

*Goldman's Knowledge in a Social World: Correspondence Truth and the Place of Justification
in a Veritistic Social Epistemology*

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Abstract

Knowledge in a Social World (KSW) is Alvin Goldman's sustained treatment of social epistemology. As in his previous, 'individualistic' epistemology, Goldman's lodestar is the idea that it is the truth-aptness of certain processes/methods which marks them out for our epistemic approval. Here, I focus on issues concerning the framework of *KSW*: Goldman's claim that a correspondence theory of truth is favoured/required by his veritistic social epistemology (VSE); and the issue of whether a VSE of the sort Goldman elaborates and defends shouldn't be (not replaced but) supplemented by more procedural or 'justification-centred' considerations.

1. Introduction

While he has made substantial contributions in other areas of philosophy,¹ it is of course for contributions to epistemology that Alvin Goldman is best known. Until recently, Goldman has tended to follow epistemological tradition in focusing on individuals – on what it is for an individual to possess some piece of propositional knowledge, on the nature of epistemic justification, and so on. With *Knowledge in a Social World (KSW)*, however, Goldman has now given us a sustained treatment of social epistemology (SE).²

Now, as perhaps befits the topic, 'social epistemology' applies to quite a diverse, and sometimes competing, range of issues and projects (see, e.g., Goldman 2001b and 2002b).

Goldman's own lodestar here, however, as in his non-social epistemology, is the idea that it is the

¹Including action theory, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and political and legal theory.

²It should be noted that many of the main themes of *KSW* were first presented in a series of Goldman's more recent papers. (These are really too numerous to mention: see *KSW* ix.)

truth-aptness of certain processes/methods which marks them out for our epistemic approval. In *KSW* we are given (in Part I) an elaboration and defence of this ‘veritistic’ framework, followed by specific applications thereof, with regard to both (Part III) rather specialized domains of socio-epistemic activity (e.g., science and the law) and (Part II) more generic forms of collaborative and/or co-operative information-sharing practices (e.g., testimony and argumentation).

In a short piece such as this, it’s not possible to do justice either to *KSW* or to the many questions and issues on which Goldman touches.³ So I shall confine myself to discussing Part I of the book, and two of the (to my mind) more salient questions which it prompts. To that end, I’ll begin with a very brief sketch of the general framework that Goldman develops and defends in *KSW*, focusing on those aspects of it that will be at centre stage here.

2. A Very Brief Statement of the Framework

As Goldman treats it, Social Epistemology (SE) is social in at least two ways: it focuses on social routes to knowledge – my coming to get knowledge through another’s testimony, say; and it addresses not just *my* (perhaps social) routes to knowledge, but how *we* together acquire and share knowledge, how information and various aspects of the epistemic burden is distributed among *us*, and so on (4⁴).⁵ In addressing these topics, Goldman’s concern is evaluative and not just descriptive: he wants to assess just which social practices are epistemically praiseworthy – hence, which we should aspire to implement, insofar as they are feasible and our goals are strictly

³Never mind to SE in general, and to the place of *KSW* within that larger, and continually growing, literature.

⁴All references in the text are to *Knowledge in a Social World*.

⁵Goldman notes a further way in which SE might be social: it might treat groups as epistemic agents, even the only such (e.g., Nelson 1993, Kusch 2001: 188; cf. Goldman 2001b, Section 4, and Talbott 2002). But as Goldman says, this is not an idea figures prominently, if at all, in *KSW*. A fourth respect in which SE might be social: it might be that the conditions on an individual’s having knowledge in the first place, say, is somehow interestingly social (cf. 79, n. 6): see section 4, below.

epistemic.⁶ Nor does Goldman think that such practices are to be evaluated in terms of their intrinsic features; the right approach, rather, is a consequentialist one. Specifically for Goldman, the right/good social practices are those which lead to knowledge on the part of its users, where knowledge is understood “in the ‘weak’ sense of *true belief*” (5; 23ff.). Even supposing some form of consequentialism is the right one, why’s *that* the proper evaluative standard? Because that is *the* over-arching epistemic goal: we want true belief, both because we are intrinsically curious creatures, and because where our beliefs make a practical difference (some don’t), *ceteris paribus* it’s true belief, not false, that helps us to satisfy our goals (e.g., 3, 69; *pace*, e.g., Stich 1990, Chapter 5).

Nor will just any notion of what truth is do for Goldman. Specifically, he spends substantial time addressing both (in Chapter 1) ‘veriphobes’ and (Chapter 2) some specific approaches to truth which he rejects – instrumentalist, relativist, epistemic, and deflationary theories. Each of these approaches is problematic, Goldman argues, and none does justice to the “the basic correspondence idea that what *makes* sentences or propositions true are real-world truth makers” (68). It’s this “the root idea,” Goldman says – the idea “that truth involves a relation to reality” (59) -- and that idea alone, that’s required for the veritistic project of *KSW* (68). Only a notion of truth that is broadly in the correspondence tradition, according to Goldman, does justice to our “intuitive understanding” of truth (42), makes sense of our having “interests, both intrinsic and extrinsic, in acquiring knowledge (true belief) and avoiding error” (69), and legitimizes a veritistic approach to SE.

3. Veritistic Social Epistemology and ‘the Basic Correspondence Idea’

⁶I won’t persist in making the latter qualification explicit. Surely we have all sorts of non-epistemic interests; and surely these sometimes trump the epistemic ones. That said, like that of *KSW*, the discussion here brackets such issues, and focuses as far as possible on the epistemology alone.

Now, there are no doubt those who, in spite of Goldman's arguments in Chapter 1, remain sceptical of the very notion of truth; and those too who, in spite of his arguments in the early sections of Chapter 2, would remain unconvinced that truth is not best understood in, say, pragmatic, epistemic, or verificationist terms.⁷ For myself, though, I agree that a proper SE should go beyond mere doxology and sociological observations; and I think an SE divorced from any interest in (at least) *true* belief⁸ is arguably not a social *epistemology* at all. Further, I agree with Goldman that pragmatic, epistemic, and verificationist theories of truth are deeply unsatisfactory: The problem is not just that such theories face various technical objections; rather, it's that they seem simply to 'get off on wrong track', confusing from the outset truth with *sui generis* things: on the face of it, utility and truth for example needn't coincide (there are many useless truths, and many useful falsehoods). So too for truth and justified/warranted belief: many of the things we justifiedly believe are false; and there are many truths which, because of our present ignorance, we would not be justified in believing. Moreover, as Goldman points out, many of these views seem actually to require an antecedent handle on the notion of truth: Thus, though justified belief and truth seem to come apart, it might be suggested that this isn't so of truth and what *would* be justifiedly believed *in the ideal epistemic situation*.⁹ Arguably, though, the notion of truth is needed to *define* (ideal) justification; if truth-conducivity *isn't* built into the understanding of (ideal) justification, however, we're back to the problem of divergence – for why suppose that what we'd be justified in believing, even in the limit, would be true?¹⁰

⁷Also, there are no doubt those who'd want to insist that truth -- /the veritistic properties of various social practices -- is somehow too 'remote' for Goldman's VSE to be feasible. I return to this idea in the next section.

⁸E.g., Shapin (1994) uses 'knowledge' to mean something like 'accepted belief'; this makes 'SE' an exercise in intellectual (/socio-political/etc.) history (see *KSW*, 7; and Goldman 2001a, 164ff.).

⁹This is basically Putnam's Peircian suggestion, discussed at *KSW*, 46.

¹⁰There is an alternative way of understanding (at least certain of) these 'competing' notions of truth: that they are not attempts to *define* 'truth', but attempts to offer a replacement for it (see 44, n. 1). Such a view might be motivated by, say, the thought that the replacement notion is more amenable to our pursuit of it, whereas 'get truth' is not so easily operationalized, so to speak. I return to this way of thinking in the next

To Goldman's mind, what the failure – and specific *way(s)* of failing -- of such approaches to truth suggest is the need for some sort of correspondence theory. Once again, we have both an intrinsic and an instrumental interest in acquiring true beliefs. What does that amount to? Well, the natural suggestion is something like this: to say that we're intrinsically curious creatures is to say that we have a natural desire to understand *the world*; and to say that our satisfying our goals depends on our navigating successfully through the world, is to say that we have a practical interest in believing things which track *the way the world is*. So our interest in truth is an interest in *the way things actually are, 'the way reality really is'*. And it's because they fail, ultimately, to conceive of truth in *this* way that epistemic and instrumentalist theories (e.g.) prove unsatisfactory. But this is just to say that the failure of these views points to the need for "a general relation like correspondence to reality" (59) as the proper basis of a theory of truth.

Goldman's own version of the correspondence approach, his descriptive success (DS) theory, runs thus:

(DS) An item X is true if and only if x describes reality as being a certain way and reality is that way (59).

Goldman is quite up front in allowing that as it stands (DS) is best regarded as a "*sketch*" of a theory within the correspondence tradition (41, 59; emphasis added): a full theory on this topic will have to answer such questions as what determines the contents of such (putative) descriptions of reality, just what the worldly truth-makers are, and what it means for reality to be the way it is described (cf. 61-3). Answering such questions as these, however, takes us beyond the scope of Goldman's Chapter 2; for the intent of that chapter is merely to motivate and defend "the basic correspondence idea that what *makes* sentences or propositions true are real-world truth makers. The tenability of this basic idea," Goldman says, "is all that is required for the veritistic epistemology [developed in *KSW*]" (68). And it's only a correspondence theory of truth that accommodates this 'basic correspondence idea'.

But is that so? Again, I think that Goldman's criticisms of epistemic, instrumentalist, etc., theories of truth are on the mark, and that *they* don't respect 'the basic correspondence idea'. (At any rate, I won't be arguing to the contrary here.) What's less clear to me is whether Goldman's own preferred approach to truth is, in this regard, really superior to deflationary views.

Of course, there are different theories that get grouped under the general 'deflationist' heading. As Goldman puts it, though, what they have in common – what makes them all 'deflationist' – is that they all involve the denying "that sentences using the word 'true' involve the predication of a property (or a 'substantive' property) to propositions or anything else" (51). Thus, on Quine's 'disquotationalism', attributing truth to the sentence, 'Snow is white', is no different from attributing whiteness to snow; "the adjective 'true' is dispensable when attributed to sentences that are explicitly before us" (1987: 214). Where 'true' really earns its stripes is when we want to talk about sentences not available to us ("The final sentence Churchill uttered was true"), when it's too cumbersome to actually token them ("The longest sentence ever uttered is true"), or when we want to generalize over sentences ("Every sentence of the form, 'P or not-P', is true"). Even so, for Quine the distinctiveness of 'true' is not that it gives us, so to speak, something new to say – a way of picking out some substantive property *over and above*, say, snow's being white, etc.; rather, it gives us a new (sometimes better) way of saying what we already could (in principle, anyway), by replacing talk of the world with logically equivalent talk about words (Williams 2001: 141).

In the same way, on Horwich's (1990) 'minimalist' theory (MT), the correct theory of the meaning of 'true' consists in all instances of the equivalence schema,

$$(T) \langle P \rangle \text{ is true iff } P.$$

And a person's understanding of the truth predicate consists in his being disposed to accept any instance of (T).

Horwich thinks that this minimal theory suffices to explain what needs explaining. For instance, it explains why, from the sentences,

(1) 'Everything Cassie says is true', and

(2) 'Cassie says that snow is white',

it follows, given (MT), that

(3) 'Snow is white'.

So, he thinks, there is no need to search for any 'deeper' theory of truth (which is just as well, Horwich thinks, since such a search would fail to turn up anything).

Now, I'm not going to argue that either of these deflationary views is *correct*; while I'm not sure that the situation is quite as dire as Goldman makes it out to be (54-9), both Quine's and Horwich's views face real difficulties. The present point is that it's not clear that Goldman's (DS) does a *better* job than either of these theories of respecting "the basic correspondence idea that what *makes* sentences or propositions true are real-world truth makers" (68).

In the final pages of his discussion of truth (66-8) Goldman suggests the following way of making his (DS) compatible with a deflationary view of truth (supposing that any technical problems facing the latter could be overcome): As Goldman says, there are a number of distinct projects that might be cited under the heading, 'a theory of truth'. Among these are: attempts to give the meaning of a specific piece of language, 'true'; and attempts to say something about the nature of *truth* itself (41, 66; cf. Horwich 1990: 37-8 and Kirkham 1992: Chapter 1). Now, Horwich's or Quine's view *might* turn out to be the correct semantic theory – the correct theory of the predicate, 'true'. The 'deflationary' aspect of these views consists in their authors' declining the invitation to give a theory of the nature of truth itself; and on *that* matter it may turn out that (DS) is the right way to go. Hence:

[E]ven if some form of deflationism...can surmount its obstacles and be rendered fully attractive, this would not force us to relinquish the basic correspondence idea that what *makes* sentences or propositions true are real-world truth makers. (68)

Surely, though, the deflationist will respond that the only reason Goldman's (DS) doesn't face such troubles itself is because it is *too much* a "sketch" of a theory of truth.¹¹ Goldman writes that "the crucial feature of the correspondence theory that distinguishes it from its competitors is its claim that the truth concept involves *truth-makers*: worldly entities of some sort that *make* propositions (or other truth-bearers) true" (61). But Horwich, for example, regards the thought that (crudely put) nothing is true but that the world makes it so to be "just about the only [sort of] uncontroversial fact to be found" in discussions of truth (1990: 126); and he thinks that this fact is just one of a family of closely related ideas which grow out of "the innocuous idea that whenever a sentence or proposition is true, it is true *because* something in the world is a certain way -- something typically external to the sentence or proposition" (*ibid.*: 110-111). ((DS), on this view, is merely a harmless generalization from instances of (T).) Quine too thinks that the correspondence theorist "is right that truth should hinge on reality, and it does. No sentence is true but reality makes it so" (1971: 10).

According to Goldman, deflationists' saying such things is "music to the ears of a correspondence theorist" (67); but should it be? As I read it, the disagreement between Goldman, on the one hand, and Horwich and Quine, on the other, is not over "the basic correspondence idea that what *makes* sentences or propositions true are real-world truth makers" (68). The disagreement, rather, concerns the prospects of turning this 'basic correspondence idea' into something worth calling a *theory* of truth.¹² For (DS) to represent an explanatory advance over the (uncontroversial) 'basic correspondence idea', the deflationist is liable to say, Goldman needs

¹¹Goldman imagines some philosophers objecting that the very idea of description presupposes that of truth (64). A (to my mind) more serious worry would be that the idea of *correct* description, as used in (DS), brings truth in through the back door, as it were.

¹²As Goldman notes (60), Alston (1996) is careful not to call his 'minimal realist' account (whereby a statement is true iff what it says to be the case actually is the case) a correspondence theory proper.

to provide (i.a.) theories of ‘descriptive content’ and ‘descriptive success’ (of a content’s ‘fitting reality’); and he must do so without invoking the notion of truth (cf. Horwich 1990: 113).¹³

But don’t we need a correspondence theory of truth in order to do justice to our interest in the truth – both for its own sake, and because it helps us achieve our goals? Again, that’s not so clear. What is uncontroversial is that, for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, we want it to be the case that, to a first approximation, we believe that p just in case p (where ‘ p ’, typically, will refer to some worldly state of affairs): we want to believe that a particular food is poisonous if it is (but, epistemically anyway, not otherwise); we want to know whether it was disease, a meteor, or some other thing that led to the extinction of the dinosaurs; etc. Uncontroversial too, when taken on its own, is the summarizing of all of this with the claim that we have both an intrinsic and an extrinsic interest in the *truth*, where it’s presumed that this interest is an interest in having our beliefs be appropriately connected with reality. The controversy, once again, is whether this claim is one the vindication of which rests upon discerning the *nature* of truth (along correspondence lines), or whether we should say instead that that which it summarizes needs no vindicating in the first place.

It bears emphasizing that none of this undercuts the larger project of VSE, or Goldman’s specific version thereof. *That*, in fact, is the point: insofar as “the tenability of [the basic correspondence idea] is all that is required for the veritistic epistemology [developed in *KSW*]” (68), that that idea doesn’t favor a correspondence theory of truth over deflationism (supposing it doesn’t) hardly threatens VSE.¹⁴ On the contrary, inasmuch as we’ve yet to be presented with a

¹³Goldman anticipates the objection that (DS) is “wholly trivial or platitudinous” (63). He replies that being platitudinous isn’t a fault where the concept in question is very familiar and basic; and that deflationist views offer an alternative account of the meaning of ‘true’ and are deliberately silent about the nature of truth and/or truth-makers (63-4). It might be replied, however: that this last point overstates things – the deflationist can allow, say, that it’s the whiteness of snow that ‘makes for’ the truth of ‘snow is white’; that turning the basic correspondence idea into a full theory of truth is something Goldman has yet to do; and that the incompatibility of this idea with deflationism follows only from taking them both to be intended as accounts of the meaning of ‘true’, whereas Goldman allows that (DS) might be better cast as an attempt at the non-semantic project.

¹⁴Though it does favor both over epistemic, etc., theories of truth (see 68, and Williams 2001: 141).

complete and satisfactory correspondence theory, that it doesn't require such a theory actually brightens the prospects for Goldman's VSE.

4. Knowledge, Justification, and the Pursuit of Truth

If the aspiration to truth strikes some as immodest, a notable feature of Goldman's KSW is that, in another respect, it's strikingly modest: contrary to how knowledge is usually treated within the North American analytic tradition, Goldman treats of knowledge (only) in the weak sense of true belief. For a couple of reasons, this is notable, and possibly worrisome.

First, of course, there is the fact that most epistemologists, including Goldman in his earlier work, take it that, while knowledge (in the sense of concern to them) *requires* true belief, it's not constituted thereby: something more – justification, warrant, or what have you – is required. So one might worry that Goldman's KSW marks a departure, not just from traditional, individualistic epistemology (include Goldman's own), but from a concern with genuine knowledge.¹⁵

But there is a second reason why Goldman's focusing on mere true belief as the chief epistemic end might be regarded as problematic. Some of those who've been most critical of KSW have complained that Goldman doesn't really do justice to the real spirit of *social* epistemology at all. Here is how Martin Kusch puts the point:

Goldman agrees that traditional epistemology is excessively individualistic. But he thinks this shortcoming can be remedied simply by adding a social wing to the old edifice.
(2001, 188)

¹⁵Maffie (2000: 251-2) goes so far as to say that Goldman's 'knowledge' "is no longer an epistemological notion!"

Why think that adding a new wing won't do? Why think that the edifice itself needs renovation?¹⁶ Well, for some anyway, it is because social factors figure in the very truth conditions of statements of the form, 'S is justified in believing that *p*'. Thus, e.g., Stew Cohen (1987) has argued that knowledge itself has a social component. On Cohen's view, knowledge entails having good reasons; but *how* good one's reasons must be in order for one to possess knowledge depends upon social (intersubjectively determined, and variable) standards. Similarly, Helen Longino (1994) argues that a scientific belief is justified (and so a candidate for knowledge) to the extent that it results from the application of 'objective' methods, where 'objective' methods are explicitly characterized in terms of certain features of the relevant social practices – whether they there are genuinely public, allow for critical interaction, exhibit equality of intellectual authority among diverse perspectives, and so on (1994, 153).

On either of these views, knowledge itself – in general, and not just when it comes to SE – is deeply social. To be clear: this is not for ontogenetic reasons – because, as a matter of fact, the conditions which enable us to come to know include social conditions – but because knowledge requires justified/warranted belief, and the truth conditions for a statement of the form, 'S is justified in believing that *p*', make ineliminable reference to social factors or conditions. One might worry, then, that in focussing on knowledge in the weak sense of true belief, Goldman has effectively side-stepped what has seemed to some to be a -- if not *the* -- route to an epistemology that's *deeply* social, much more deeply social than Goldman's *KSW* makes it out to be.

Having raised some worries about Goldman's taking knowledge in the weak sense to be his target, let me say that I think they're actually misplaced. -- Not because there *aren't* these problems with focussing merely on true belief, but because, and contrary to what Goldman

¹⁶The reason Kusch himself mentions is that, according to some, the epistemological tradition is "wrong to assume that isolated individuals can possess knowledge at all...The epistemology of the individual knower [on this view] is merely a chapter in the epistemology of the group" (*ibid.*).

himself suggests, there is a sense in which it is incorrect to think that his concern is really just with ‘weak knowledge’.

Goldman wants, recall, to evaluate social practices in terms of whether they produce true belief(s) -- versus false belief, or no belief -- in their users. However, that a practice *just happens* on a given occasion to issue in someone’s, even most people’s, having a true belief won’t suffice – that would be a fluke; our (intrinsic and extrinsic) interest in the truth is best served by practices that *tend to* produce (/sustain) true belief. When Goldman says that “the main concern for veritistic [social] epistemology is: Which [social] practices have a comparatively favourable impact on knowledge as contrasted with error and ignorance?” (5), he is speaking of the *propensities* of various practices to produce knowledge (versus error or ignorance) (91). But this just means that there is a reliability requirement implicit within Goldman’s VSE: for reliability *just is* the tendency of a practice (/process/etc.) to produce a high ratio of true beliefs to false.¹⁷ And Goldman, famously, has argued that the reliability condition is what separates (mere) true belief from (genuine) knowledge (e.g., Goldman 1976), and that it constitutes the proper *justification* condition on knowing (e.g., Goldman 1979, 1988).

Of course, both of these claims – that reliabilism is the right approach to knowledge, *and* that it’s the right approach to justification – are controversial. But they’re not controversial *for Goldman!* So it’s not at all clear that, by Goldman’s own (reliabilist) lights, the knowledge with which he’s concerned in *KSW* is knowledge in the ‘weak’ sense of, simply, true belief.

Granted, in the case of social processes, the relevant practices/processes won’t always supervene simply on properties of the subject;¹⁸ in picturesque terms, they won’t always be

¹⁷This talk of ‘tendencies’ is a bit crude: Goldman is careful to distinguish propensities from (actual) frequencies: see *KSW* 91.

¹⁸Not that they *must* be in the case of non-social epistemology. We can perfectly consistently decide that some non-social belief-forming processes (perception, say) are best understood in non-individualistic terms (contrary, perhaps, to Goldman: see next note), while maintaining the distinction between individual and social epistemology (in the latter case, the extra-individualistic facts/things on which the relevant processes supervene would be *social*, and not *just* ‘outside the subject’s head’).

‘inside’ the subject’s head’.¹⁹ But that’s only to be expected, given that they are *social* processes; their reliability (or not) is unaffected by their ‘location’.

Does the presence of this justification condition make knowledge itself interestingly social? Does it show that the edifice of traditional epistemology needs serious reworking? Not that I can see. The feature of, say, Cohen’s view that makes knowledge itself interestingly social, is that the truth conditions of ‘*S* knows that *p*’ make explicit mention of social facts: *S* doesn’t know that *p* (/ *S*’s belief that *p* isn’t justified) if socially determined standards aren’t met. Whereas, in Goldman’s case, the requirements for knowledge (/justified belief) with respect to beliefs arising from social processes is the same as they always are – *S* doesn’t know that *p* (/ *S*’s belief that *p* isn’t justified) unless that belief is produced (/sustained) by reliable processes. Granted, none of the arguments of *KSW* require that reliabilism be correct. What making explicit the implicit reliabilist condition explicit does do, however, is to show that *KSW* may be much more continuous, both with Goldman’s own previous work and with the epistemological tradition, than Goldman himself suggests.

Even so, Goldman does wish to avoid talking his target in *KSW* to be anything other than *weak* knowledge. He gives two reasons for this. First, because he wishes to speak to SE, and wants to avoid getting drawn into the tangled epistemological topic of what constitutes knowledge in the ‘strong’ sense. More importantly, Goldman says, his view is that “people’s dominant epistemic goal...is to obtain true belief, pure and simple” (24). Of course, the “usual route” to true belief might be the obtaining of evidence, say; but the value of such evidence is wholly instrumental: we want it only because (we think) it will lead us to true belief (*ibid.*).²⁰

¹⁹“Both [individual and social epistemology] would seek to identify and assess processes, methods or practices in terms of their contributions -- positive or negative -- to the production of true belief. Individual epistemology would identify and evaluate psychological processes that occur within the epistemic subject. Social epistemology would identify and evaluate social processes by which epistemic subjects interact with other agents who exert causal influence on their beliefs.” (2001b, Section 2).

²⁰And in a later paper: “The theory [of *KSW*] centres on knowledge – in the sense of ‘true belief’ – rather than on justification, although the latter inevitably plays a role as a means to truth” (Goldman 2002c: 186;

However, one can be wholly sympathetic to Goldman on both of these points, and still worry that there is a problem lurking here.

Above, we saw that classical epistemology is concerned with knowledge, in the sense of (at least) justified/warranted belief. Nor is the inclusion of the justification condition gratuitous: for even if all we ‘really’ care about, in the end, is correct information (true beliefs) about the world, and even if that’s all that our getting by in the world requires, justification is supposed to be what helps get us there. As Goldman says, a – even *the* -- guiding question of ‘classical epistemology’ is, “How can an individual engage in cognitive activity so as to arrive at true belief and avoid false belief?” (2001b: Section 2).

However, as critics of epistemic externalism are constantly pointing out, injunctions such as, “use reliable methods” (e.g.), are no help at all if what you’re wondering about is how to maximize truth and minimize falsehood among your beliefs. Hence at least one common rationale for the inclusion of the justification condition: it constitutes a more tractable, proximal goal; it’s often hard to know when we’ve got the truth, but less hard to know when we’ve got justified belief; and if all goes well, in pursuing justified belief we’re getting closer to knowledge as well.

Thus motivated, the need for justification is the need for (what’s usually called) an ‘internalistic’ construal thereof. Whereas, insofar as Goldman has an implicit justification condition at work in *KSW*, it’s reliabilist (hence, externalist). Not that reliabilism is therefore the wrong account of knowledge, or even of justification. Goldman can say that the demand to *know* whether we’ve got knowledge, or to *know* how to get more, is meta-epistemological, and shouldn’t affect our understanding of knowledge (/justification) itself (cf. 25, note 16). Fair enough; but whether or not we see an internalistic sort of justification as required for knowledge *per se*, or as something that is independently desirable, one might insist that it *is* desirable nonetheless.

cf. 2001c). Both in *KSW* and in his 2002b, Goldman’s positive comments on justification – as contrasting with the insistence that it is valuable only because it is instrumental to true belief -- occur within his

Returning now to *KSW*, one common/natural worry about Goldman's VSE, even among veriphiles, concerns its feasibility – that is, our ability actually to *employ* veritistic norms. For suppose we agree that it's (reliably produced) true belief we want from our socio-epistemic practices; how exactly, and how often, are we actually going to be in a position to determine how well we're doing on this score? This worry, note, is not an especially sceptical or 'pessimistic' one (cf. 80-1): what's at issue is not whether our faculties, in general, issue in true beliefs – surely they do ("there goes a squirrel"); and surely, when they don't, we're often in a position to see that things have gone wrong ("I was wrong – it was a bird").²¹ Often, though, especially as concerns, not the 'methods' and results of simple perception but, say, those of scientific inquiry, it's hard to know how well we're doing, veritistically speaking; here, we encounter veritistic failure as often as success; and the discovery of such failure tends to be backward-looking – we tend to see that we were wrong in either our beliefs or our methods only once we've moved on to different ones.

Goldman addresses this sort of concern in Chapter 3, giving examples in which subjects are able to select the veritistically best practice, even when they start out using different means of choosing among the available alternatives (81-2). As Goldman notes, however, it's a feature of these examples that the subjects *know* what the prior probability that a candidate practice (/expert) will get it right is; and this, Goldman admits, is a "condition that may be met only infrequently" (82, note 8). Indeed, he says writes that the problem of determining the performance of various practices, both actual and possible, across a wide range of prospective circumstances – which is precisely what measuring 'veritistic value' is all about -- makes "[t]he implementation of veritistic epistemology...*extremely difficult*" (91; emphasis added). Still, Goldman says,

[m]y measures of V-value are intended to provide *conceptual* clarity, to specify what is *sought* in an intellectually good practice, even if it is difficult to determine which

discussion of testimony-based belief.

²¹Here I'm ignoring worries about epistemic circularity, also discussed by Goldman in Chapter 3 (83-7).

practices in fact score high on these measures. Conceptual clarity about desiderata is often a good thing, no matter what hurdles one confronts in determining when those desiderata are satisfied. (91)

Fair enough. But we're still left with the question of how actually to proceed the next time we're deciding what views or methods to adopt (cf. Maffie 2000: 250). This concern – the concern about implementing VSE – suggests, to my mind, that a veritistic SE stands in need of supplementation by a *procedural* one. Consider, say, Longino's suggestion that scientific communities and their activities should include a shared standards that critics can invoke, a general responsiveness to such criticism, and a rough equality of intellectual authority among qualified practitioners (78). Now, as Goldman observes, in discussing this (and other) more procedural conceptions of SE, it's not clear that the features Longino's criteria pick out are *intrinsically* good, as opposed to being good because (we think) they promote good veritistic outcomes. But no matter: we don't have to *choose* between procedural and consequentialist (specifically, veritistic) means of evaluating practices; and there are going to be cases where, though we hope the meeting of the procedural criteria will have good veritistic results, we really can't be sure, and will have to evaluate candidate social practices solely in terms of these more tractable proximal goods. Putting it another way, there are likely cases in which we'll have no choice but to adopt a justification-centred²² approach -- with the proviso, of course, that given the source of the present concern it won't help to have the justification in question be externalist in character.

This leaves the question of how far any of this is strictly *incompatible* with what Goldman says in *KSW*. In Chapter 3, he presents proceduralism as though it were necessarily a competitor to veritism.²³ Yet, if Longino's proceduralist view ends up being 'impure', perhaps so

²²In *KSW*, Goldman terms Longino a proceduralist; in his 2001b he calls her view a 'justification-centred' one. (Not that there's any inconsistency here.)

²³Whereas, say, he is explicit that 'competing' conceptions of proper argumentation might not be such: 154,

too does Goldman's veritistic approach. For instance, some of the features of science that Goldman takes to be "veritistically significant"—e.g., that there be in place systems of credit and reward, and for the critical assessment of theories and findings (see 250, Chapter 8) -- are quite like Longino's criteria for good scientific exchange. (Though they, in turn, might be well-complemented by consensus considerations – another of the "alternative conceptions" of SE Goldman discusses in Chapter 3; for our shared verdict on the matter of whether those criteria have been fulfilled might be all we have to go on in the end.²⁴) And one might say that the rules for good argumentation that Goldman puts forward (Chapter 5) are excellent examples of good (non-externalistic) socio-epistemic norms, and perhaps a model of a practice that can be applied to the very question of whether a given social practice is veritistically good (when we lack any direct knowledge thereof). (Here, such argumentation would constitute justification in the sense of the right kind of public, inter-personal *justifying* of beliefs.²⁵)

Of course, for Goldman, both Longino's criteria and good rules of argumentation derive their epistemic value from their tending (we think) towards true belief. The issue, though, is whether, in a given instance, *that* feature of a candidate practice will be available to us. If not, then in discussing a feasible VSE, perhaps justification and more 'procedural' considerations should have a place at, or near, the centre of *KSW*. Then again, insofar as Goldman's book contains both an implicit externalistic justification requirement, and at least the resources for an account of the proper role of internalistic justification in VSE, perhaps they already do.

Acknowledgements

and ff.

²⁴"Of course, in the end we want processes and practices that are reliable, but our judgment that they are reliable is secured through...material and discursive interactions...; not by the epistemologists, but by the community that employs them" (Longino 2002: 164).

²⁵Some have suggested that such is the source of the very notion of epistemic justification: "...the background against which the concept of epistemic justification has developed is the practice of critical reflection on our beliefs, the practice of epistemic assessment of beliefs..., the challenging of beliefs and

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responses to such challenges." (Alston 1986: 225).

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