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RELIABILISM AND ANTIREALIST THEORIES OF TRUTH

ABSTRACT. In order to shed light on the question of whether reliabilism entails or excludes certain kinds of truth theories, I examine two arguments that purport to establish that reliabilism cannot be combined with antirealist and epistemic theories of truth. I take antirealism about truth to be the denial of the recognition-transcendence of truth, and epistemic theories to be those that identify truth with some kind of positive epistemic status. According to one argument, reliabilism and antirealism are incompatible because the former takes epistemic justification to be recognition-transcendent in a certain sense that conflicts with the latter's denial of the recognition-transcendence of truth. I show that, because the recognition-transcendence of reliabilist justification is significantly weaker than the recognition-transcendence required by a realist conception of truth, antirealist theories of truth that deny the strong transcendence of truth do not threaten the externalist character of reliabilism. According to the second argument, reliabilism cannot be combined with an epistemic truth theory because reliabilists analyze positive epistemic status in terms of truth but epistemic theorists analyze truth in terms of positive epistemic status. However, I argue that reliabilists who wish to adopt an epistemic theory of truth can avoid circularity by appealing to a multiplicity of positive epistemic statuses.

According to generic reliabilism, beliefs are justified just when they are produced by cognitive processes that are highly reliable or truth-conducive. The more reliable the process is that produces a belief, the more justified the belief will be. The less reliable the process, the less justified the belief. Because of the important role that truth plays both in generic reliabilism and in other theories that include reliability as one component of justification or warrant, it is important to know whether these epistemological theories require or exclude certain kinds of truth theories.

In this article I examine two arguments that purport to establish that antirealist and epistemic theories of truth cannot be combined with reliabilism.¹ I show that both arguments fail. Although there are various forms of realism and antirealism about truth, for the

purposes of this article I take realism about truth to be the view that it is possible for there to be true propositions that transcend the best investigative efforts of human beings to discover or verify them. In other words, realists take truth to be recognition-transcendent. Antirealism about truth is simply the denial of this thesis. I use the term "epistemic theory of truth" to denote any theory that identifies truth with some kind of positive epistemic status of the truth bearer.²

The argument against combining antirealism about truth with reliabilism is based upon the idea that justification, in the eyes of epistemic externalist theories like reliabilism, is recognition-transcendent in a certain sense. According to externalism, subjects do not have to be able to recognize that their beliefs are justified in order for them to be justified. They must simply be justified, and this fact can transcend the recognitional capacities of the believers in question. Reliabilism, it is argued, can only be combined with truth theories that preserve the recognition-transcendence of truth. Consequently, reliabilism appears to be incompatible with antirealist truth theories that deny the recognition-transcendence of truth. However, I will argue that the kind of recognition-transcendence involved in epistemic externalism is a distinct and significantly weaker sort of recognition-transcendence than the sort entailed by realist theories of truth. Thus, the fact that antirealist theories deny that truth is recognition-transcendent in one (strong) sense does not render them incompatible with reliabilism's claim that epistemic justification must be recognition-transcendent in another (weaker) sense.

The second argument, which tries to show that epistemic truth theories cannot be combined with reliabilism, notes that reliabilists analyze or explain positive epistemic status in terms of truth but that epistemic theorists analyze truth in terms of positive epistemic status. Combining reliabilism with an epistemic theory of truth, it seems, would lead to circularity. However, I argue that, because there is more than one kind of positive epistemic status, explanatory circularity does not have to result from combining reliabilism with an epistemic truth theory.

The considerations of the present article are intended to shed light on the broader question of the degree to which the theories of epistemic justification we offer constrain or are constrained by the theories of truth we offer. The failure of the two arguments against combining reliabilism with antirealist and epistemic theories of truth suggests there may be fewer mutual constraints than we might have expected.³

1. RELIABILISM AND RECOGNITION-TRANSCENDENCE

Alvin Goldman (1986, Ch. 5; 1999a, Ch. 2), the most prominent defender of reliabilism, has claimed that reliabilism cannot be completely neutral with respect to truth theories but must be committed to the correspondence theory of truth or to something very close to it. He writes:

The tenability of [the basic correspondence idea that what *makes* sentences or propositions true are real-world truth makers] is all that is required for the veritistic epistemology I shall develop in the remainder of this book. Actually, it might be argued that the epistemological project of the book is compatible even with full-fledged deflationism. The only requirement is that epistemic, pragmatic, and relativist theories of truth be excluded. (Goldman 1999a, p. 68)

It is clear from the broader context of Goldman's remarks that he believes the truth theories I have labeled "antirealist" and "epistemic" both fall within the category of theories that are excluded by his veritistic or reliabilist epistemology. Why would Goldman think antirealist and epistemic theories of truth cannot be combined with reliabilism? In a discussion of Michael Dummett's attack on bivalence, Goldman (1986, p. 143) writes:

There is nothing in my epistemology that requires defense of the principle of bivalence for all classes of statements. I could readily admit the failure of this principle for any number of classes of statements: statements about the future, subjunctive conditional statements, even statements of mathematics. What is critical is that when any such statement *is* true (or false), what makes it true (or false) is independent of our knowledge or verification. Thus, the second of the two realist theses explained above, verification-transcendence, is critical. To put it another way, truth must not be an *epistemic* matter.

Goldman's remarks about the importance of the verification-transcendence of truth suggest the following line of argument for the incompatibility of antirealist theories of truth and reliabilism.

Reliabilists analyze epistemic justification in terms of the truth-conduciveness of the cognitive processes that produce beliefs.⁴ Reliabilism does not require subjects to know or even to be able to recognize that their cognitive processes are reliable. They must simply be reliable. This makes reliabilism a form of epistemic externalism. Externalism about epistemic justification is the view that the conditions for justified belief are such that subjects do not have to know (or justifiably believe or be able to recognize) whether they are fulfilled in order to have justified belief. Traditional epistemic internalists maintain that subjects need to have some kind of direct, internal access to the factors that make their beliefs justified. Because

reliabilists do not require subjects to be able to tell whether their beliefs are justified, reliabilists view epistemic justification as being recognition-transcendent in a certain sense.

Since reliabilists claim that the truth about whether the justification condition is fulfilled in a particular case can transcend the recognitional capacities of the subject in question, we can ask whether the externalist character of reliabilism is threatened by the antirealist thesis that truth is not recognition-transcendent. Antirealists deny that there can be true propositions that could transcend our best efforts at verifying them or that are in principle unknowable. Because antirealist theories deny the recognition-transcendence of truth, they may seem to be incompatible with the important externalist component of reliabilism.

As plausible as the foregoing considerations may appear, they involve an equivocation concerning the notion of recognition-transcendence. To understand this equivocation, we need to look more carefully at the central claims of externalists, internalists, realists and antirealists. Describing the distinction between epistemological internalism and externalism, Laurence Bonjour (1992, p. 132) writes:

The most generally accepted account of this distinction is that a theory of justification is *internalist* if and only if it requires that all of the factors needed for a belief to be epistemically justified for a given person be *cognitively accessible* to that person, *internal* to his cognitive perspective; and *externalist*, if it allows that at least some of the justifying factors need not be thus accessible, so that they can be *external* to the believer's cognitive perspective, beyond his ken.

Epistemic internalists, on this construal, subscribe to the following principle:

- (1.1) In order for *S*'s belief that *p* to be justified, all of the factors that justify *S*'s belief must be internal to *S*'s cognitive perspective.⁵

Externalism about epistemic justification can be understood as the denial of (1.1). (Although many epistemic externalists do not defend externalist accounts of justification, I will focus only on those that do.) The externalist position should not be confused with the view that agents can never have access to whether the conditions of knowledge or justified belief have been satisfied.⁶ Externalism is simply the claim that such access is not necessary.

Some classic statements of internalism include the following:

Traditional epistemology... has been predominantly *internalist*, or egocentric. On [this] perspective, epistemology's job is to construct a doxastic principle or procedure *from the inside*, from our own individual vantage point... The *objective* optimality of a [doxastic principle], on this view, does not make it right.

A [doxastic principle] counts as right only if it is “certifiable” *from within*. (Goldman 1980, p. 32)

[Internalism requires] guaranteed epistemic access to the correctness of a [doxastic principle].... Internalism’s *own* condition of rightness must, therefore, be such that any cognizer *can tell* which [doxastic principle] satisfies it. (Goldman 1980, p. 35)

One of the most well-known formulations of externalism is the following:

One way, perhaps somewhat tendentious, to put this alternative approach is to say that according to [externalism], though there must in a sense be a reason why a basic belief is likely to be true, the person for whom such a belief is basic need not have any cognitive grasp of this reason. (BonJour 1980, p. 55)

We can also characterize the distinction between internalism and externalism in terms of a certain possibility that externalists maintain and internalists deny. Externalists believe the following:

(1.2) It is possible that *S*’s belief that *p* is justified and yet not all of the factors that justify *S*’s belief are internal to *S*’s cognitive perspective.

Internalists in turn deny this possibility. Although the characterization of internalism and externalism in terms of (1.1) and its denial is more common in the epistemological literature, in what follows it will be more useful if we use the equivalent characterization expressed by (1.2) and its denial.

Antirealists deny that truth is recognition-transcendent because they maintain that truth is epistemically constrained in some way. Classic statements of antirealism about truth include the following:

If a statement is true, it must be in principle possible to know that it is true. (Dummett 1976, p. 99)

[T]he notion of truth, when it is introduced, must be explained, in some manner, in terms of our capacity to recognize statements as true, and not in terms of a condition which transcends human capacities. (Dummett 1976, p. 116)

[T]ruth is independent of justification here and now, but not independent of *all* justification. To claim that a statement is true is to claim that it could be justified. (Putnam 1981, p. 56)

Common antirealist ways of spelling out the epistemic constraints on truth include requiring that truths be in principle knowable, that it be possible to warrantably assert a truth in ideal epistemic conditions, or that it be possible to verify any truth. Realists deny all of these requirements, claiming that truth is not epistemically constrained in any way. Dummett (1978, p. 147) writes, “for the realist, the statement can be true even though we have no means of recognizing it as

true.” Realists, then, claim that truth is recognition-transcendent in a certain sense.

Comparing the kind of recognition-transcendence realists ascribe to truth with the kind of recognition-transcendence externalists ascribe to epistemic justification, we can see that the former is significantly stronger than the latter. Call the former “strong transcendence” and the latter “weak transcendence.” Regardless of which epistemic relation antirealists use to spell out the epistemic constraints on truth, strong transcendence will be stronger than weak transcendence along the following three dimensions:

- (2.1) The range of subjects whose recognition is in question.
- (2.2) The degree of recognition-transcendence involved.
- (2.3) The kind of recognition the possibility or necessity of which is being denied.

Differences between strong and weak transcendence along the first dimension can be seen when we consider the range of subjects whose recognitional capacities can be transcended. Realists maintain that truth can transcend *everyone’s* ability to recognize it. Externalists, however, make a more modest claim on behalf of justification: that the justification of a particular subject’s belief can transcend *that subject’s* ability to recognize it. Internalists maintain that a subject’s beliefs are not justified unless the justifying factors do not, in fact, transcend that subject’s ability to recognize them.

Consider now the second dimension of difference between strong and weak transcendence, viz., the degree of recognition-transcendence involved in the realist’s and the externalist’s claims. Realists maintain that it is possible for there to be truths that are in principle beyond our ability to discover, verify or otherwise recognize them. Truth, they claim, is not in any way limited by our cognitive capacities. Externalists are again concerned to assert a more modest possibility, viz., that epistemic justification could in fact transcend the ability of a particular subject to recognize it.

The third difference concerns the kind of recognitional capacities the antirealist and internalist opponents of strong and weak transcendence maintain are necessary. Realists about truth claim there might be truths that cannot be uncovered by our best investigative efforts – even if they were carried out indefinitely. Antirealists maintain that, although some truths may resist our current attempts to discover them, there cannot be truths so far beyond our ken that they could not be discovered somewhere by someone. In contrast, epistemological

internalism demands that justification be easily recognizable. For example, internalist Roderick Chisholm (1989, p. 7) maintains:

[T]he concept of epistemic justification is... internal and immediate in that one can *find out directly*, by reflection, what one is justified in believing at any time.

Other internalist statements on the accessibility of justification include the following:

Every one of every set of facts about *S*'s position that minimally suffices to make *S*, at a given time, justified in being confident that *p* must be *directly recognizable* to *S* at that time. (Ginet 1975, p. 34)

Internalism requires that a person have a "cognitive grasp" of whatever makes his belief justified.... Internalism... treats justifiedness as a purely internal matter: if *p* is justified for *S*, then *S* must be aware (or at least be immediately capable of being aware) of what makes it justified and why. (Bach 1985, p. 247, 250)

Externalists deny that subjects must have easy access to the factors that justify their beliefs. There is a significant difference between the realist claim that truth could escape even our best investigative efforts to identify it and the externalist claim that epistemic justification could escape a particular subject's ability to recognize it directly and immediately.

Thus, we can see that the form of recognition-transcendence realists ascribe to truth is significantly stronger than the variety of recognition-transcendence externalists ascribe to epistemic justification. Realists maintain that truth can *in principle* transcend *everyone's best efforts* at recognizing it, while antirealists deny this strong form of recognition-transcendence. Externalists maintain that the justification of a belief can *in fact* transcend *a believer's ability to recognize it directly*. Internalists, in turn, deny this possibility. The externalist character of reliabilism requires epistemic justification to be weakly but not strongly recognition-transcendent. Because reliabilism demands only weak transcendence, the fact that antirealist theories deny the strong transcendence of truth does not render them incompatible with reliabilism.

Practically all antirealists grant that truths can very often transcend the recognitional abilities of particular people. In other words, they willingly concede the weak transcendence of truth. C. S. Peirce, for example, offers an antirealist theory of truth that denies the strong transcendence of truth but maintains that truth can be weakly transcendent. Some of the more well-known formulations of Peirce's theory of truth include the following:

The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by truth. (Peirce 1931–1958, 5.407)

The truth of the proposition that Caesar crossed the Rubicon consists in the fact that the further we push our archaeological and other studies, the more strongly will that conclusion force itself on our minds forever—or would do so, if study were to go on forever. (Peirce 1931–1958, 5.565)

These formulations obviously entail a denial of the strong transcendence of truth. However, Peirce is also keen on distinguishing between strong and weak transcendence and affirming the weak transcendence of truth:

This final opinion, then, is independent, not indeed of thought in general, but of all that is arbitrary and individual in thought; is quite independent of how you, or I, or any number of men think. (Peirce 1958, p. 82)

Although Peirce maintains that truth cannot transcend the ability of the unlimited communication community in the long run to recognize it, he allows that it can easily transcend the ability of particular persons to recognize it in the short run. While putting forward his antirealist theory of truth as idealized warranted assertability, Hilary Putnam (1981, p. 56) echoes Peirce's commitment to the weak transcendence of truth: "[T]ruth is independent of justification here and now, but not independent of *all* justification." This minimal kind of recognition-transcendence is sufficient to preserve the externalist character of reliabilism because the form of recognition-transcendence at the heart of externalism is weak rather than strong transcendence. Thus, reliabilism could remain fully externalist if it were combined with an antirealist theory that maintained the weak recognition-transcendence of truth. Consequently, the first argument for the incompatibility of reliabilism and antirealist theories of truth fails.

2. RELIABILISM AND EPISTEMIC TRUTH THEORIES

In one of his former hilarities,⁷ Putnam defended what is probably the most famous epistemic theory of truth.⁸ He wrote:

Truth is an *idealization* of rational acceptability. We speak as if there were such things as epistemically ideal conditions, and we call a statement 'true' if it would be justified under such conditions. (Putnam 1981, p. 55)

'Truth,' in an internalist view, is some sort of (idealized) rational acceptability—some sort of ideal coherence of our beliefs with each other and with our experiences *as those experiences are themselves represented in our belief system*—and not correspondence with mind-independent or discourse-independent 'states of affairs.' (Putnam 1981, pp. 49–50)

Putnam (1978, p. 125) sets himself against the following view:

[T]hat *truth* is supposed to be *radically non-epistemic*... and so the theory that is 'ideal' from the point of view of operational utility, inner beauty and elegance, 'plausibility,' 'simplicity,' 'conservatism,' etc. *might be false*.⁹

The mark of an epistemic theory of truth is that it identifies truth with some kind of positive epistemic status of the truth bearer. Because this implies that truth is epistemically constrained in some way, epistemic theories also count as antirealist theories of truth. Goldman (1986, sec. 5.8) has argued that, because epistemic theories analyze truth in terms of positive epistemic status but reliabilism analyses positive epistemic status in terms of truth, the two sorts of theories cannot be combined. If the two were joined, he claims, a very small and uninformative circle would result.

If there were only one kind of positive epistemic status a belief could enjoy, circularity might be inevitable. If, however, there were more than one kind of positive epistemic status, there might be hope for the marriage in question. It is significant that many epistemologists embrace the view that there are many, distinct kinds of positive epistemic status. Ernest Sosa (1991), for example, distinguishes between the justification and the aptness of a belief and between reflective and merely animal knowledge. Tyler Burge (1993) distinguishes between justifications and entitlements. William Alston (1993) argues that there are a variety of distinct properties that have each been designated at one time or another by the term "epistemic justification." Some philosophers claim to be externalists about knowledge but internalists about justification. Others follow Alvin Plantinga (1993) in calling the property that makes the difference between knowledge and mere true belief 'warrant' and let 'justification' denote some other property. Goldman (1988) has even distinguished between strong and weak justification.

Since there is reason to believe in a plurality of positive epistemic statuses, it might be possible for reliabilists cum epistemic theorists to avoid explanatory circularity by analyzing reliabilist justification in terms of truth and truth in terms of a distinct kind of epistemic status. If an ordinary form of internalist justification were used to explicate truth, the resulting theory might endorse the following claims:¹⁰

- (3.1) A belief has reliabilist justification iff it is produced by a belief-forming process that tends to produce true beliefs.
- (3.2) A belief is true iff it is internally justified.
- (3.3) A belief has reliabilist justification iff it is produced by a belief-forming process that tends to produce beliefs that are internally justified.

One objection against this theory is that it appears to be a scam. It is a form of epistemic internalism dressed up to look like a form of epistemic externalism.¹¹ Further difficulties arise when we begin to think about the form of internalist justification it requires. On the one hand, if (3.2) equates true belief with fallibly (internally) justified belief, we get the implausible result that fallible internalist justification necessarily excludes falsity. Yet since a belief is fallibly justified just when its justification does not entail its truth, this consequence is contradictory. On the other hand, if (3.2) equates true belief with infallibly (internally) justified belief, we get the implausible result that a belief cannot be true unless the evidence for that belief guarantees its truth. True beliefs can be based upon poorly justified hunches, guesswork or even wishful thinking. Such beliefs clearly fail to be justified, but (3.2) counterintuitively seeks to deprive them of truth as well.

In order to avoid difficulties such as these, defenders of epistemic theories of truth have typically employed *idealized* notions of justification that abstract away from the justifications particular individuals might have for believing certain propositions. Consider, for example, the idealizations involved in Peirce's epistemic conception of truth:

The opinion which is *fated to be ultimately agreed to by all* who investigate is what we mean by truth. (Peirce 1931–1958, 5.407, emphasis added)

This *final opinion*, then, is independent, not indeed of thought in general, but of all that is arbitrary and individual in thought; *is quite independent of how you, or I, or any number of men think*. (Peirce 1958, p. 82, emphasis added)

The truth of the proposition that Caesar crossed the Rubicon consists in the fact that the further we push our archaeological and other studies, the more strongly will that conclusion force itself on our minds *forever*—or would do so, if study were to go on *forever*. (Peirce 1931–1958, 5.565, emphasis added)

Peirce identifies truth with the “final opinion” that is (or would be) arrived at “in the long run” by an “unlimited communication community” that pushes its investigations on “forever.” This final opinion is not something that you or I (or anyone else) are likely ever to encounter. In a similar vein Putnam (1981, p. 55) speaks of truth as “an *idealization* of rational acceptability” and of “epistemically ideal conditions.” Putnam (1981, p. 55) recognizes that we can never attain to this ideal but defends his use of the concept in the following way:

‘Epistemically ideal conditions,’ of course, are like ‘frictionless planes’: we cannot really attain epistemically ideal conditions, or even be absolutely certain that we have come sufficiently close to them. But frictionless planes cannot really be attained

either, and yet talk of frictionless planes has ‘cash value’ because we can approximate them to a very high degree of approximation.

Thus, in order to avoid the untoward consequences associated with ordinary or non-idealized internalist justification, it seems that any attempt to marry reliabilism with an epistemic theory of truth needs to employ an idealized conception of internalist justification in its analysis of truth.¹²

Although it appears to be *prima facie* possible to combine reliabilism with an epistemic account of truth, it must be admitted that adopting an externalist theory of justification would seem to undermine at least one of the motivations scholars have had for embracing epistemic theories in the first place. The desire to formulate an epistemic truth theory has very often grown out of a dissatisfaction with the correspondence theory. Describing one epistemological source of this dissatisfaction, Marian David (2005, §9.2) writes:

In a nutshell, the objection is that a correspondence theory of truth must inevitably lead into skepticism about the external world because the required correspondence between our thoughts and reality is not ascertainable.... It is typically pointed out that we cannot step outside our own minds to compare our thoughts with mind-independent reality. Yet—so the objection continues—on the correspondence theory of truth, this is precisely what we would have to do to gain knowledge. We would have to access reality as it is in itself, independently of our cognition of it, and determine whether our thoughts correspond to it. Since this is impossible, since all our access to the world is mediated by our cognition, the correspondence theory makes knowledge impossible... Assuming that the resulting skepticism is unacceptable, the correspondence theory has to be rejected.¹³

Some epistemic theorists believe that by identifying truth with some kind of positive epistemic status, the allegedly skeptical implications of the correspondence theory can be avoided.

The line of argument described (but not endorsed) by David above appears to make the following assumption about knowledge:

(4.1) *S* knows that *p* only if *S* knows that *p* corresponds to reality.

It is tempting to think that (4.1) is entailed by the KK-thesis, viz.:

(4.2) *S* knows that *p* only if *S* knows that *S* knows that *p*.

However, closer examination reveals that the widely rejected KK-thesis does not imply (4.1) after all. Assuming for the sake of argument that knowledge can be analyzed as justified true belief plus a “no relevant alternatives” condition we have:¹⁴

(4.3) *S* knows that *p* only if *S* believes that *p*, *S* is justified in believing that *p*, *p* is true, and there are no relevant alternatives to *p* for *S*.

(4.2) and (4.3) imply:

(4.4) *S* knows that *p* only if *S* knows that (*S* believes that *p*, *S* is justified in believing that *p*, *p* is true, and there are no relevant alternatives to *p* for *S*).

Since knowing a conjunction is plausibly equivalent to knowing each of its conjuncts, the epistemic operator on the right-hand side of (4.4) can be distributed to yield:

(4.5) *S* knows that *p* only if *S* knows that *S* believes that *p*, *S* knows that *S* is justified in believing that *p*, *S* knows that *p* is true, and *S* knows that there are no relevant alternatives to *p* for *S*.

Given that, according to (4.5), knowing that *p* requires knowing that *p* is true, some objectors claim that (4.1) – the claim that knowing that *p* requires knowing that *p* corresponds to reality – must be true. However, (4.1) follows from (4.5) only on the following, controversial assumption:

(4.6) Necessarily, if property *F* is identical to (or necessarily co-instantiated with) property *G*, then *S* knows that *x* is *F* iff *S* knows that *x* is *G*.

(4.6), however, is extremely implausible. David (2005, §9.2) notes that, according to (4.6), knowing that the Nile contains water requires knowing that the Nile contains H₂O and, thus, that until very recently no one knew that the Nile contained water. Thus, even if it were true that knowing that *p* required one to know that *p* was true, this would not mean that one must know that *p* corresponded to reality. Consequently, the foregoing argument about the allegedly skeptical implications of the correspondence theory of truth seems to be based upon a faulty assumption.

Furthermore, very few epistemologists take the KK-thesis to be very plausible. Reliabilists argue that the meta-cognitive acts required by the KK-thesis preclude children, animals, unreflective adults and even philosophers in their unphilosophical moments from having knowledge in cases where they are plausibly taken to have knowledge. Many cognitive agents that do not have the conceptual sophistication to acquire knowledge about their knowledge nonetheless seem capable of acquiring knowledge about the external world. And many subjects who do have the required sophistication do not exercise that capacity on many of the occasions where they clearly seem to have knowledge. Thus, reliabilists argue that the KK-thesis over-intellectualizes the conditions on knowledge.

Finally, it is not at all clear that epistemic theories of truth would not have the same skeptical implications the correspondence theory

allegedly has. If (4.6), the KK-thesis and Putnam's epistemic theory were all true, they would jointly imply:

(4.7) *S* knows that *p* only if *S* knows that *p* is justifiable in ideal epistemic conditions.

If it is difficult to ascertain the required correspondence between our thoughts and reality, it would seem to be no less difficult to ascertain whether a proposition is justifiable in ideal epistemic conditions. Indeed, it would seem to be more difficult, since we actually inhabit the reality to which our thoughts may or may not correspond, but we never find ourselves in ideal epistemic conditions. Peirce's epistemic theory of truth does not make truth any more accessible than Putnam's. The conjunction of Peirce's theory, (4.6) and the KK-thesis imply:

(4.8) *S* knows that *p* only if *S* knows that *p* would be included in the final opinion fated to be arrived at in the long run by an unlimited and ideal community of investigators.

As John Maynard Keynes once quipped, "In the long run we are all dead." Again, it seems that on Peirce's account of truth, truth would be less rather than more accessible than it would be on the correspondence theory.

Thus, although it seems that accepting a reliabilist account of knowledge would undermine at least one epistemological motivation for pursuing an epistemic rather than a correspondence theory of truth, it seems that this epistemological motivation is problematic in its own right. There are, of course, other motivations for pursuing epistemic truth theories that are not epistemological in nature. Dummett's arguments about what linguistic meaning must be if we are to acquire and manifest an understanding of it are a case in point. Such semantic motivations might be able to underwrite a harmonious marriage of reliabilism with an epistemic theory of truth.

3. CONCLUSION

I have shown that two arguments that attempt to establish that reliabilism cannot be combined with antirealist and epistemic theories of truth do not succeed. Because the recognition-transcendence of reliabilist justification is significantly weaker than the recognition-transcendence required by a realist conception of truth, antirealist theories of truth that deny the strong transcendence of truth do not threaten the externalist character of reliabilism. Because epistemic theories analyze truth in terms of some positive epistemic status, reliabilists who wish to adopt an epistemic theory of truth can avoid

explanatory circularity by appealing to a multiplicity of positive epistemic statuses – although, as we have seen, combining reliabilism with an epistemic theory may neutralize some of the (albeit problematic) epistemological motivations one had for pursuing an epistemic theory of truth.

While it seems *prima facie* plausible that theories of truth and theories of epistemic justification should place significant mutual constraints upon each other, we have seen that adopting a reliabilist account of epistemic justification does not prevent one from adopting an antirealist or epistemic theory of truth. Conversely, adopting an antirealist or epistemic theory of truth does not prevent one from adopting a reliabilist account of justification or warrant. Thus, there appear to be fewer mutual constraints between theories of knowledge and truth than one might have expected.

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NOTES

¹ For ease of exposition, I will discuss only generic reliabilism in what follows, but my remarks will apply to any epistemological theory that includes reliability as merely one component of justification or warrant.

² Many traditionally minded philosophers claim that if any philosophical thesis is true, it is necessarily true and, if false, it is necessarily false. It follows from this claim that if a certain analysis of truth is false, that analysis will not be logically consistent with any other philosophical theory because it will be false in all possible worlds. However, the two arguments I examine do not appeal to the necessary (or even the actual) falsity of antirealist or epistemic theories of truth in order to support their claims. They maintain that even if antirealist and epistemic theories were true, there would still be reasons why they could not be combined with reliabilism. The following considerations ask whether there are any special reasons, unique to these theories, that render them unfit for union with reliabilism.

³ Cf. Beebe (2006) for further discussion of this larger question, with special attention given to the relation between reliabilism and deflationary theories of truth.

⁴ Some may object to my representing reliabilism – and in particular, Goldman's reliabilism – as offering an analysis, in the traditional sense of that term. Indeed, Goldman (1994) has in recent years chided his former self for engaging in what is, in his opinion, an “insufficiently naturalistic” activity. However, because (a) Goldman's more recent formulations of reliabilism still seem to provide necessary and sufficient

conditions for the application of the concept ‘justified belief,’ (b) naturalists who supposedly reject traditional forms of conceptual analysis rarely specify what else they might be doing besides providing explanatory sets of necessary and sufficient conditions for concepts, and (c) providing sets of necessary and sufficient conditions that are in some sense explanatory seems to me to be the essence of analysis, I will treat Goldman’s reliabilism as offering an analysis of justified belief.

⁵ Not all epistemic internalists would characterize internalism quite like this. However, the points I wish to make about recognition-transcendence would apply equally well to other accounts of internalism.

⁶ Cf. Brandom (1998) for an example of someone who erroneously takes externalism to be the view that such access is not possible.

⁷ According to Daniel Dennett (1987), a ‘hilarious’ is a “very brief but significant period in the intellectual career of a distinguished philosopher.”

⁸ One complicating factor in interpreting Putnam (1981, p. 56) is that he claims, “And in any case, I am not trying to give a formal *definition* of truth, but an informal elucidation of the notion.” It is not clear how an “informal elucidation” is different from a definition or analysis and how – despite initial appearances – Putnam has not offered a definition of truth.

⁹ These remarks suggest that there could not be any true propositions “such that nothing that tells for or against their truth is cognitively accessible to human beings, even in principle” (Alston 1996, p. 200). As we can see, then, Putnam’s epistemic theory clearly counts as antirealist.

¹⁰ When epistemic theorists identify truth with some kind of idealized rational acceptability or justification, they do not always spell out the sort of justification they have in mind. Putnam (1981) is a case in point. When epistemic theorists do provide us with an account of justification, that account is usually internalist.

¹¹ This objection was suggested to me by an anonymous reviewer for *Erkenntnis*.

¹² Goldman (1999a) and Alston (1996) provide a number of reasons to think that epistemic theories of truth are false. Yet because these objections do not constitute any special reason for thinking reliabilism and epistemic theories of truth cannot be combined, I will not address them here.

¹³ For further discussion of this sort of objection to the correspondence theory, cf. Walker (1997).

¹⁴ Although Goldman has always defended process reliabilism as a theory of justified belief but never as a theory of knowledge, he has recently (1999b) suggested that the easiest way to turn reliabilism into a theory of knowledge would be to add a no relevant alternatives clause. For the purposes of this essay, it does not matter whether a correct analysis of knowledge includes such a no relevant alternatives clause. All that is required for the points I want to make is the supposition that truth and epistemic justification are necessary for knowledge.

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