

PHIL 2606: Knowledge, Reason and Action
Lecture 3: Caused justification

Reading:

Goldman, A. I. (1967), 'A Causal Theory of Knowing', *Journal of Philosophy* **64**, pp. 357-72.

1. Recall from last time the JTB account of knowledge. And recall Gettier's proposed counterexample: Smith truly and justifiably believes (b) that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket, but he does not know (b). If we accept this as a counterexample, then we need to modify the JTB account.
2. One modification we considered last time: adding an additional 'no false lemmas' condition. But there is a problem for this: there are Gettier-style cases that do not involve false lemmas. I gave one last time. Here is another:

Mr Farmer sees a fake sheep and, mistaking it for a real sheep, forms the belief that there is a sheep in the paddock. As it turns out, there *is* a sheep in the paddock (elsewhere), the presence of which Mr Farmer is unaware. Mr Farmer truly and justifiably believes that there is a sheep in the paddock, and has not arrived at this belief by inference from any false lemmas (in fact, by no inference at all), but he does not *know* that there is a sheep in the paddock.

3. Goldman suggests Smith does not know (b) because there is no *causal connection* between the fact that (b), and Smith's belief that (b). He proposes a *causal* account of knowledge:¹

S knows that P iff the fact that P is causally connected in an appropriate way with S's believing that P.

4. Why 'is causally connected' rather than the simpler 'is caused by'? Two reasons why the latter would be wrong (it would *undergenerate*, be *too strong*):
 - a. I intend to drive to Wagga tonight. You now know that I will drive to Wagga tonight. The fact that I will drive to Wagga tonight did not *cause* your belief that I will drive to Wagga tonight. But they are causally *connected*, by a common cause – the fact that I intend to drive to Wagga tonight.² (Knowledge of the future)
 - b. I know that smoke was coming out of my chimney, because I saw that my fire was alight. The fact that smoke was coming out of my chimney did not *cause* my belief that smoke was coming out of my chimney. But they are causally *connected*, by a common cause.
5. Why 'in an appropriate way'? Because it seems that some causal connections are *inappropriate*. Here is a variation of an example from Goldman:

Mr Scoop observes that Floyd won The Tour, and writes an article for the Daily Advertiser. But there is a typo, and it is printed that Floyd did *not* win the Tour. But Mr Blurry misreads the Daily Advertiser as saying that Floyd won The Tour, and comes to believe (truly) that he did.

¹ He proposes this for empirical truths only – he thinks that JTB is fine for non-empirical truths. Yuck?

² This is a variation of Goldman's example.

The fact that Floyd won The Tour is causally connected with Mr Blurry's believing that he did. But Mr Blurry does not *know* that Floyd won The Tour. So Goldman must declare this causal connection to be inappropriate.

Does the modification risk making the account trivial?

6. How does one get causally connected in an *appropriate* way? By processes, Goldman claims, that include the following:
 - a. Perception: seeing that P puts one's belief that P in an appropriate causal connection with the fact that P. So too for hearing that P, smelling that P, and so on.
 - b. Memory: remembering that P puts one's belief that P in an appropriate causal connection with the fact that P.
 - c. Testimony: being told that P by someone who knows that P puts one's belief that P in an appropriate causal connection with the fact that P.
 - d. Inference: inferring that P (not necessarily explicitly) from something in an appropriate causal connection with the fact that P puts one's belief that P in an appropriate causal connection with the fact that P.
 - e. ESP: extra-sensorily perceiving that P *might* put one's belief that P in an appropriate causal connection with the fact that P.
 - f. Combinations of the above.
7. How does Goldman's account handle the Gettier cases?
 - a. Ten coins case
 - b. The farmer case
8. Goldman's account is an *externalist* one: it allows that S can know that P, even if she does not know that she is justified, or, if she is, what her justification is. An *internalist* account requires that S knows that she is justified (weaker version), or that S knows what her justification is (stronger version).

Goldman thinks that an internalist account would be wrong: He knows that Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809. He used to be able to justify this belief, but has now forgotten the justification; but he still *knows*. (But this is only an argument against the strong version.)

9. Is the JTB account externalist or internalist? On the surface it seems externalist. But maybe it is not – maybe one cannot be justified unless one knows that one is justified? Or, more strongly, maybe one cannot be justified unless one knows what one's justification is. Then the JTB account is internalist.

But maybe this can't be right, because it leads to an infinite regress: S can't be justified, unless she knows that she is justified, hence unless she knows that she knows that she is justified, hence...

10. Goldman makes an important clarification: he is not claiming to give the *meaning* of 'S knows that P'. He is just interested in given *truth conditions*. This is an important distinction: 'Grass is green' is true iff grass is green and $2 + 2 = 4$. But 'Grass is green' does not *mean* that grass is green and $2 + 2 = 4$. A related distinction: what something *is*, versus what it is *coextensive* with.