that he is perceiving something to be *F*, then it is evident for *S* that he perceives something to be *F*.

John Pollock has proposed:²³

If *S* is appeared to redly, then *S* is *prima facie* justified in believing that there is something red before him.

These principles simply state that under certain conditions (stated in the antecedent) a certain belief (stated in the consequent) is justified. But the conditions described in the antecedent do not involve either an objective or a doxastic connection to the truth of the belief described in the consequent. Pollock is quite explicit about this. For him, epistemic principles are true in virtue of a meaning connection. But this connection is not between a statement and its truth conditions, rather the connection is between a statement and its justification conditions.²⁴ Of course in each case the epistemic principles describe conditions under which *S* is justified in believing that *P* is true, but this is just the trivial connection.

Is a theory that employs only this trivial connection adequate? I believe we can see that it is not. This can be most clearly brought out by considering the details of Pollock's theory.²⁵ For Pollock, epistemic principles describe conditions under which beliefs are *prima facie* justified. To say that a justification is *prima facie* is to say that it can be defeated under certain conditions.²⁶ Pollock characterizes two types of defeaters (construed propositionally) for *P* being a *prima facie* reason for *S* to believe that *Q*. Type I defeaters are reasons for *S* to believe that *Q* is false. Type II defeaters are reasons for believing that the truth of *P* is not an indication of the truth of *Q*, independently of being a reason for believing that *Q* is false. So take Pollock's principle:

If *S* is appeared to redly, then *S* is *prima facie* justified in believing that there is something red (before him) (i.e., 'being appeared to redly' is a *prima facie* reason to believe "there is something red.")

The proposition 'S is in a room with no red objects' is a type I defeater of this *prima facie* justification, since it is a reason for *S* to believe it is false that 'There is something red.' The proposition 'S is in a room with a red light' is a type II defeater. Although it is not a reason to believe 'There is something red' is false, it is a reason to believe that the truth of 'S is appeared to redly' is not an indication of the truth of 'There is something red (before S)'.

The issue I want to raise is whether a theory like Pollock's can account for defeaters of *prima facie* justification. Type I defeaters are explainable by the trivial justification – truth connection. If *S* has a reason to believe that *Q* is false, then it's clear why *S* is not justified in believing that *Q* is true. But matters are not so clear for type II defeaters. There is no doubt that Pollock has correctly identified a source of defeat for *prima facie* justification in type II defeaters. If *S* has reason to believe there is a red light shining on *X*, then the fact that *X* appears redly to *S* does not justify *S* in believing that *X* is red. The difficulty is that there seems to be no way for a theory like Pollock's to account for the fact that type II defeaters defeat. Where *P* is a *prima facie* reason for *S* to believe that *Q*, essentially type II defeaters attack the connection between *P* and the truth of *Q*. But we have just seen that a theory like Pollock's does not require any such connection between *P* (the justification conditions for *Q*) and the truth of *Q*.²⁷ If a theory requires that the truth of *P* logically entail the truth of *Q* (like Descartes); or if a theory requires that *P* make the truth of *Q* probable (like Goldmans); or if a theory requires that the subject believe that *P* makes the truth of *Q* probable (like Lehrer's); then such a theory can account for why the subject having a reason to believe that *P* is not connected to the truth of *Q*, defeats his justification for believing that *Q* is true on the basis of *P*. But in the absence of any such requirement the existence of type II defeaters is utterly mysterious.

It looks as if the existence of type II defeaters gives us good reason to think that any complete theory of epistemic justification must require a non-trivial truth connection. Now Pollock and Chisholm may want to claim that the existence of type II defeaters is a primitive fact about epistemic justification.²⁸ This raises the issue of what explanatory requirements we should place on a theory of epistemic justification. For the failure to explain type II

defeaters is an instance of a more general explanatory deficiency that certain philosophers have attributed to Foundations theories like Chisholm's and Pollock's. The objection is that those theories are not framed at a sufficiently general or abstract level to provide any insight into the nature of epistemic justification. According to Keith Lehrer: ²⁹

The most important function [of a theory of justification], in my opinion, is to explain why certain beliefs are justified and others are not. Hence a theory of justification must be judged in terms of how well it explains this. A system of principles may be presented as a theory of justification when the principles are presented as ultimate ... If a belief is justified according to the system, the only explanation for why it is justified is – that is what the principles tells us. But the principles are unexplained.

Chisholm and Pollock do not really provide analyses of justification in the sense that Goldman and Lehrer do. Their theories just amount to sets of epistemic principles, one concerning perception, one concerning memory etc. These principles tell us that beliefs of certain types are justified under certain conditions. But the principles are nowhere united by a general theory that explains why those beliefs are justified under those conditions. In a sense, Foundation theories do not tell us what justification is. This objection to Foundationalism is reminiscent of the complaints of Socrates who in the Platonic dialogues, repeatedly chides his dialectical opponents for merely citing instances of a particular concept rather than providing an account of the concept itself.

In all fairness to Chisholm and Pollock, it does not seem to be their intent to provide analyses of justification in the sense that Goldman and Lehrer do. Their project is to account for how knowledge is possible. Their epistemic principles are intended to serve this purpose. But certainly it would be desirable to have a general theory that would motivate epistemic principles – a theory that would explain why, e.g., certain perceptual conditions yield justified beliefs.

My present purpose is to show that the truth-connection provides a basis for such an explanatory theory. This is illustrated by the theories of Goldman and Lehrer, both of which make essential use of a non-trivial truth connection. Those theories can explain the truth of epistemic principles by showing how the justifying conditions described in the antecedent are connected to the truth (construed objectively or doxastically) of the beliefs described in the consequents. It will be helpful to consider an example. Consider Pollock's principle:

If S is appeared to ϕ -ly, then S is *prima facie* justified in believing there is something ϕ before him.

Presuming that Goldman would concede the truth of a principle very close to this, how would he explain its truth? Goldman holds that justified beliefs are produced by reliable cognitive processes. Since perception is one example Goldman gives of a reliable process, he would explain the truth of the principle in those terms. If S 's belief that there is something ϕ before him results from S 's being appeared to ϕ -ly, then S 's belief is produced by the reliable cognitive process — perception. As such S 's belief is justified.

Lehrer as well would concede the approximate truth of Pollock's principle. How would he explain its truth? Lehrer holds that justification arises out of probabilistic relations within an acceptance system. Generally when one is appeared to ϕ -ly, one's acceptance system is such that the proposition 'there is something ϕ ' is assigned a higher probability than competing proposition. So on Lehrer's theory, it will generally be true that if S is appeared to ϕ -ly, S is justified in believing that there is something ϕ before him.

The argument would proceed in the same way for epistemic principles involving memory, introspection, *et al.* Thus Goldman and Lehrer claim a theoretical advantage over Foundationalists since they can in this way explain the principles that the Foundationalist must take as basic. And they achieve this advantage by constructing their theories on the basis of a non-trivial truth connection.

v

We seem to have come full circle. We began by noting that there is good reason to suppose that there is an internal connection between justification and truth. We then examined several proposals as to how to construe that connection and found them to be problematic. Finally we considered a theory that does not employ any such connection and found it wanting for precisely that reason.

What can we conclude? Intuitively, it's hard to see how some truth connection could not exist. Being epistemically justified in believing a proposition is quite a different matter from being morally or pragmatically justified. And there is a strong temptation to say that the difference lies in the fact that unlike moral or pragmatic justification, epistemic justification is connected in

some important way to the truth of the justified belief. Nonetheless it has turned out to be a difficult matter to say precisely what that connection comes to. While theories that ignore the connection incur an explanatory deficit, theories that are based on some initially plausible construal of the connection are problematic. This leaves open several possibilities. Perhaps a theory based on some other formulation of the truth-connection will avoid the shortcomings of those I have considered. On the other hand, perhaps an explanatory theory can be achieved without the use of a truth-connection, although it is hard to see how such a theory could explain type II defeaters. Finally we might suppose that there is no greater level of generality to be attained by a theory of epistemic justification than that provided by Foundations theories. There may be no more general truths about the nature of epistemic justification beyond those stated in the Foundationalist's epistemic principles.

NOTES

* I have benefitted greatly from comments made in discussion by Keith Lehrer, John Pollock, and Keith Quillen.

¹ Probably, Descartes is most reasonably interpreted as holding this view *vis-à-vis* some notion of philosophical certainty rather than ordinary justification. I will side-step the scholarly issues by simply referring to this view as the Cartesian view whether or not Descartes actually held it.

² Alvin I. Goldman, 'What is justified belief', in George S. Pappas *Justification and Knowledge* (Dordrecht: 1979); Marshall Swain, *Reasons and Knowledge* (Ithaca: 1981). Two philosophers have proposed reliability analyses of knowledge rather than justification, viz, D. M. Armstrong, *Belief, Truth, and Knowledge* (London: 1973) and Fred I. Dretske, *Knowledge and the Flow of Information* (Oxford: 1981). Because these analyses are aimed at knowledge rather than justification, it is not clear whether what I say applies to them.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴ Unlike Goldman's frequency probability analysis, Swain analyzes reliability in terms of inductive probability. On this interpretation, *C* makes *B* more probable than not *B* only if *C* constitutes better evidence for *B* than not *B*, *op. cit.* p. 100. This epistemic interpretation would seem to render the analysis circular.

⁵ Goldman might reply that in the evil demon case, the cognitive processes themselves are reliable. It is only because of the intervention of the evil demon that the beliefs they produce turn out false. Equivalently, Goldman might hold that reliability in a non-manipulated environment is a necessary condition of justification. I don't believe anything crucial hangs on this. Certainly we can imagine a world where the cognitive processes are unreliable in a non-manipulated environment. We might imagine a world where, e.g., the perceptual processes naturally produce consistent sets of hallucinations.

⁶ In response to this objection, Goldman has suggested (in conversation) that his theory be interpreted in the following way. *S*'s belief at *t* is justified only if *S*'s belief at *t* results from a cognitive belief-forming process that is reliable in the actual world. (He makes the

same point in a different context in 'What is justified belief?', *op. cit.*, p. 17). On this interpretation, the e.g., perceptual beliefs of the inhabitants of the Demon world would be justified, since perception is a reliable belief-forming process in the actual world.

However, the theory so construed would be too strong. We can imagine a world with beings whose perceptual faculties operate according to different natural laws than the ones that hold in the actual world. Since the perceptual faculties of such beings would be unreliable in the actual world, they would be precluded from having justified perceptual beliefs.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁸ If the evil demon should occasionally arrange for a belief to be true, then we would have a Gettier case. This indicates that reliability is better suited to being a separate component of knowledge rather than a constituent of justification.

⁹ Strictly speaking, Goldman holds only that reasoning processes must be *conditionally* reliable in order for them to yield justified beliefs. "A process is conditionally reliable when a sufficient proportion of its output-beliefs are true *given that its input-beliefs are true*" ('What is justified belief?', p. 13). However we can easily suppose that the Demon world is a counter-inductive world. Of course this fact is concealed from its inhabitants by the Demon and so does not affect the justificational status of their beliefs. In such a world, induction would not even be conditionally reliable.

¹⁰ Explanatory coherence theories would construe the connection between *C* and *B* as "*C* explains *B*." See Gilbert Harman, *Thought* (Princeton, 1973). I believe that what I say about probabilistic coherence theories will apply to explanatory coherence theories as well.

¹¹ Because certain Foundation theories are cast in terms of *prima facie* justification, this characterization is not quite right. For *prima facie* justified beliefs will have to bear the relation of not being defeated to other beliefs if they are to be completely justified.

¹² Certain Coherence theorists also require that the justification conditions for a belief include an objective connection to truth. See Keith Lehrer, 'Knowledge, truth and ontology' (forthcoming) (p. 17) and Lawrence Bonjour, 'The coherence theory of empirical knowledge', *Philosophical Studies* (1976), pp. 293–294. Insofar as they require this they are subject to the same objection that can be raised to Reliabilism.

¹³ In his book *Knowledge* (Oxford: 1974) Lehrer seems to endorse only a subjective connection to truth. In his later work, 'Keith Lehrer – a self profile', in Radu J. Bogdan, *Keith Lehrer* (Dordrecht: 1981) (pp. 79–85), and 'Knowledge, truth and ontology', *ibid.* (pp. 16–18), Lehrer endorses an objective connection as well.

¹⁴ Lehrer refers to probability as an objective feature of the world, e.g., a propensity. 'Knowledge, truth and ontology' (p. 11).

¹⁵ Ignoring a technical emendation, *P* competes with *Q* if $\text{prob}(P/Q) < \text{prob}(P)$.

¹⁶ The term 'Intellectualist model of justification' is used by Ernest Sosa in 'The raft and the pyramid', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, ed., French, Vehling, and Wettstein (University of Minnesota: 1980) (pp. 3–26).

¹⁷ John Pollock, *Knowledge and Justification* (Princeton: 1974), (pp. 58–64).

¹⁸ Roderick Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd edition (Englewood Cliffs: 1876) (p. 78).

¹⁹ Cf. Gilbert Harman, *op. cit.* Harman construes the supporting beliefs as explanatory rather than probabilistic. (Chapters 7 and 8.)

²⁰ This point is made by Pollock *op. cit.* (p. 58).

²¹ This position is taken by Lawrence Bonjour, 'Externalist theories of empirical knowledge' in *Midwest Studies*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–67.

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 78. In 'A version of foundationalism', *Midwest Studies*, *op. cit.*, Chisholm seems to acknowledge some form of nontrivial truth-connection. After pointing out the trivial connection he writes:

There is still another point about the relation between epistemic justification and truth ... if I want to believe what is true and not to believe what is false, then the most reasonable thing for me to do is to believe what is justified and not to believe what is not justified (p. 545).

Chisholm must intend the expression "the most reasonable thing for me to do" to be taken in a *pragmatic* rather than an epistemic sense. Otherwise the statement would be trivial. It is still unclear what Chisholm means here. At any rate, no truth connection is expressed in Chisholm's principles beyond the trivial one.

²³ This principle is adapted from remarks Pollock makes in Chapter Three *op. cit.*

²⁴ *Op. cit.* Chapter One (especially pp. 11–12). Chisholm is not explicit about this point.

²⁵ What follows is from Chapter Two, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Chisholm does not propose principles of *prima facie* justification. He handles defeaters by adding clauses directly to the epistemic principle. See *Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd edition (pp. 75–76).

²⁷ In *Knowledge and Justification*, Pollock does remark "*P* is a *prima facie* reason for *S* to believe-that-*Q* iff *S* is *prima facie* justified (in the sense of Section 2.2) in believing-that ($P \Rightarrow Q$)" (p. 42). Pollock uses ($P \Rightarrow Q$) to symbolize the subjunctive conditional "it would not be true that *P* unless it were true that *Q*" (p. 42). Section 2.2 tells us:

- (2.2) "*P* is *prima facie* justified for *S*" means "It is necessarily true that if *S* believes (or were to believe) that *P*, and *S* has no reason for thinking it is false that *P*, then *S* is (or would be) justified in believing that *P*" (p. 30).

I don't understand the basis for Pollock's remark, given his account of *prima facie* reasons in Chapters 1 and 2. Let *P* be "*S* is appeared to redly" and let *Q* be "There is something red before *S*." Suppose *S* believes ($P \Rightarrow Q$) because the Ouija Board tells him it is true. This does not give *S* a reason to believe it is false that ($P \Rightarrow Q$). But surely *S* is not justified in believing ($P \Rightarrow Q$).

²⁸ Pollock has taken this position in conversation.

²⁹ 'The knowledge cycle', *Noûs*, 1977, p. 19. Goldman makes the same point in 'What is justified belief?' *op. cit.*, p. 2.

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